

The Beauty Of Autumn

With the onslaught of Fall comes the recognition of rapid change in our landscape. The vivid and striking colors of the trees along with the sting of the morning cool, make this time of the year a favorite for many. Some will no doubt be planning the drive into the mountains on that weekend when the colors are richest, and the sun it's brightest. We know it is not far away.

Other preparation goes on in the fall of the year. From winterizing our vehicles to determining what plants to bring inside, this time of year signals the sure season of cold weather just around the corner.

Behind all the beauty of autumn is the realization that with the change of color of each leaf in all its splendor and brilliance is the fact that it is dying. In any other part of nature, to find such beauty at such a time is difficult to find. Generally death experienced in the animal kingdom is not something that captures the kind of beauty seen in the forests of our beautiful state. Even in the day of High Definition television showing spectacular filming of animal life in the jungles of Africa, scenes of death and mayhem are not something that can be called beautiful unless you have a macabre perspective.

The same could be said about humans. There is much about the human experience that is beautiful. However, the death process is not something that generally attracts people as a thing of beauty, except in one powerful and clearly defined way.

It is not the death of a person that attracts the mind's eye to express it as beautiful, it is how someone dies. Not the how, as it has to do with what causes death, but the disposition one reveals as they die. It is not necessarily found in the positive mental attitude found in many as they come to terms with their death, though a good attitude is a pleasing thing to see. The beauty of death is only seen when the one dying has his house in order. No, not preparation in the sense of making sure his estate is in order, though those things are important.

True beauty is found in the death of a saint. The Psalmist said, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints," Psalm 116:15. Presupposed in this passage is the fact that someone has obeyed the gospel of Christ. Repentance, confession and baptism on the basis of faith in Christ makes one a Christian. However sainthood goes beyond the basics of entrance into the

kingdom. It is a life that not only conforms to the commands of the Lord, but also to the daily display of His image. Graceful departure from this life is seen when the beauty of Christ is expressed in the person who continues to live each day full of faith in the Lord. How precious it is to attend a funeral of a Christian who captured in life the beauty and joy of the place they had not yet seen, but lived their lives in such a way as to give people who looked on a little picture of what heaven would be like.

It might be argued that there is no true and long lasting beauty to be found except in the death of a saint. Aesthetic beauty found in the change of colors in foliage may give temporary pleasure to the indulging spirit, but can it begin to compare to the long-living example of the faithful Christian? After the colorful leaves have finished giving off their beauty, they fall from the tree simply to return to the dust from whence they came. The human body follows a similar pattern. Yet, the Christian body continues to live on in the hearts and minds of those who will ultimately follow their passage into glory. Pondering over their lives long after they are gone continues to challenge the Christian to live faithfully in view of going to be where they are someday. John wrote, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" Revelation 14:13.

How beautiful indeed is the death of a saint!

—Scott