



O Lord, I love the habitation  
of Your house  
And the place where  
Your glory dwells.

*Psalms 26:8*

# THE GLORIES OF HIS PRESENCE

*Reflections  
by the Pond*

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AROUND THESE PARTS WE ARE NECK-DEEP INTO the very thing for which I pined while trapped on the west coast for twenty years: season change. I mean the real thing. I mean not just switching from a T-shirt to a light jacket because the evenings are getting cooler, but switching from a T-shirt to heavy insulated coat with matching boots and muffler. Now, *that's* season change.

The autumn is a time of many labors as preparations are made for the freezing temperatures of winter. When overnight frost is predicted before all the crops in the garden have been harvested, we must protect the remaining squash and peppers and tomatoes with blankets. Before the ground freezes we need to dig all the remaining potatoes and carrots. Then the entire garden is cleared, with the remaining vegetation removed either to the burn pile or compost heap. If the weather permits, the soil is then tilled in preparation for next spring. At the same time any outside potted plants that cannot survive in freezing temperatures are trimmed and brought inside for the winter.

Out in the unheated barn, remaining liquids—such as in the water wagon tank—must be drained to prevent damage from freezing to the pump or hose. Garden hoses are drained and brought inside for winter; unprotected water lines to exterior spigots are shut off. Any unfinished exterior house repairs or painting must be finished up before temps get too cold. Then, of course, the snow blade must be mounted onto the garden tractor for plowing snow off the drive, and the mower prepared for its winter rest.

But the most labor by far expended for the season change is for the laying in of firewood. In this household the fireplaces are not for ornamentation but for keeping warm—especially during challenging economic times when propane for the furnace is so expensive. So the cutting down of trees begins even before autumn—both those that are dead, for burning this winter, and those still green, for next. As temperatures cool and summer humidity abates, the log sections are split (by hand) and the wood stacked in the first floor workshop. Every effort is made to bring in sufficient wood for the entire season, since any wood left outside in the winter will collect ice crystals inside, and thus will not burn as well. So by the end of autumn the workshop is overwhelmed by neatly arranged but towering stacks of firewood.

## INCREDULITY

One cannot blame those in warmer climes who look upon such labors with stunned amazement. They shake their heads and chuckle under their breath, as one might question the sanity of someone who voluntarily walks five miles to work every day rather than catch a free ride on a bus.

But who can say that the one who voluntarily walks those five miles hasn't benefited from the effort?



To many outside the body of Christ, the “labors” of those within seem a ridiculous, even futile inconvenience. *“You mean you’d rather get*

*up early on a Sunday to attend church than sleep in? You'd rather be in Sunday School than out on the golf course? What, are you crazy? And why would I want to visit sick and dying people in the hospital? What a downer! And now you're pulling my leg: You're seriously telling me that you voluntarily give ten percent of what you make—and sometimes more—to the church? You are nuts, my friend!*

*"And while we're at it, what is this nonsense about actually reading the Bible? C'mon, that dusty old thing! Just a bunch of myths and fairy tales and dry poetry. What a waste of time."*

**Though a host encamp against me,  
My heart will not fear;  
Though war arise against me,  
In spite of this I shall be confident.  
One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek:  
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the Lord  
And to meditate in His temple.  
For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle;  
In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;  
He will lift me up on a rock.  
And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around  
me,  
And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;  
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.**

*Psalms 27:3-6*

We who chop the wood do so in the crisp, fresh air of autumn, enveloped in the homely fragrance of dried fallen leaves and the breathtaking Technicolor splendor of turning trees. We who rise before dawn to plow out the drive do so in the pristine stillness of a world

draped in the gossamer cloak of freshly fallen snow. And we who sweat through the labors of a garden enjoy at our dinner table the fresh, flavorful fruits of that labor.

And in this our spirits are revived.

We who attend to the things of heaven do so out of devotion to its Lord—because His love for us predates ours for Him. It is due Him, because at the cross we were purchased by the blood of His Son.

**And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation."**

*Revelation 5:9*

But we also attend to the things of God because of the glories of His presence. We who worship Him (at any time; only corporately on Sunday morning) do so for the sweet communion with Him. His Spirit rises within us and we rejoice in the breathtaking beauty found at His throne. We who attend to the sick and dying do so not just out of our love for them, but because we come away from their bed enriched, revived.

And we read and study the Bible because it is the holy word of God. Reading it is like sitting at His feet, like Martha's sister, absorbing His wisdom.



She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word.

But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up *to Him* and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but *only* one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:39-42

Reading His word is the same as linking directly to God's mind, our spirit to His.

A waste of time? No, it is the only dependable foundation for true life.

One thing I have asked from the Lord,  
that I shall seek:  
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the Lord  
And to meditate in His temple.

