

Column

Yesterday, a neighbor casually remarked, “Did you know, Thanksgiving is only 14 weeks away?” I did not. Didn’t we just begin summer? Were we not just celebrating Independence Day? Where has 2022 gone?

Then, as I began the walk back to my house – as if further confirmation were needed of my neighbor’s words – I spied on the ground a single leaf tinged with reds and yellows.

This harbinger of autumn said the time for raking and blowing leaves would soon be at hand, but it said something else as well. It proclaimed a profounder truth. It was a reminder of the cyclical nature of all things living, humans included. “We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree, and wither and perish . . .” says Walter C. Smith’s great hymn “Immortal Invisible, God Only Wise”.

What I have said thus far is thoroughly depressing. One day we shall all end up like that leaf on the ground. The bright colors will fade, turn to brown and disintegrate into dust. But thankfully there is more to the story. The author of the hymn I just quoted does indeed say that we shall “wither and perish,” but thankfully he does not end there. He adds: “But naught changeth thee.” The eternal God, the God of the Bible, stands outside the cycle of change and decay that we see all around us. More than that, He wants to give us His own life.

How do we receive this new type of life? Well, the Bible tells us. It is by receiving the One God has sent, His only Son, crucified and risen. “Because I live, ye shall live also,” now says the Son to all who come to Him in sincere faith (John 14:19).

The fallen leaf points us to the God who stands above time and wants to give us His own life – eternal life – but it does something else as well. It reminds us that the clock is ticking, what seems far off will soon be here.

When I was in the second grade in the 1960s, I remember the teacher saying something about the year 2000. For us students, that was so far in the future that it hardly seemed worth thinking about. Yet, that year has come and gone, and we are 22 years beyond it. Hopefully, for all of us in that classroom that day, the years that have followed have been productive ones, ones of growth, service and witness.

A wise man has said: "Only one life, twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last." In a similar vein, another wise man, the Apostle Paul, wrote: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Both quotes remind us to get busy, time is passing. Let the fallen leaf be your sign.

O GOD, who declarest thy almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity; Mercifully grant unto us such a measure of thy grace, that we, running the way of thy commandments, may obtain thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Collect for the 10th Sunday after Trinity, Book of Common Prayer)

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