

THE FLOWER MAY FADE, BUT ITS MEANING ENDURES

By Rev. Donald L. Rose

A flower can be a symbol of what is temporary. Some things may flourish for a short time, and then they are gone. The Epistle of James reminds us about the seemingly powerful and successful person. "As a flower of the field he will pass away." James was aware of the saying of Job: "He comes forth like a flower and fades away."

When we contemplate what is merely temporary, it helps us appreciate what is not temporary. "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40). Jesus said, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life" (John 6).

Jesus observed that God clothes the flower of the field "which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven." And the point is that God will much more care for human beings (Matthew 6:30). We are created to live forever.

The flower can also symbolize the hope of rising into new life. That is why Jesus was buried in a garden (John 19:41).

We choose to use flowers on meaningful occasions. We think of bouquets at weddings, and we lay flowers on the graves of those we love. Will there be flowers in the life to come? We instinctively know the answer, and the Scriptures keep us mindful of "the garden of God." It is a phrase that helps us think of heaven.

Particularly for people who have mourned the loss of children, let me share insights of one who claimed that he saw into heaven. Emanuel Swedenborg wrote a chapter called "Little Children In Heaven."

When he saw children, he saw them cared for tenderly, and he saw them with flowers. He wrote, "I have been permitted to see children most charmingly attired, having garlands of flowers resplendent with most beautiful and heavenly colors twined about their breasts and around their tender arms."

Once he said he saw children being conducted into a garden that had a flowering arbor as an entrance. "And when the children entered, dressed as they were, the flowers over the entrance shone forth most joyously." It was as if the flowers welcomed them.

And what of adults? One man was observed who during his worldly life had enjoyed the care and study of flowers. He was astonished at what he saw. "He was allowed to wander over the field, and not only to see the plants in detail, but also to gather them and bring them close to his eye and examine them."

He said that it was unbelievable and that he saw flowers such as have never been seen upon earth.

Flowers are the chosen garments that beautify the earth. They are there for us to behold, to contemplate and to ponder. Jesus said, “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. And yet, I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

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