

CELTIC EVENING PRAYER

In The

'SEASON OF MISTS AND MELLOW FRUITFULNESS'



AUTUMN



Opening Prayer

The heavens declare the glory of God.
The skies display the work of His hands.

**God of light and God of night,
Creator of seed and mountain,
raindrop and fountain:
we bring our offering of praise.
God of right and God of might,
lover of strong and weak,
proud and meek:
we bring our offering of praise.**



Do you not know? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth
(Isaiah 40:28)

'As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease' (Genesis 8:22)

By faith
I gaze up to the heavens
and know within its vastness
that this is Your creation,
planned and effected within eternity.

By faith
I pluck an ear of wheat
and know within its symmetry
lies the chemistry of life,
the potential of creation within my hand.



By faith
I listen for your voice
and know the whisper that I hear
breathed a world into existence,
yet listens to the prayer within my soul.

By faith
I strive to do Your will
And know the door that I approach
may lead me to shadows,
where my role is to become Your light.

By faith
I cling to Your word
and know the strength that I receive
has its source within the love
that is at the centre of all things.



Lord, purge our eyes to see
within the seed, a tree;
within the glowing egg, a bird;
within the shroud, a butterfly.
Till, taught by such, we see
beyond all creatures, Thee.

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

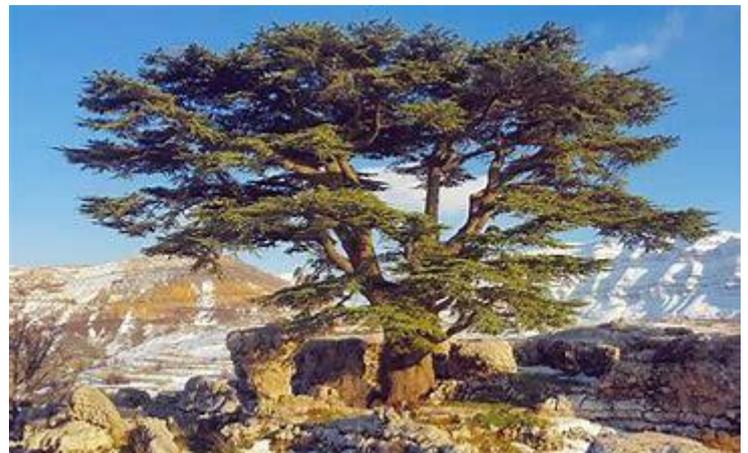
SCRIPTURE

Psalm 92 : 12-15

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;

planted in the house of the LORD,
they will flourish in the courts of our God.

They will still bear fruit in old age,
they will stay fresh and green,
proclaiming, "The LORD is upright;
he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him."



John 15 :1-17

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have



spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

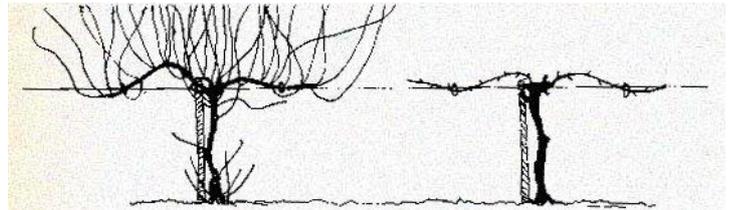
REFLECTION

As he so often does, Jesus uses a parable from nature to drive home his point. Just outside Jerusalem, rows of vines cover the Judean hillsides. It’s very likely that Jesus and the disciples walked through them en route to the city. Jesus uses two images from those vineyards: Firstly, the image of lush, juicy grapes. Not long before, the disciples had been drinking the product of those grapes as they

listened to Jesus' deeply symbolic words at the Last Supper. In order to bear fruit, Jesus says, one thing is essential: they must remain in intimate connection with the vine. The second image is that of a pile of dead sticks at the edge of the vineyard. Somehow, these branches have lost their connection with the vine, the source of nourishment. A farmer has snapped them off and thrown them in a heap for burning. They no longer have a useful function.

We carry over into our Christian life a lot of things from our old life that are not Christ-like. We brought a lot of old baggage when we came to Christ.

God accepts us in his grace - he doesn't expect us to 'clean up our act' before coming to him. By grace



he accepts us just as we are. Through the process of sanctification (growing in Christ-likeness), God cuts the old person out of our lives. God cleans us up through this process of pruning. It doesn't happen suddenly or once and for all, but it takes a whole lifetime. God prunes us repeatedly. Slowly and surely, God's Word works in our hearts, pruning and cleansing and causing us to bear fruit. It is only by remaining in Christ that we bear fruit and age is no barrier, as we read in Psalm 92 – 'In old age, they still produce fruit. They are always green and full of sap.' Indeed, youth does not prevent us becoming withered and useless.

It is not activity that glorifies God, but a Christ-like character, from which flows all we do. Most of us are preoccupied with performance. What God requires is that we are preoccupied with the person of Jesus Christ.

'Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me, you can do nothing.'

Prayer for Autumn Days

God of the seasons, there is a time for everything;
there is a time for dying and a time for rising.

We need courage to enter into the transformation process.

God of Autumn, the trees are saying goodbye to their green,
letting go of what has been.

We, too, have our moments of surrender, with all their insecurity and risk.

Help us to let go when we need to do so.

God of fallen leaves, lying in coloured patterns on the ground;
our lives have their own patterns.

As we see the patterns of our own growth, may we learn from them.

God of birds migrating south, Your wisdom enables us to know what needs to be left behind and what needs to be carried into the future.

We yearn for insight and vision.

God of life, You believe in us, You enrich us, You entrust us with the freedom to choose life.

For this we are grateful. Amen.

PRAYERS FOR OUR WORLD

Let us offer to God our prayers, trusting that God hears and uses them in the mystery of healing the brokenness and pain of the world

For our family of humankind throughout the world

For the earth and all its creatures

For Christ's Body on earth, his Church

For all who are ill and in special need at this time

For all who have journeyed on into the arms of God

We hold before our gracious Lord all we carry on our hearts today

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BLESSING

We bless you,

God of Seed and Harvest

and we bless each other in this season of mellow fruitfulness.

May the beauty of this world

and the love that created it

be expressed through our lives

and be a blessing to others,

now and always.

And until we meet again,

may God keep us in the hollow of His hand.

Amen.

