Autumn is my favorite time of year, and so in October I am in my glory! I love the colder temperatures with the crispness in the air, like all the wonderful apples that are in abundance then. I love the beautiful colors of gold and crimson and rust as well as the smells of fall – burning leaves and bonfires, rain in the fields and cinnamon in the kitchen. My daughter calls autumn (to borrow a phrase from a famous holiday song) “The Most Wonderful Time of the Year” because she loves anything pumpkin-flavored and that is when we can experience that everywhere, from lattes to cookies, from milkshakes to waffles and pancakes – pumpkin rules!

So, what is your favorite season? Think about it for a minute. Could it be spring with its drenching rains, glorious smells, planting seeds, and signs of new birth of birds and animals? What about winter with glistening snowflakes and jingle bells, family dinners, and time to snuggle at home in front of the fireplace and hibernate? Maybe it is summertime, full of sunshine and warmth, lemonade and laziness, vacations and visiting? Birds and bees, flowers and trees, and fun in the sun!

Each season of the calendar has its positive points and some unlikeable moments, just like each stage of our lives involves wonderful new adventures and growth as well as challenges and pain. The scripture that was shared from Ecclesiastes chapter 3 has a familiar and yet profound message to declare. “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven…God has made everything beautiful in its time.”
The scriptures are full of references to the seasons. Deuteronomy 11:14 tells us “then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and olive oil.” And another can be found in Psalm 1:3: “That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.” Of course, Proverbs always offers up words for the wise: “He who gathers crops in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.”

If we liken our years to the seasons, those of us who are older would actually consider ourselves in the autumn and approaching—or deep within—the winter or final season of our lives. These seasons include the activities of harvest and preparing for the death or at least hibernation of all living things. But we also know with assurance that after winter comes another spring and the cycle is repeated over and over again. And it may not be so bad to be entering into or deep within our winter season as the scriptures encourage and humor us this way in Psalm 92:14: “In old age they still produce fruit; they are always green and full of sap.”

Most of us have heard the familiar phrase “the circle of life” whether it was in a song from the famous movie The Lion King, or perhaps in the explanation of life and death and life again involving animals on a farm. We know that every human being is destined to birth, life, and death on this earth. And if we are followers of Jesus, we also believe in the resurrection and everlasting life after death. So our earthly circle of life has a heavenly twist, and for that we can celebrate life to its fullest while we are on earth. “There is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God” (Eccl 3:12-13). God wants us to enjoy and grow through every season of our lives. God has gifted us with skills, talents, and abilities and wants us to be able to practice and share them throughout our lifespan, and to have a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction knowing that we used them to “glorify God and for our neighbor’s good.” We have much to contribute no matter how old we are if we continue to go to God for guidance and grace in our everyday living.

No matter what season our lives are in, God can make all things new. In every season, month, or minute, God gives us the opportunity for new beginnings, new life, and a fresh start through his love, forgiveness, and grace. Sometimes our memory fails us and we lose parts of our past, and sometimes there are moments that come back to haunt us no matter how hard we try to forget. But we don’t need to live with regrets and remorse for things undone that should have been, or things done that were unkind or unthinkable. God knows us inside and out, and will forgive us if we ask believing it is so. We can receive the gift of God’s grace and mercy,
love and forgiveness, every time we come to God with our minds and our hearts wide open to amazing transformation.

Isaiah 43: 18-19 says it this way: “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old! Behold, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs forth – don’t you see it?” We don’t have to hold onto our old hurts and habits thinking that there is no hope for change and renewal. God’s love is new every morning and God’s forgiveness and grace is never-ending. We can become transformed, letting go of the past which can free us to be transformed into new and beautiful creatures on the inside, no matter what our exterior appears to be.

Romans 12:1-2 instructs us “in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV reminds us: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” A more contemporary paraphrase from The Message states it this way: “Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it!”

Finally, we are encouraged by the words from Lamentations, chapter 3:22-24: “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’”

Just as the seasons repeat over and over again, such are our lives in God’s hands. Even though it might be winter which we consider the end of our calendar year, we can always look forward to a new year, a different season and a fresh start. Our lives are the same in God’s hands. We may think we are in the midst of winter—bleak, frigid and approaching death—but God brings his mercies to us, fresh every morning. God’s loving forgiveness allowing us to forget the things of old and God’s grace presenting new life and the ability to be a new creation.

May we go forth in life knowing God’s love, assured of God’s forgiveness, and comforted by God’s grace no matter what season we are experiencing in God’s creation around us or within. May we be grateful for what life brings us to today and realize the hope that carries us into a future in God’s love and peace.
Prayer:

As Christ burst forth from the tomb, may new life burst forth from us and show itself in acts of love, healing and forgiveness. And may that same Christ, who lives forever and is the source of our new life, keep your hearts rejoicing and grant you peace this day and always. Amen.

~ Adapted from “Easter Benediction” (#52) by Carol Wise in For All Who Minister (Brethren Press 1993)

Additional Resources:

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Suggested Hymns from Hymnal: A Worship Book (Brethren Press 1992)

I sing the mighty power of God #46
In the bulb there is a flower #614
New earth, heavens new #299
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty #37
Seed, scattered and sown #454
Take my life #389


Call to Worship #71 Thanksgiving Readings
Prayer of Thanksgiving #72
Prayer selections from #150 and #179


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Encouraging individuals, families, and congregations to celebrate God’s gift of aging through the observation of Older Adult Month is a ministry of the Church of the Brethren’s Older Adult Ministry. For more information about aging:

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