

# Summertime 2017

06/25/17

Proverbs 30:25 ESV

*The ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer.*

So happy summer! June 20 at 9:54 PM was the summer solstice, the longest day of the entire year. During the summer, it is the only time I get up and its light, and when I go to bed it's still light. It is in summer when the sun reaches its most northern point in the sky at noon.

Also, from this point until December 21<sup>st</sup>, the days are again growing progressively shorter. Strange, summer just got here and already it is slowly fading from us.

Yet while it is here, summer is a magical time. Yes, it is hot at times. As Russell Baker wrote: Ah, summer, what power you have to make us suffer and like it.

But it is heat that warms the soil and causes the fruits and vegetables to grow. You can't have one and not the other. So as summer advances, we benefit from the abundance that has been slowly building within the vegetation.

In Biblical times harvest season for fruits ran from June to September. Harvest time is figuratively when we capture all the plenty that God has intended for us, or as the Bible says, this is

when we gather the ‘summer fruits’, which in ancient Israel were primarily grapes, figs, and pomegranates.

Our summer fruits come in various forms. When I was a child I loved the freedom of summer: No school; beautiful weather; time to play, ride a bike, and exercise. Plenty of time to read, get together with friends, go on family vacations. Yes, summer has always been a special time. Even today, when I don’t have summers off, I still enjoy the weather, the sun, the warmth, and the light. I enjoy having Mary home and seeing her tend the garden.

There is something special about each season, and I find I get into specific cycles depending upon the season -- especially when it comes to foods. When the watermelons show up in the grocery stores, I know summer is approaching.

Luke 21:29-30 says: "Notice the fig tree, or any other tree. When the leaves come out, you know without being told that summer is near.

We may not have figs in this area, but the principle is the same. Watermelon is part of our summer fruits.

I also tend to want to stay up a little later than usual, even though I still have to get up and go to work. I want to get outside more and get away from the house more during the summer.

Summer is always forward-looking – what do you want to do today? Henry David Thoreau said: “One must maintain a little bit of summer, even in the middle of winter.”

Have you noticed that there are cycles that we enter into as the seasons progress. Our clothing changes, our diets change, our habits and behaviors sometimes change, and occasionally even our moods change. Our gas bill changes as I turn off the heater.

Summer time is often the time when things get done. There is finally enough daylight and time to take care of things ... the fence, the roof, the garage, the yard; painting, repairing, and the list goes on.

Each season has its characteristics, lessons, and responsibilities. The Bible warns us against straying too far away from the responsibilities demanded by summer. What is the expression – make hay while the sun shines? Proverbs says that even the ants gather food during summer to prepare for the next season of lack.

Now this can mean various things, but are we paying attention? Are we using this opportunity right now – today -- to prepare for the slim times? I’m not just speaking of gathering food or money, but what about friends, opportunities, chances to ‘pay it forward’?

Jim Rohn made this observation: Some people plant in the spring and leave in the summer. If you're signed up for a season, see it through. You don't have to stay forever, but at least stay until you see it through.

Are we taking care of business? Are we taking the time to be still and pay daily visits to God?

In the summer, so many wonderful things can pull us away from the things that are really important to our personal and spiritual growth. We may be eating well and getting out of doors and exercising, but what of our spiritual life?

Can't we do both – have fun and be spiritual? I don't believe those things are mutually exclusive. Keeping a thought on God as we enjoy our families is doable. Offering up a frequent "Thank You, God", helps keep our lives orderly.

There is order in the seasons, each season necessary for the continuance of life. Life has perfectly adapted to the turning seasons. As much as some of us would like it, try leaving out winter one year. Life on earth would stagger in confusion.

John Steinbeck wrote: "What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness."

We need the winter; we need the dormancy. We need the contrast. We lived in southern California for a few years, where the contrast in seasons is minimal. But the contrasts are still there. Yes, they may call there four seasons, spring, early summer, summer, and late summer ... but there are variances that drive nature.

There is order in the seasons. Are we in tune with the Divine Orderer? Are we in alignment with the seasons in our own life?

Are we accepting the responsibilities of summer while at the same time feeling the joy it brings? Are we making hay while the sun shines, but also enjoying the sun?

Yes, there is order in the seasons; and that order creates balance. We can get to the point where every spare moment is spent in working, and we start to feel tipsy and un-centered. Finding the balance between work and relaxation is important.

John Lubbock wrote: Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time.

We are nurtured by the light that comes from the sun as are the plants that grow in our gardens and the crops that grow in the farmer's field. We are also nurtured by the light of God, the divine light that is always within our hearts if we open to its radiance. For this we can be deeply grateful. And we can always keep this Light of God vibrant and focused despite the season we traverse. Albert Camus wrote: In the depth of winter I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer.

Happy summer everyone! May yours be filled with the summer fruits of light, patience, prosperity, wisdom, health, order, balance, joy, peace, love ... and an occasional thunderstorm to keep things interesting.

Let us pray....