

Steadfast Living: Faithful

As of Friday this week we are now officially in summer.

How many of us remember what life was like 6 months ago?

Six months ago winter officially began.

But we had already had over two months of snow.

We had six solid months of snow during the ice age of 2012/2013.

That was a long winter.

I think we all had had enough of winter.

And gradually, ever too slowly, the snow began to melt.

As the snow started to thin out I started watching our back yard.

I began looking where I thought I remembered the flower beds being.

I felt like Noah after being in the ark for a year of floodwaters.

He was looking for any sign of land.

I finally found what I was looking for.

I started to see bits of green showing through the snow.

The green I was looking for were leaves to the pansies I planted.

I was teased with a glimpse of them.

Then it would snow and I wouldn't see them for a while.

When the snow receded frost settled on the green leaves.

Other days were cloudy and cold.

A few days would go by and I wouldn't pay much notice to them.

It looked like what the winter had left the spring would kill.

The flowers that had survived the winter struggled to bloom.

But then the day came when the sun shone brightly.

And the air was warm I think it was May 3rd

Amazingly the ground thawed.

How did such frail plants survive such hostile conditions?

Not all survived equally well.

Some are still struggling.

But they have all lived to see summer once again.

The miracle of life in nature is truly amazing.

The beauty of nature unfolding around us is astounding.

It is something we desire to see.

It captivates our attention.

I doubt I am not the only one who watched for survivors of this winter.

But there is another miracle of life that should also captivate our attention.

The spiritual rebirth of people around us is truly miraculous.

Scripture tells us that apart from Christ we are dead.

Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Being short of the glory of God is a spiritual deadness.

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Paul says "In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope." (Eph. 2:12)

But Jesus changes all that.

"I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength" (Phil 4:13)

"The free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

As we receive that gift we want to see others experience life.

That is what Jesus calls us to do for others.

Jesus calls us to go into the world with the gospel.

We are to go like salt and light to make disciples.

We are to encourage others to experience new life in Christ.

We know there are people all around us who need Jesus.

People are struggling under heavy burdens.

People face a hostile world every day without knowing Jesus' presence.

Those who are in Christ see that because Jesus opens their eyes to see.

What do we do with the vision Jesus enables?

We certainly pray to God to ease their burdens and protect them.

We pray that Jesus will become real and dynamic in their lives.

We know that Jesus is the answer so we pray for them.

It is right to do that.

But Jesus did not limit the work of the disciple to prayer.

He said "Go into all the world."

Jesus says we must move from prayer to intersect their lives.

What enables us to enter that journey?

Jesus preached a sermon about the flowers of the field and birds of the air.

He said some interesting things about them.

Notice the things He said the flowers did to make themselves look beautiful.

What did the flowers do? - Nothing! (verses 28 and 29)

They do not spin or toil.

Well they are only plants after all so what do you expect?

Surely the birds do something (see verse 26).

They don't sow nor reap, nor gather into barns.

What do the birds do?

The same as the flowers - nothing!

So how do they survive?

Not through anything that they do.

God provides everything they need to live life to the fullest.

As I journeyed with the pansies I realized they had no control.

They could not control the weather.

They did not monitor their moisture intake.

They did not worry about a thing.

Those flowers had no control over what happened to them.

I could have gone out with a shovel and dug them out.

Were the flowers worried about that possibility?

Did they shudder every time I looked or walked by?

No they just bloomed.

God provided the flowers with everything they needed.

Harsh conditions did not reduce God's provision.

The moisture, soil, sunshine - gifts from God.

My pansies were not in control of anything - God was.

When we allow God to be in control we will live Steadfast Lives.

An essential quality to Steadfast Living is Faith.

Jesus says to us, "You live like flowers and birds!"

Could it be possible to live like that?

After all, we are more complex than birds and flowers.

We live by more than mere instinct.

That is so true.

Our complexity makes it even more important for us to trust God.

We have been given a choice.

We can choose to maintain control or we can choose to surrender to God.

We can choose to strive for everything we experience in life.

Or, we can choose to trust God and live by faith in Him.

Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

We can choose to seek all the things and pleasures of this world.

Or we can choose to seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness.

"Then" Jesus says, "all these things will be yours as well" (v. 33).

The Kingdom of God is not about worrying and fretting.

The Kingdom of God is not about our efforts to be in control.

The Kingdom of God is about surrender.

It is about giving up control.

The Kingdom of God is about living by faith.

The Kingdom of God is about experiencing God's provision.

"I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ." (Philemon 1:5, 6)

The Kingdom of God is about letting go and trusting God.

"In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." (Eph. 3:12)

Faith is essential to experiencing the Kingdom of God in our lives.

And faith is what accomplishes Kingdom work.

Faith enables us to make the risky journey to care for people.

How do we stand and grow and show the glory of God in a harsh world?

We believe that God will speak and touch through us.

By choosing to believe God will provide.

Faith in the God who provides is what enables us to choose the journey.

"Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John 5:4, 5).

It is faith that overcomes the world.

By faith we choose to face conditions that may be resistant to growth.

We embrace that because we want to experience the joy of new life.

Faith overcomes the fears that would isolate us from the world.

You can choose to live like the flowers of the field and the birds of the air.

You can choose to trust God and seek first His Kingdom in your life and others.

Faith moves mountains and moisturizes deserts.

Faith is an essential ingredient to Steadfast Living.

What is your choice today?

Trust God and He will provide every need to prove your value to Him.

We do not need to be shaken by the winds of change and need.

Closing Song - Love Knows No End