







DOGWOOD DEVOTIONAL

Dogwood Homecoming Weekend marks a beautiful time on King's campus as the trees are blossoming, the flowers blooming, and the signature Dogwood wakes up from winter and takes its place around the Oval. The Dogwood is a reminder that spring has sprung, a new season is here, and the beauty of the resurrection is right around the corner. In Isaiah 43:19 the author exclaims "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it...?" and in 2 Corinthians 5:17 it is written "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." What a wonderful time to celebrate that a new season is here and God is at work all around us.

This is a five day devotional that King alumni and previous faculty have written. These words have been meditated over, prayed through, and thoughtfully considered. Our prayer is that we as a King community would read this devotional together during the week of Dogwood even though we are far apart in distance and it would bring us together in heart.

We hope that this devotional brings you peace, joy, and comfort in this season and puts a smile on your face as these authors reflect about their time at King and ponder over the scriptures. If you enjoy what you read, have revelation for yourself, grow closer in your relationship with Jesus Christ, or have any encouragement for the King community or any of the authors please let Alumni and Community Engagement Director, Jenna Christie, know at jmchristie@king.edu.

Happy Spring!



Nowhere is the coming of spring so fresh, with new beginnings, as on the campus of King. We have never grown tired of seeing the dogwood blossoms that form the shape of a cross; the center of the flower resembles a "crown of thorns," and the tips of the petals seem to have nail dents. This year's Dogwood Festival comes shortly after Easter. We are filled with hope that just as the winter cold fades so also the severe covid pandemic will come to an end. It is the time of new beginnings.

700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah the prophet spoke about new beginnings in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We read about it in what is called the "Suffering Servant Song" (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). It is called a song, and not just a poem, because it brings good news! God has freed those who suffered the long exile, and they will be returning home! We also are confronted with what someone has called the sheer miracle right at the center of life! We find ourselves forgiven!

What happened on the cross? Isaiah 53:5 tells us the 4 great things that bring the spring of new beginnings into our lives.

He was wounded for our transgressions. These are the sins we commit each day. We are forgiven.

He was crushed for our iniquities. This is the heart of sin: pride, arrogance, rebellion that are found in the heart of every human. Jesus took upon Himself our proud, rebellious spirits.

He was chastised for our peace. We are reconciled with God. We now have shalom, inner wholeness and a deep inner peace that the world cannot understand.

With His stripes, we are healed. We can pray for and receive spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical healing because of what happened on the cross and resurrection.

This freedom raises us up to be more than we could imagine; we no longer have to live in unrelenting sorrow or anger, we have a new freedom that expands our vision and enlarges our heart. We are free to serve a deeply wounded world in love. May this Dogwood Festival be a new beginning for each of us.

HELP FROM THE HILLS

Katie Wande Brake, Faculty Emerita of English and Technical Communication 1980-2017

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD who made heaven and earth...

The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. (ESV)

How many sunsets have you seen from the top of the hill between Maclellan and Bristol Halls? It's almost impossible not to pause on that spot and be awed by the beauty of Appalachia, hills upon hills into the distance bathed in the magic glow of a waning day.

I spent my career working on Appalachian campuses—Berry Academy and King College/University. At Berry I taught middle school language arts. Each morning the Middle Schoolers assembled and began the day reciting both the Pledge of Allegiance and the school psalm, #121. Reciting a psalm every day for 5 years made those words as natural as breathing. It's those words that often came back to me standing on King's campus hill looking west at the end of many work days.

Wise campus leaders realized the significance of their mountain locations in the opening lines of these two schools' alma maters.

Far up **in the hills of Georgia** stands old Berry tried and true.... and **In the hills of Appalachia**, pointing to the sky, Stands beloved our alma mater, holding ideals high....

Training involves repetition. Reciting Psalm 121 and/or singing an alma mater can have a lasting effect on our thinking and disposition toward life's triumphs and challenges. Words are important. Promises we cling to in rough times can rise unbidden to consciousness from the well of texts we memorized years before. "O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come. Be thou our guard while life shall last, and our eternal home," wrote Isaac Watts, echoing Psalm 121.

Add to the importance of words the power of images—like the vista from the hilltop at King—to trigger emotions, and you have a habit of mind and heart that can sustain you. Pause for a moment and claim the promise of this psalm: *The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.*

DEEP DOWN THINGS

Rev. Dr. Ralph William Hawkins, Class of 1996

Each year when the days grow longer and the pall of winter begins to recede, I find myself returning again to lines from the sometimes-mystifying British poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. After a stanza mourning the ways humanity "sears and smears" God's grandeur in creation, the poet announces:

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;

And though the last lights off the black West went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

I suppose nostalgia for the heady days of classroom tutelage is an inevitable and familiar byproduct of a liberal arts education. Guilty am I, for I continue to give thanks for wise King College professors who, in addition to conveying their subject matter, also taught me to pay attention in life to "the dearest freshness deep down things."

In the current frenzy for credentialing and content acquisition, growing in "wisdom" almost seems a quaint – lost? – ideal. Yet deep in my spirit is a conviction – best celebrated in spring, perhaps, as the creation shows new signs of life – that there is always more knowledge to be known, and there is always wisdom to be garnered for learning how to know it, and why. What's more, I was taught by example that the "Holy Ghost" broods over this entire "deep down" engagement with the goodness and glory of God. It seems a minority report in these days of political rancor and winner-take-all culture wars, yet such is the residue in my life from my undergraduate years around the Oval.

Give thanks for spring. Give thanks for the gift of each new morning. Give thanks for a creation that knows of God and therefore is itself worth knowing. Give thanks for learning and wisdom and those who preside over the nuptials of those two partners. And let us give thanks for God, and God's grandeur: God who has given us one who vacated our tomb and who leads us onward, upward, with such "bright wings."

SPRINGTIME AT KING Sally Waadard, Class of 1963

My freshman year at King was amazing in a number of ways, one of them surprisingly having to do with weather. First of all, having grown up in South Carolina, I couldn't have imagined seventeen inches of snow, but there it was covering the campus shortly after we returned from Christmas vacation. It was beautiful; it was enjoyable; it was cold.

While I enjoyed the snow as long as it lasted, the winter was obviously much different from anything that I have ever experienced, and like everyone else I looked forward to spring. Of course, we all knew that greatest attraction in spring would be the dogwoods. However, something else bloomed before the dogwoods and that held a fascination for me. It was the forsythia.

Forsythia bushes lined the old drive up to the campus, and I would often walk on the drive, watching first the buds, and then the gradual bursting out of the most beautiful golden blossoms I thought that I had even seen. I fell in love with forsythia, and for ever after they would be the first sign of spring for me.

Somewhat later I was introduced to Archibald McLeish's play *JB*, a contemporary retelling of the book of Job. In this version of the story not only has JB, a modern Job, lost all that personally mattered to him, but disaster akin to a holocaust had devastated the land. Near the end of the play JB's wife comes in with something in her arms. She is holding branches with blooms on them. Everything had not died; a plant had not only survived, it had also produced beautiful flowers. It was a sign of hope.

When I read that play, all I could see in that scene were the forsythia bushes along the King drive. What in the play was a sign of hope that there was still life after seeming death and destruction became more than that for me. The blossoming of forsythia bushes was the reassurance that not only had spring come once more, but also that God could bring restoration, renewal, even Resurrection in the most dismal of times and circumstances.

Lamentations 3:22-24

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; God's mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore, I will hope in him."

PRAYER: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, we offer you praise that you do not desert us in times of trouble. We thank you for the tangible signs of hope that you give us in the beauty of your creation. In your holy and blessed Name we pray. Amen.

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:8-17

Tam Sullivan, Class of 1970

The Song of Solomon has long captivated students of Scripture who have debated whether the Biblical book speaks of marital intimacy or pictures instead the deeply affecting spiritual union between Christ Jesus and His redeemed bride, the church. I personally believe that both positions have valid claims of truth. Read these chapters and look for elements of both the natural and the supernatural. Prepare to be changed and edified.

These chapters relate a lively and passionate relationship of love that is coming to life, and in very vivid metaphors from the created world picture for us the joys and heartaches of committed love. As such it reflects both human marriage relationships and the realities experienced in the spiritual realm by believers in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 2 and verses 8-17 describe a brief moment in this emerging story. The 'beloved' is described as a 'gazelle' or young stag, and he is literally leaping and bounding over hills and mountains to reach the object of his affections. The mountains perhaps picture possible obstacles and difficulties that must be resolved for the lovers to be together. The woman then quotes her lover in verses 10-17. The language is vivid and poetic in character, but notice that this relationships is set in real space and time, right in the midst of the created order as described in the Bible. Thus the relevance of the descriptions from the natural world is better understood. New life is not something merely theoretical or biological. It comes from the living God, who alone is the giver of life.

The 'winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth'. Even as the emerging spring brings the promise of new life, there is evidence of God's presence all around. The 'time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in the land' (2:11-12). In the natural world turtledoves are known to form strong and lasting bonds, and as such have become in literature pictures of devoted love. Additionally the fig trees have put forth their new green figs, and the grape vines are newly awakened, and the vines are flourishing with tender fruit (2:13). The fragrance of new life is unmistakable!

After a long winter spring returns, and the days begin to again increase in length. There is light, and for longer periods than experienced in the winter months. In the New Testament it is not insignificant that new life in Christ is described as coming out of the darkness of sin and unbelief and into the light of saving grace. The Lord Jesus is 'the light of the world' (John 8:12), and all who follow Him 'shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life'. We need this light in every season of life! Are you languishing in personal and spiritual darkness, or have you availed yourself of the hope and promise of the Gospel?

The scientific community has determined that for some the winter months are a time of increasing sadness and depression. Everything seems darker and more depressing. 'Seasonal affective disorder' describes the affliction, and one of the remedies is to spend more time in the light. Spring holds forth the renewal of life. To be sure depression can be complicated, and the coming of spring does not eliminate all our afflictions. But the coming of spring points us to the Creator who is able to bless, renew and strengthen His children. The death of winter is followed by the new life and renewal of spring. The difficulties of 2020 remind us that what we most need goes beyond the natural world and the schemes of mankind to 'fix' what is broken. It requires the light of saving grace which the Lord has given to us in the person and work of Jesus. Don't stay in the dark. Come to the light!

