



FROM THE BREATH OF GOD

Whatever point of compass the wind is in, it is fulfilling

God's word, and turns about by His counsel.

Matthew Henry

IT IS A PERFECT DAY TO LONG FOR SPRING. Winter—not to mention the autumnal celebration of Thanksgiving—has not yet arrived, but the day is so utterly dismal that those of us who favor the cooler temperatures of the season are forced to question our sanity.

The sky is a dull, twenty-percent gray. The copper-colored garments of the trees now lie moldering on the ground, leaving the original wearers embarrassingly naked. The oak and maple and hickory limbs are black and ugly, seemingly bereft of life. It has drizzled and rained all night, and will continue most of the day. With temperatures hovering around freezing, shimmers of thin ice collect on the

less-insulated surfaces. From time to time pellets of sleet descend from the clouds.

It is a cold, drippy, perfectly miserable day.



Still, everyone is busy preparing for winter. Thornton has finished with his Indian-summer, nocturnal romps, and is visibly bulking up with body fat and thicker fur. He is also, these days, favoring his cozy, heated basket instead of the barren ledge next to the window. The birds that need to have escaped for sunnier climes, and the winter snow birds have announced their arrival by banging into the large windows of the sun room.



Reflections
by the Pond

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Our gardens have been cleared. The potatoes, pumpkins, squash, onions and herbs are now drying in the garage, and the canning shelves strain under the weight of new applesauce, jellies and jams, pumpkin, pickles, pears, tomatoes and salsa.

Mice are trying their best to take up winter residence in the lower reaches of the house, but our library cat, Jireh, has something to say about that. Meanwhile, outside, the squirrels are busily stuffing their lofty, tree-top nests with wads of dried leaves, while the chipmunks and possums stay closer to terra firma doing the same.

Everyone is getting ready for the snow.



While it is true that winter remains a beautiful, glorious season for this writer, it is also, admittedly, a time when death is closer. Even before the first snow, the freezing temperatures bite away the life from many plants, withering their green leaves overnight. Small animals that have failed to plan ahead may starve to death when a foot of snow covers the ground. Squirrels lay in stores of food, hidden all over the property, and build up their nests with dried leaves to insulate them from the cold. The deer must redouble their efforts to obtain meager sustenance in a world draped in snow and ice.

"God thunders with His voice wondrously,
Doing great things which we cannot comprehend.

For to the snow He says, 'Fall on the earth,'

And to the downpour and the rain, 'Be strong.'

He seals the hand of every man,
That all men may know His work.
Then the beast goes into its lair
And remains in its den.

Out of the south comes the storm,
And out of the north the cold.
From the breath of God ice is made,
And the expanse of the waters is frozen."

Job 37:5-10

It doesn't take much preparation for the pleasant things God brings our way. In fact, we can rise to greet the morning of a warm, sunlit day to bask in the mercies of our God without any advance planning whatsoever. No coats or boots are required, no woolen mittens or ear muffs.

But God's mercies include, as well, the mornings shuttered to an icy blast. He also brings the cold and the winter storms and the bitter ice that glazes creation. He is the one who sends temperatures that lock the soil into a frozen clod, that kill the tender vegetation, and that threaten the breath of the small animal.

"Shall we indeed accept good from God
and not accept adversity?"

Job 2:10b

It is certainly easier living with the gentle warmth of a clear April day than the icy blast of a January storm. And it is easier living with God's gentle blessings than His inconvenient trials. But both come from Him, and both are for our benefit.

"Whether for correction, or for His world,
Or for lovingkindness, He causes it to happen."

Job 37:13



God is as much the author of the hard times of our earthly sojourn as He is the easy times. In fact His fingerprints are more often discovered upon those things that cause discomfort, for He is an attentive, loving Father who puts us—just as He did His own Son—through the trials that will bring us, inevitably, into closer fellowship with Him.

He loves us too much to bring us only warm, sunny days.

So, are you ready for winter?