

In Spring



As a young man, I never understood an activity that the "older" folk seemed to take some pleasure in doing. But my outlook has changed quite a bit in the last few years. Now, each time I visit a cemetery I am confronted with reminders of powerful truths that need frequent reinforcement.

Wander among graves and you'll learn some things. For one, death is no respecter of persons; he visits infants and aged alike. Our pilgrimage here is brief, and the grave awaits us. We must prepare for that day.

But there's something more certain than death: the resurrection of the dead. "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." (1 Cor 15:51). As friends and family precede us into death, the hope of the resurrection becomes even more precious and compelling.

Epithets from tombstones often have a ring of that hope. Here are two I have recently seen: "Weep not father and mother for me, for I am waiting in glory for thee."— A 21-year-old wife. "Sleep on dear child and take thy rest, in Jesus' arms forever blest."— A 14-year-old girl. Though death may bring sorrow, Christians can see beyond the horizon of physical life into Paradise (Lk 23:43), where the dead in Christ await.

Along with ever-faithful friends Dean and Mamie Baney and Jan Simmons, we recently made another trek to the cemetery where our daughter Jenny is buried. Two things are especially memorable.

For one, we reenacted what has become a meaningful tradition. Before leaving, we stand near Jenny's grave to hold hands and pray. Then Mr. Baney quotes that thrilling passage (1 Thes 4:13-18) about Christ's return.

We're always aware that the voice of the archangel and the trump of God could shatter our prayers — as the Lord Himself descends from heaven with a shout. What a thrill it will be to see both living and dead caught up together to meet the Lord in the air!

Nature provides a graphic foreshadowing of the resurrection as winter's decay invariably yields to spring's new life. This Spring Jan lovingly planted a blooming rose on Jenny's grave, carefully watering it with the plant food that husband Keith had prepared.

From spring to spring, that blooming rose should continue to remind us that death is not the end. New life is inevitable. For Jenny ... and for all who are in Christ.

In Spring

*In spring, when sunlight gently falls
In golden heaps of dappled rays,
There open windows of recall
To other springs in other days.*

*This spring, on such a wistful day
'Twas out of love two freely gave
A gift of more than words could say:
A blooming rose to grace a grave.*

*Each spring, that blooming rose's pow'r
For touching hearts will e'er suffice
To call to mind another flow'r,
Our rose who blooms in Paradise.*

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