

Column

Spring fever got the best of me on a particularly raw day this past week. So much so that I ordered three fig trees from a mail order nursery. I have no idea if they will survive North Georgia winters, but the description in the catalogue sounded encouraging, “cold hearty.” More than that, they are being shipped from Greenville, S.C., which I suppose has a climate not that different from our own. We shall see.

The choice of fig, as opposed to apple, pear or some other fruit, no doubt goes back to my childhood. At our old homeplace, we had three fig trees. On good years, they produced so bountifully that we had to call neighbours to come and take some away.

One tree was located in the corner where the chicken yard and barn met. Harvesting was best done by climbing onto the slightly sloping roof of the latter. Almost a half a century later, I can see fat hens in the yard waddling over and greedily eating the overly ripened fruit which fell on their side of the fence. I can also remember the taste of the figs after they were turned into preserves and spread over hot, buttered biscuits.

A life lesson can be found in planting a tree. Gladys Taber, one of my mother’s favourite authors, wrote in her *Stillmeadow Calendar: A Countrywoman’s Journal* -- “The happy people I know are always beginning something.” I believe she is right. Forward-looking and happiness often go hand in hand.

Looking back does have its place. Knowing where we came from, recalling how God has provided for our needs and directed our path, is a good exercise, one I heartily commend. Even so, craning your head backward too long can give you a crick in your neck! Understandably, this stance is more common in older folks than younger.

Regardless of age, though, the primary stance of those who have given their allegiance to Jesus Christ must always be forward. Might not planting one or more fruit trees, the beginning of something new, serve as a reminder of this truth taught in the Bible?

The Apostle Paul gives us our marching orders when he says: “Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13,14).

Today's political climate has caused many to succumb to a spirit of apathy, to say the best is past, and to lay down their tools. to zone out. If that is you, consider, either literally or metaphorically, planting a fig tree today!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: *Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go / my daily labour to pursue; / thee, only thee, resolved to know, / in all I think or speak or do. The task thy wisdom hath assigned / O let me cheerfully fulfil; / in all my works thy presence find, / and prove thy good and perfect will.* (Hymn by Charles Wesley)

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