

## Column

I miss the print edition of the seed and nursery catalogues that once began arriving in January. Some may still be printed, but most, I fear, have been replaced by digital versions which can be accessed online. O progress, both a blessing and a curse!

One thing I liked about those print catalogues was the pictures. They set your mind to thinking beyond the grey landscape outside to the time of rebirth that lay a few months ahead. Sitting in front of the fireplace with one of these catalogues in hand was a tangible reminder of the good order that our good God has put in place in His world.

In both the book of nature and in the book of Scripture we discover a God who can be trusted.

“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease”, we read in Genesis 8:22.

This observation is in line with words sometimes found on outdoor benches and plaques: “To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.” There is something reassuring about the reoccurring seasons of the year. They should cause us to look up and give thanks to the gracious God of order.

Even so, when we look out on our world in this year of grace and sorrow 2020, we find many things that seem out of kilter to God’s good order: international tensions, man’s inhumanity to man, man’s disregard and exploitation of God’s good creation, elected officials in Washington bickering and looking after their own interests rather than the interests of the people. All of these are signs that we live in what the theologians call a ‘fallen world’, a world that needs to be put right. The good news – the story the Bible tells in many different ways – is that God is in fact at work bringing about this needed healing and restoration.

While the seasons are cyclical (they repeat themselves over and over), history ultimately is not: it is linear. The Bible teaches that history is going somewhere. The story which begins with “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1)” concludes with a vision of new heavens and a new earth, one in which God will wipe away all tears and death itself will be abolished (Revelation 21).

This present “garden” with its weeds and thistles points toward another garden, one God is preparing for those who love Him. Speaking of this latter

garden, St. John the Divine writes: “In the midst of the street of it [the new Jerusalem], and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the trees were for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:2). To these words may we give a hearty “Amen” – “so be it” – even as we remember and lament the passing of those seed catalogues of years gone by.

*O ETERNAL Lord God, who hast brought thy servants to the beginning of another year: Pardon, we humbly beseech thee, our transgressions in the past, and graciously abide with us all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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