



It's All In The Season

Spring has sprung!

The passage of the seasons is one of those phenomena which we tend to think of as eternal and unchanging. As the months slip by and the year passes with it, we note the changes to the weather as the days grow shorter or longer, the air becomes crisper or dryer, the rains bitter and sharp or soft and lingering. The passage of the seasons help us mark the passage of time; and for those who live on the land, they help determine when crops should be sown or reaped, herds moved or sheltered, and so on.

We tend to think of the seasons as "fixed" - but like calendars, our conception of seasons is often a cultural construction, or a product of where we live. For example, in the Jewish calendar, this is not the year 2023, but the year 5783; likewise, for Muslims, this is the year 1445. Even our own "universal" calendar is a product of European history mixed in with Christian influence - a fact that isn't changed by replacing BC/AD with BCE/CE as occurs in modern academic circles!

Likewise, for people living in tropical regions of the world, the seasons essentially divide into two: wet and dry. Similarly, for many people on the Indian sub-continent, the year essentially consists of the monsoon season and the rest of the year. Likewise, for communities in the polar regions of the earth, the year essentially divides into the time of the "midnight sun" when it is light 24 hours a

day, and the time of "polar night", when the sun either does not rise above the horizon or only does so for a very brief period.

In other words, how we understand "seasons" - in exactly the same way that we understand "calendars" - often depends on where we live and the culture and society in which we are born. The fact that we view the passing year through the lens of four seasons is in large part a function of our living in the earth's temperate zone; it is also a product of the appeal of "elegance", of being able to neatly divide the 12 month calendar into four seasons of three months each. And all of this, of course, is ultimately a product of the velocity at which the earth orbits the Sun, combined with the distance from the Sun at which our planet orbits.

For the ancient Japanese, the year was divided, not into four, but into 24 seasons. In part, these seasons were determined by ritual and religious considerations, the need to mark points of the year in which certain ceremonies and holy days needed to occur. But it was also a function of the fact that the ancient Japanese were keen and careful observers of the natural world: the indigenous religion of Japan, Shinto, encultured within the people a deep reverence for the natural world, and a desire to live attuned to its rhythms and patterns.

The 24 seasons which the ancient Japanese divided the year reflect the subtle gradations and nuances in change that occur over the course of the year. For example, the season of "Shousho", which runs from approximately the 7th to the 22nd of July, marks the period of "lesser heat" after the annual "rainy season" when the pink lotus flower comes into bloom. By contrast, the season of "Taisho" or "greater heat" that runs from approximately the 22nd July to the 7th August is the period when the hot and humid Japanese summer reaches its peak: during this time, many summer festivals and holidays occur.

Seasons play an important part in human life, enabling us to mark the changing patterns of the natural world and respond accordingly. It is for these reasons that the church also has a "liturgical calendar" which is also divided into "seasons". This calendar and these seasons do not mark the changing weather; rather, they draw us through the Gospel narrative and the sacred history of Israel, inviting us into a different reflective space as we hear and respond to Scripture through the course of the year.

Lent and Advent, for example, invite us into a deep contemplation of the mystery of Emmanuel, God among us - of the stunning notion that, in the person of Jesus, God became human and lived our life and suffered our death in order to irretrievably reconcile the life of the world to the life of God. They invite us to contemplate the deep mystery of the connection between Christmas and Easter, that we cannot have the manger without the Cross. On the other hand, Epiphany and Pentecost are periods for reflecting on the ongoing presence and faithfulness of God in and to the world, inviting us to be once more open to the movement of the Spirit so that we may minister to the world and embody the reality of God in human life.

In just the same way that our marking of the seasons enables us to respond to the weather around us, and make decisions about what kind of clothes to wear, so they also give us a sense of momentum, a sense that we are not stuck in one time or place where everything remains the same. Likewise, the liturgical calendar reminds us that faith is always a matter of motion, of not standing still - and that the way we read and respond to Scripture must not be static, either. The seasons of the liturgical calendar invite us into an active faith that is alert to the gradations and nuances of the Gospel, and transforms them into a responsive and intentional way of being.

CPP Theatre News

CPP Theatre Productions will be presenting their Annual Musical Show in October with performance dates **from October 6th to 14th** at the Mahon Theatre, Aquinas College, 46 Great Ryrie Street, Ringwood,

Bringing Charles Dickens' beloved novel to life, Lionel Bart's Oliver! will take you on a wild adventure through Victorian England, capturing your heart as well as your handkerchief. More details from their website, cppcommunitytheatre.com.au.

Protecting Yourself Against Scammers

The last edition of the Update reminded readers of the need to be aware of scammers, especially those operating online.

The Australian Government National Anti-Scam Centre operates a website called Scam Watch, which provides up-to-date information about current scams, and what you can do if you are targeted.

The website can be accessed by [clicking this link](#).

Blessings,

Brendan





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