

Flower Festival



Or a Service at an open Garden

Opening Words

Let us acknowledge the Lord;
let us press on to acknowledge him.
As surely as the sun rises,
he will appear;
he will come to us like the winter rains
like the spring rains that water the earth.

Hosea 6: 3 NIV

or

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden
and there he placed the human being (or earthling*) he had formed.
And the Lord God placed the human being (or earthling*) in the garden
to tend it and to care for it.

** 'earthling' is a direct translation of the Hebrew word 'Adam'*

Responses

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow

They toil not neither do they spin

Yet even Solomon in all his glory

Was not arrayed like one of these.

Matt. 6: 28 & 29 NRSV

Responses and Prayer

God has made many different types of plants for our gardens,

God has made many different types of people for his world.

Some plants need to be in the sun, some like to be in the shade,

Some of us need to be at the centre, some of us are retiring.

Some plants hug the ground and others reach for the sky,

Some of us are content with a lowly role, others have great ambitions.

Some plants grow in rich soil, producing flowers, seeds and fruits in abundance,

Some of us are full-nourished, producing marvellous creations which enrich the lives of all.

Some plants do well in poor soil but all their strength is needed to survive,

Some of us are so straitened in our lives that survival is our only achievement.

O Lord, we need to accept that you've made us all so different,
with our own temperaments and talents.

Like plants, we cannot change our nature

but you rejoice in each one of us being special.

Help us to come to terms with who we are
and what we are called upon to do;
wherever our lives are planted,
grant that we may praise and glorify your name.
Amen.

Poems

You love the Roses

You love the roses - so do I. I wish
The sky would rain down roses, as they rain
From off the shaken bush. Why will it not?
Then all the valley would be pink and white
And soft to tread on. They would fall as light
As feathers, smelling sweet: and it would be
Like sleeping and yet waking, all at once.

George Eliot (1819 - 1880)

The Glory of the Garden

Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing "Oh, how beautiful" and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working lives
At grubbing weeds from gravel-paths with broken dinner knives.

There's not a pair of legs so thin, there's not a head so thick,
There's not a hand so weak and white, nor yet a heart so sick,
But it can find some needful job that's crying to be done,
For the Glory of the Garden glorifieth every one.

Then seek your job with thankfulness and work till further orders,
If it's only netting strawberries or killing slugs on borders;
And when your back stops aching and your hands begin to harden,
You will find yourself a partner in the Glory of the Garden.

Oh, Adam was a gardener, and the God who made him sees
That half a proper gardener's work is done upon his knees,
So when your work is finished, you can wash your hands and pray
For the Glory of the Garden, that it may not pass away!
And the Glory of the Garden, it shall never pass away!

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

Readings

Jesus set before me the book of nature.
I understood how all the flowers he created are beautiful,
how the splendour of the rose and the whiteness of the lily
do not take away the perfume of the violet
or the delightful simplicity of the daisy.
I understood that if all flowers wanted to be roses,
nature would lose her springtime beauty,
and the fields would no longer be decked out with little wild flowers.
It seems to me that if a little flower could speak,

it would tell simply what God has done for it
without trying to hide its blessings or say,
under the pretext of a false humility,
that it is not beautiful or without perfume,
that the sun has taken away its splendour
and the storm has broken its stem when it knows that all this untrue.
St. Therese of Lisieux (1873 - 1897)

Gardening in the Soul

Gardeners are a strange bunch, home-loving, creative, caring and fulfilled. I've rarely met a miserable one. They draw great comfort from the thought that they've improved their plot - made it look better than before - given their time to a worthwhile project. They know that they're only guardians, that as soon as they move house or come to the end of their lives, the garden will change - back to decay, or if they're very lucky, into another gardener's hands.

The thought that the process of gardening is a transient affair opens up new possibilities. Things don't always stay the same and the brave person faces up to the reality that life doesn't run through a safe cycle, as predictable as the programme of an automatic washing machine. Life moves on, but not always as we expect. The gardener is more prepared than most, having given way to the idea long ago that life is rarely perfect and if it is, it's a fleeting state, to be thoroughly enjoyed.

Gardening isn't a one way traffic - the garden gives so much back. Those magical moments, enjoyed during the early morning stroll and the 'put to bed' walk, catch dawn and dusk. They frame the day at either end, whether it's been a good one or a bad one. I might not be able to pick up the garden that I visit and take it home with me but it's deep in my soul. In that sense I make it my own.

Val Bourne in 'A Country Way' Summer 2000

Prayer

We thank you, heavenly Father, for this beautiful garden
and for all the loving work which has made it so.

We praise you for all the life in this garden,
singing birds and wild creatures,
busy insects, bees gathering nectar,
the myriad organisms in the soil.

May we and all your creatures
find peace and refreshment in this place.

And may we all one day come to the Heavenly Garden*,
where we shall be at home with you,

We ask this in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Who redeemed the whole creation.

Amen.

** Jesus uses the word Paradise in St Luke's Gospel (23:43). It is a Persian word, meaning a pleasure garden.*

Blessing

May the fragrance of the flowers
and of the blossom on the trees
fill your hearts with the sweetness of God's love.

May the rays of the shining sun
make you aware of the healing

given through our Lord Jesus Christ.
May the wind as it blows
remind you of the power of the Holy Spirit
in our hearts and lives:
And may the blessing of the three-in-one God,
the God who created and upholds us,
keep you and all those whom you love,
now and for evermore.

Amen.

or

Over the earth is a mat of green
Over the green is dew:
Over the dew are the arching trees,
Over the trees is blue.
Across the blue are the scudding clouds,
Over the clouds the sun,
Over it all is the love of God
Blessing us everyone...
**and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us now and evermore.
Amen.**

Hymn

Spring has now unwrapped the flowers

Spring has now unwrapped the flowers,
Day is fast reviving,
Life in all her growing powers
Towards the light is striving;

Gone the iron touch of cold,
Winter time and frost time,
Seedlings, working through mould,
Now make up for lost time.

Herb and plant that, winter long,
Slumbered at their leisure.
Now bestirring, green and strong,
Find in growth their pleasure:

All the world with beauty fills,
Gold the green enhancing;
Flowers make glee among the hills,
And set the meadows dancing.

Through each wonder of fair days
God himself expresses;

Beauty follows all his ways,
As the world he blesses:

So, as he renews the earth,
Artist without rival,
In his grace of glad new birth
We must seek revival.

Praise the Maker, all ye saints,
Heralds of perfection;
He who skies and meadows paints
Fashioned all your virtue:

Praise him seers, heroes, kings,
He with glory girds you.
Brothers, praise him for he brings
All to resurrection!
Piae Cantiones 1582; Tune: Good King Wenceslas

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