

Column

I spied a solitary leaf. Intense with colour, reds and yellows predominating, it lay on the ground. More than a leaf, it sent a message: “Pleasant summer is over and all the summer flowers” (Robert Louis Stevenson).

There is something both comforting and discomfoting in the rhythm of the seasons. On one hand, this rhythm is a sign of God’s wise order. Spring gives way to summer, autumn to winter without deviation.

Predictability is easier to deal with than chaos. Just imagine how confusing it would be if spring failed to appear one year, or if autumn began to manifest itself in May.

“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease,” says Genesis 8:22. There is more than a little comfort in these words.

At the same time, there is discomfort. Discomfort in that we know that we too are part of this transient order. “We blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree, then wither and perish,” says the hymn writer.

Something in us rebels and makes us want to rail against this present state of things. We know in our bones we were made for more. Man, writes Tennyson, “thinks he was not made to die.”

To add to our discomfort, we know that creation itself is winding down and is on a collision course with death. Left to run under its own steam, one day the sun will cease to give its light, and our planet will grow cold and die.

If that were all we knew, we humans would have every reason for discomfort. But, God has revealed something more. “The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God,” writes Paul in Romans 8:21 (RSV).

Put another way, autumn and winter will give birth to God’s eternal spring. “A new heaven and a new [renewed] earth” is promised (Revelation 21:1) . . . and we already have a pledge and foretaste of this great coming

event! What is that pledge and foretaste? It is Jesus' resurrected body that came out of the tomb on that first Easter morning.

What should be our response? Go and sit on the porch and wait? No! It is to be about the Lord's business in the present, including preparing to welcome the many leaf-lookers who will soon be coming to North Georgia.

ALMIGHTY and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service; Grant, we beseech thee, that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Rev. Victor H. Morgan is rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Blue Ridge.