

The Four Seasons of Life

by Keith Malcomson

This sermon delves into the spiritual significance of the four seasons of life as outlined in Ecclesiastes chapter 3, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and embracing the different seasons ordained by God. It highlights the concept of springtime as a period of new beginnings, growth, and restoration, where pruning is necessary for further fruitfulness in one's life.

Scripture: John 15:2, Ecclesiastes 3:1, Psalms 74:17, Proverbs 26:1

Topics: "Seasons of Life", "Embracing Change"

Description

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Transcript

Please turn with me in your Bibles, I want to take you to the seventh and final message of our series, which we called The Four Seasons of Life, and we've mostly been in Ezekiel chapter 1, but I want you to go here this morning to Ecclesiastes chapter 3, Ecclesiastes chapter 3, and we're going to read our text just fine, and then Proverbs, and the next book is Ecclesiastes, written by King Solomon, and we're going to turn to it, but our entire series has been The Four Seasons of Life, that's the series title. Now I want to give a message as we close on this seventh and last message, and I'm calling it by the same title, The Four Seasons of Life. As we looked at the previous six messages, we stayed in Ezekiel 1 with the four cherubim, and we looked at all the attributes of them as symbols, or as a real lesson to us about the redeemed believer, what we're to be.

But I want to go a stage further here this morning, reading from Ecclesiastes chapter 3 verse 1, and our message of four seasons of life. To everything there is a season and a time, to every purpose under the heaven, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build up, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to cast away stones and a time to gather together stones, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to get and a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to cast away, a time to rend and a time to sew, a time to keep silence and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time of war and a time of peace. And then lastly, verse 11, he

that is God has made everything beautiful in his time.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for the word of God. We thank you for your presence, your hand upon us, how you walk with us and your fellowship with us.

You're the divine gardener, you're the planter, you're the farmer, you're the good shepherd, you're all things unto us. And I pray this morning in this message, will you be all things unto us. Will you make us to discern the season and the hour and the time that we're living in both individually as an entire church as well.

Lord God, open our eyes, teach us, instruct us, make us conscious and aware of the season that we're passing through. Lord God, we thank you that our lives are not haphazard, they're not accidental. Lord God, even the wintertime is ordained of you like the summertime.

Oh God, things are not out of your hand. When we cry, it's not out of your control. Lord God, any more than when we laugh.

Lord God, when it's darkness all around us, it's no less your presence there than when it is light and bright. And we thank you for all these things that you weave them together. The good things with the bad things, the winter with the summer.

Lord God, to bring forth fruitfulness and harvest and life and abundance and blessing out of our lives. Lord God, we can as much serve you in autumn as we can winter and springtime and summer. And Lord God, I pray that you give us such an overwhelming sense that no matter what season of life, whether it's childhood or early age or adulthood or elderly age, whatever the season of our life, that we would revel in it.

Lord God, that we would not merely look to another season with sadness. But oh God, we would enter in fully to your plan today, your plan and your purpose for us. And Lord God, we ask above all else, be glorified in us and through us by bearing much fruit in Jesus name.

Amen. And so our message is the four seasons of life. And we're going to look at these four seasons.

We're going to look at summer and autumn. We're going to look at winter and springtime. Because these four seasons have a spiritual application to your life.

What they are in nature. They are used in the Bible to speak to us about our walk with God and our spiritual life. We have so far spent six messages in Ezekiel chapter 1. Let me just give you a summary of Ezekiel as we go into this finishing different message.

Because we're not going to deal much at all with Ezekiel 1 or with Ezekiel. But I want to introduce it with a few words of Ezekiel to give you a context. Ezekiel the prophet was carried into captivity in Babylon from the city of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was his home. Israel was his people. And yet he was a godly man.

In the future, although not in Jerusalem, he wasn't a prophet in Jerusalem. He was of the Levitical line. He would have been a priest if he would have stayed in Jerusalem.

If there wouldn't have been an invasion, a captivity. If Nebuchadnezzar's army had not carried away Israel. Do you know he would have grown up in Jerusalem.

Part of the priesthood. Ministering in the temple. But he gets carried away.

There is a season in his life. Where although he's righteous and he's godly. And he's upright and he walks with God.

And he loves the word of God. Yet he gets carried off into captivity. He'll never serve in the temple.

You began that at the age of 30. He won't spend his days in Jerusalem. In fact his ears hear that the temple gets burnt down.

And utterly destroyed and annihilated. There is no more temple. There is no more priesthood.

There's no more ministry. Jerusalem is devastated. And this young man carried away into captivity.

Begins to hear report after report after report. How discouraging to hear of Zion. The Jerusalem of God.

That was the glory of all the earth. That Jerusalem the apple of God's eye was desolate. And here you have this young man carried into captivity.

And in captivity God comes to him. And calls him or makes him a prophet. So he's not going to serve as a priest in Jerusalem.

He's going to serve as a prophet in the land of captivity. What a prophet that we have dealt with in these messages. For six messages we've mainly dealt with Ezekiel chapter 1. And what a chapter.

What a chapter Ezekiel 1 was. That vision that as soon as he's called to be a prophet in the land of captivity. He is immediately caught up in this amazing remarkable vision.

God is going to speak to him amazingly all through this book. Chapter after chapter. Vision after vision.

Prophecy after prophecy. But it all begins in Ezekiel 1. When God gives him a vision of the four cherubim that come out of the fire. And we have dealt with what they represent on the message.

But look at this Ezekiel in his remarkable prophecy and letter. A bit later in his prophecy in Ezekiel 36-39. It predicts a war.

And remember this 2,600 years ago. That he prophesies or writes this prophecy. 2,600 years ago.

600 years before Christ. He is giving this. What does he deal with in Ezekiel 36-39? About a time when Israel the Jews would be scattered into all nations of the earth.

It wasn't in his day. They were in Babylon in captivity. Not in all the nations of the world.

And yet this man looks down through the corridors of time. So he's got eagle's eyes. He looks down.

He can see afar off. He can see 2,600 years into the future. And he begins to predict that Israel is going to get gathered from all nations of the earth.

Especially from the north or from Russia. And they're going to be regathered to their little nation. And God is going to begin step by step restoring them.

Rebuilding them. And finally spiritually reviving them. Do you know he talks about a war that has never yet happened.

This Ezekiel the prophet he's in Babylon. He'll never serve in that temple. He'll never see Jerusalem again.

And yet he can look afar off. And he can see an invasion of Israel. Where Russia, Turkey and Iran and other nations join together to invade Israel.

And they fall as an entire army. Five out of six soldiers on the mountains of Israel. Which is that area contested over today and called Palestine.

That they say belongs to the Palestinians. You know what? An entire army is going to get annihilated on those very mountains. This is 2,600 years ago.

Remember what we dealt with just two weeks ago. About the eagle face of the cherubim. Remember how I said John was like that.

He was on Patmos. Yet he ascended on high. This old man of God.

In prison. A captive of the emperor. Persecuted.

His life threatened. And yet on the island of Patmos. He took wings and he ascended into the heavenlies.

And he saw things afar off. That are yet to come to pass in our day and generation. So I think Ezekiel is very like Jeremiah.

I believe Ezekiel had eagle's eyes. I believe he had the ability to mount up with wings of an eagle. And see like an eagle.

Like we dealt with last time. And Ezekiel states 72 times in his book. This statement.

When he's given his prophecies. And they shall know that I am the Lord. Why did God give him all these prophecies? That they may know that I am the Lord.

As we go into this last message. Why am I saying all that? Because I want you to understand. Ezekiel was shown the four cherubim.

And Ezekiel won. Then he sees all of this. Over the next years.

I believe we can see from Ezekiel's life. There are different seasons in his life. Do you realize when he mounted up with wings of an eagle.

And gained that eagle vision. That could see 2600 years into the future. To our day.

To the days just before us. Do you realize? He was in a winter season. He got carried off into Babylon.

He had hard things to face. His eyes wept many tears. As you read this book about this man of God.

You read in Ezekiel 24 16. The Lord comes to him. And gives him a personal prophecy.

You know in the church today. There's a lot of personal prophecies. But you never get personal prophecies like this.

It's all the Lord wants to bless you. The Lord's given you gifts. The Lord wants to do remarkable things through you.

That he's never done through anyone else. What sort of a word did God give Ezekiel? Listen to this in chapter 24 16. Son of man behold.

I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes. That is his wife. With a stroke.

Yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep. Neither shall thy tears run down. Do you realize God had ordained certain seasons in Ezekiel's life? The season of captivity.

You're not going to go into ministry like you thought. You're going to get carried away from your city. Guess what? God's will was in it.

Do you think this was the devil? Do you think the devil allowed him to be carried off into captivity? Absolutely not. God had a plan. Do you not think he cried many tears? Yes he did.

Do you know here he's told. God actually says guess what? I'm going to take your wife away. The desire of your eyes.

Who you love. And I don't want you to cry any tears. He actually told Ezekiel when his wife is going to get taken.

And he says I want you to put your best clothes on. I want you to dress smartly. Have your best suit on.

Your good Sunday hat. And I want you to go to church and preach. That's what I want you to do.

And you're not allowed to mourn. You're not allowed to wear black. Make sure it's that red tie that you're wearing on this morning.

Make sure you wear that nice sky blue jacket. I'm just using a bit of preacher's license here. You go and read the text for yourself and you'll see this.

That God is actually saying yes I brought you into an hour of sorrow. Do you not think my plan's in this? Do you know why? That God would allow Ezekiel to pass through a season like that. Because you know what? In Israel God's bride had died and nobody cares about it.

All the people in ministry. No one's weeping over God's bride. Nobody's mourning and rending their hearts and wearing black.

None of them are sitting silent dumbstruck over the condition of the church in their hour and day. And I want to tell you it's the same in our day. We have a generation who are not grieving over the condition of the church.

You know what God was doing? Ezekiel you're going to feel what I feel. So that when you preach you're going to know my heartbeat. You are going to become the message.

You're not merely going to prophesy. You're not merely going to preach. You are going to embody and feel and know and understand my heart for my bride.

What you feel for her you're going to see. I feel for my people Israel. And so you see that in a man Ezekiel who's given us this.

Where we have got all our messages from Ezekiel 1. The four cherubim representing the four seasons of life. In the life of Ezekiel I see certain different seasons in his life ordained of God. The very worst of the seasons in his life are ordained and planned of God.

And they're still affecting you and I in this room. Don't tell me the things you don't understand. Tragedy, heartache, weeping.

Things you cannot understand are not allowed of God for a divine purpose. You may never understand. I wonder if Ezekiel could ever understand how much he would affect our world through his prophecies.

Let me go to my message here. The four seasons of life. It says in Genesis 8.22. While the earth remaineth.

It's a promise. While the earth remaineth. It's not going to always remain.

There's a day God's going to roll it all up. The earth is going to be burnt with fire. So it's not always going to remain.

It comes to an end and God will create a new earth. Which the righteous will dwell upon. But he says while the earth remaineth.

Notice what continues always. This is 6,000 years ago. Seed time and harvest.

All the big companies in America are never going to break this. Seed time and harvest is ordained of God to the end of time. Cold and heat.

Summer and winter. Yes, they're playing with our weather. There's no doubt about that.

They're playing with everything in society. But there'll always be a summer. There'll always be a winter.

And he says a day and night shall not cease. And so he gives all of this. Seed time and harvest.

Cold and heat. Summer and winter. Day and night.

None of these things. God has ordained them right at the beginning of time. And for 6,000 years they have remained.

Remember what we said in Genesis chapter 1 and 14 on day 4 of creation. And God said let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens. To divide the day from the night.

And let them be for signs. These two lights for day and night. Are for signs and for seasons.

And for days and for years. In other words, the sun and the moon affect the four seasons right across our world. Do you know the sun and the moon affects everything? It affects our day.

Do you realize night and day is affected by these two great lights? And by their functioning, God created them. Our days. Our year.

Everything set. This is in Genesis right at the back beginning of everything. And God is saying I have established these great bodies in the sky.

In the universe. And you know what they're going to affect? You're always going to have a day. You're always going to have a season.

You're always going to have night and day. All of these things are established of God in a real way. It says in Psalm 104.19. He, that is God, appointed the moon for seasons.

So do you see God very clearly in the Bible says he is behind this. And he sets the moon in place to affect the seasons of the world. The moon affects the tidal motions of Ireland and of all nations.

The moon has been created and it has that power. But who's the power behind the moon? It is God himself. He has appointed the moon for seasons to control these things.

The sun knoweth his going down. In other words, the sun knows when to go down. God has ordained.

Do you realize it happens every 24 hours? Do you realize how regular this is? Can you imagine one of these days if the sun didn't go down or if it didn't rise in the morning? Can you imagine the panic in Ireland? The chaos. The questions. The uproar.

And yet God says, hold on. The sun knows when to go down. Why? Because I told it.

I tell it. I set it in order. Don't you realize the moon and the sun is in the hands of God? Those two greatest of bodies that affect our world.

And those two bodies actually affect the seasons. It brings certain seasons on. You can't hold them back any more than you can stop the sun and the moon and hold them in your hands.

If you could hold them in your hands then maybe I would think you had some power. But you've got no power over these things. It says in Psalm 31 15.

And this is the psalmist David speaking. He's in a dark time, a hard season of life. There's troubles.

Men are seeking to kill him. Listen to what he says. My times are in thy hand.

Do you really believe that this morning? That your times are in his hands? Or do you think it's in the devil's hands? Other people's hands. The hands of fate, circumstance, perchance. There's no order in it.

There's no reason. There's no purpose. My life just goes from one thing to another thing.

But there's no actual purpose in anything that happens around me. David actually in a very dark hour says. My times are in thy hand.

Then he says deliver me from the hand of mine enemies and from them that persecute me. What a remarkable thing that David knew his times, his seasons, his nights and days. No one else had power over them.

His faith was in God. He loved God. He followed God.

He obeyed God. And so his times are your times in God's hands. Do you believe that? Have you put your times in God's hands? Or do you have more faith that your times are in the hands of circumstance and other people? The changing seasons of nature have also been ordained of God.

And we can see that the four seasons in the Bible. And you're going to see this in a moment. The four seasons in the Bible can be applied spiritually in your life.

Or the life of this local church. Or to Bible prophecy. When you begin to study this you'll see there are seasons of Bible prophecy.

Distinct biblical seasons. The beginning and the end when certain things are going to happen. And God has ordained those seasons.

Jesus said, can you discern the season? The prophetic season that you're living in. And so we see that prophetic world history is divided into certain seasons. All different.

All distinct. With different things happening at that time. We're not about to see the birth of the Messiah.

That was 2,000 years ago. It happened already. It's not going to happen a second time.

We are living in the hour just prior to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. That didn't happen 2,000 years ago or 500 years ago. It is ordained for this time and this season.

There are prophetic seasons in God's calendar. And so the four seasons can be applied to that prophetically. I also believe the four seasons can be applied to the worldwide church.

The real body of Christ over the past 2,000 years. I believe in reading and studying church history most of my lifetime. And I love church history.

I love to read about it. I can see certain distinct seasons. I can see winter times in church history where everything was barren and dead.

And I see other times, spring times, that came to the church of revival and restoration. And summer times of great and gatherings of harvest. I see all of this in church history.

But I want you to see here that the four seasons are also applied to the individual Christian life. And I want you to understand this. Unless someone or some smart alacarter wants to tell me in certain countries there's only two seasons.

And sometimes in Ireland you think you only get perpetual rain from year to year. From January to December. Some people will argue that.

Or when I went to Iceland once, I arrived and the sun, as I arrived into the airport, the sun is a ball sitting on the horizon. It never went any lower. During the summer in Iceland, the sun never goes down.

But then go back there during the winter, the sun never rises. So we understand in our world there are some places that seem to lack the full clarity of four seasons. We understand that.

And even the full clarity of night and day. We understand that. But that does not deny what we're saying here.

That there's four distinct seasons and the Bible talks about them in a very real way. You see, all winters are not the same in Ireland. Winter comes every year, but all winters are not the same.

Sometimes we have a very mild winter, but yet we know it's winter time. There's other times where, like when I was younger, and any farmer, you ask farmers in Ireland, they don't believe in all this climate change rubbish. They don't believe in that.

And any farmer worth his salt knows, and this is what they said, the old farmers, they just go, but it always goes in a cycle like this. Sometimes you have years of very hard winters, and then you have years, decades of very mild winters. Real farmers aren't bluffed by that.

And there's some political farmers in Ireland still, when they open their mouth, boy, they chase the whole thing out of court. They know what they're talking about. So all winters are not the same.

All summers are not the same. In length, or intensity, or in severity, or in difficulty, whatever the season, it can vary. And even in our world, while some countries are in winter, others are in summer.

You know, I contact my mother-in-law, and she's there going, I can hardly breathe, I'm sweltering, I wish there was a cool breeze. I'm sitting here in Ireland saying, I'm freezing, it's cold. I've got three layers on, if you're around over the past week.

I've got three layers on, the fire is going. I've got gloves on, and I'll wear about two or three hats just to go outside to walk Shiloh. And so you've got different seasons, even in different parts of the world.

But it does not change this factor. It says in Psalm 74 and 17, Thou hast set all the borders of the earth. Thou hast made summer and winter.

God has set these in place. It says in Proverbs 26 and 1, As snow is in summer. Snow and summer, that's out of place.

So it says, as snow is in summer, and rain in harvest, in Israel in harvest time, it doesn't rain. It never rains in harvest time in Israel. And so he's saying, snow in summer time is out of place.

So is rain in harvest time, it's out of place. So honour is not seemly for a fool. Say someone who's a fool, and some people online, they don't like me calling people fools.

I don't call people personally fools. But if the stone hits you and you yell, don't blame me. Don't do that.

Or if you know someone who fits the bill, don't say I called them a fool. I'm giving you scripture. So it says someone who's classified as a fool, don't honour them.

Someone who acts foolish, thinks foolish, speaks foolish, for you to put honour on them and give them respect and admire them, is just as out of place as having snow in the summer time. It doesn't fit, there's something wrong with it. And so God has ordained seasons.

Certain things happen in certain seasons. And if it doesn't, then it's just not right. A season contains certain things.

You know in winter, you're not meant to be getting sunburned. That would be out of place. In summer time, you shouldn't be making snowballs.

That is out of place. So when these four spiritual seasons come to your life, don't think you'll always be laughing in winter time. You will not.

Don't ask yourself, when everything is barren and dark and cold, why do I feel down? Don't be surprised at that. You see, there is a divine purpose for the seasons. There is a specific time and occasion for the seasons.

The wrong season at the wrong time is wrong. You need the right season at the right time in the right order to accomplish the right thing. There's a unique way to walk through each season of life.

And we saw this with the four cherubim. No matter what the season of life is, you are to go through as a calf, as an ox, as a lamb, as an eagle. You can be all four of those no matter the season of life, no matter what it is like in around you.

There is a specific purpose for each of the seasons. Listen again what it says in Ecclesiastes 3, verse 1. To everything there is a season. In other words, every individual thing, there's a right season for it to happen.

And a time to every purpose under heaven. You know, he gives then a list in these first eight verses, a time to be born, a time to die. They're all opposites.

A time to be happy, a time to cry. They're all opposites. Life and death, birth and death are opposites.

They seem to contradict. There's a time to gather stones and to cast stones away. They seem to contradict.

And yet God says, hold on, there's an actual right season. You and your mind think they contradict, they don't fit. Yes, they do.

If they come at the right season, at the right time, in the right way, even death will bring forth fruit in your life. To have death at the wrong time won't. To have a bursting of life at the wrong time, it won't either.

But look how God weaves all this together. He has certain things to happen in certain seasons. And certain seasons aren't meant to be sun-scorched.

If you keep thinking, why isn't the sun shining on me? Maybe it's not meant to shine on you. Why am I walking through darkness? Because that is part of the season in your life. Why isn't God speaking to me? He spoke to me before about this and this and this and this.

And he seemed so silent during this time. Maybe he's deliberately being silent. Some people want to hear God for everything, on every issue, all the time.

I've met lots of people in the church. They claim that they hear God very clearly on everything all the time. I very nicely want to say they're liars at best.

The Apostle Paul wasn't like that. Jeremiah wasn't like that. David wasn't like that.

Moses wasn't like that. Nobody has heard God's voice constantly all the time. You know what? That would destroy you.

That would be dangerous to you. Not even the Apostle Paul lived in that condition. Sometimes he just done what seemed right, and going, that's not the will of God, and that's not the will of God.

But I know what's written. I obey you. I serve you.

But he was seeking to find the will of God. He didn't hear voices all the time. But he knew to do the will of God.

You've got to be very careful about these things. What is a season? It's a change of climate. It's an atmosphere, a certain set atmosphere around you, a certain temperature.

You may not be able to say when winter starts, but you certainly know when it arrives. You may not be able to give a date or a time, but you go, winter's here. How do you know? The temperature has changed.

Do you realize with the changing seasons, storms can be created or held back? In America, there's hurricane season. I'm glad I don't live in some of those places. I'm glad I don't live in South Africa when I see the snakes and the monkeys that get into your kitchen, squeezing through the bars.

My mother-in-law had an incident this past week where they squeeze in. Believe me, you don't want to face a South African monkey in your kitchen. You don't want to do that.

I'm very glad for what we have in Ireland. But do you know what? Our entire climate creates an atmosphere. With a certain season and the movements of the moon and the sun, there's changing weather induced and marked by a particular weather pattern.

And listen, as a result of the earth, earth's changing pattern around the sun. Do you hear what I've said? As the earth moves, do you know the earth is constantly moving? Every 24 hours, it moves in such a way that you're seeing the sun, then you don't see the sun every 24 hours. Every day is like that because it's turning in such a way you have night and day, night and day, night and day.

You're experiencing that. And the entire globe is literally moving like that. And then also you have in a period of a year, the earth is so moving that it revolves around the entire sun in one year.

An entire year. That year is set where it moves in that sort of pattern. So the days are set and the years are set.

They're set in orbit. They're set in distinct ways. And do you know it is the influence of the sun on the earth that ordains or sets the seasons in place.

So you've got all of this happening in a remarkable way. You see, I believe when you begin to look at the four natural physical seasons around you, you know what you begin to see? You begin to see God's sovereignty, His absolute control. You begin to see His power that He ordained these things 6,000 years ago and He's still in control.

He cannot lie. His word cannot be broken. You also see the timetable of God.

If God has set the day in place and He set the year in place and it follows an order, do you think your life is that out of order? I know it may seem like that, but that's because you need to begin to understand the word of God. You need to understand the plan of God. Do you know the four seasons are used to mold and to shape the environment around them? They affect the plant life.

They affect the economy. They affect the oceans. They affect the weather.

The four seasons do that. So the four seasons have been ordained of God to mold, to affect, to create a very specific atmosphere at a certain time. This is all remarkable that I'm telling you here.

It says in Zechariah 14, speaking prophesying of the time of the millennium, it says that the Lord's going to be exalted. Then a river flows out and this continues to flow in summer and winter. A river flows out into the Dead Sea and into the Mediterranean and this goes on every year, summer and winter for a thousand years.

It's going to keep on flowing throughout that entire time. Let me bring you here to the four seasons and I'm not going to cover everything about these seasons. I just want you to see there are four seasons applied to the spiritual life.

I hope you're already beginning to see that and understand that. If you see God's sovereignty in the seasons of our natural world, if you see his unchangeable nature, his plan, his order, his control, can you not transpose that onto your personal individual life? If you trust him and love him and walk with him, are you honestly going to allow thoughts to cram in and to steal your peace by saying everything is out of order? Why? Because it's cold? Why? Because you're suffering loss? Why? Because someone died? Why? Because your heart's broken? Surely it's out of order because I'm crying tears. Don't you know there's a season for crying? What do you think God only ordains seasons where you laugh and you dance and you rejoice and you gather and you're born? You see, we choose all those things, but hold on, there's a corresponding thing here that seems contradictory, but it has its right season.

It's vital, it's ordained, it's important. It produces something. And so all these work together.

Let me give you the four seasons here very briefly with a summary of what they represent for our lives. Number one, springtime. The Bible does explain and lay out to us a springtime.

I thought I'd start with something good here. In the Song of Solomon, chapter 2, verse 11, this is what it says. For lo, the winter is past.

It's saying here winter has just come to its end. There's a time when you become aware winter has ended. Have you had a winter season in your life? Do you realize when winter ends you can know it and walk through winter? I've been there for months I know it's climate.

It's dark. It's cold. It's not always nice.

But here in the Song of Solomon, chapter 2 and 11, it says for lo, the winter is past. The rain is over and gone. Winter has actually come to an end.

It's not speaking about the physical season here in the Song of Solomon. It's talking about a spiritual something going on amongst God's people. The flowers appear on earth.

What is this? It's springtime. What comes after winter when everything begins to spring? It's springtime. It's well named.

The time of the singing of birds has come. Do you remember what it's like at the end of winter when you're coming out of winter and spring comes in and suddenly you start waking in the morning. Oh, it's lighter in the morning and all the birds are chirping, singing.

Beautiful birds. They come from all manners of other countries and they stop off in Ireland on their way to their final destination. And you're there going, isn't this beautiful? Well, that's what the Song of Solomon is talking about.

And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The turtle or the dove often represents the work of the Holy Spirit coming. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell.

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. I believe the first season we see here is springtime. God ordains for his church.

God ordains in the individual life. There's a time when winter periods in your life come to an end. Maybe you're in a winter period.

Maybe it's been long and dark and hard. Maybe it feels monotonous, like it's never going to come to an end. The chill, the freezing, the coldness.

How you have to deal with that. Will it ever come to an end? Yes, God ordains seasons. He knows what's too much for you, you know.

He knows what would break you. Winter is necessary, but it can't stay winter. It mustn't stay winter.

And so there's a springtime when he says, Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. It's a time of a new beginning. It's a time of reviving.

It's a time of springing forth. It's a time of restoration where everything that's been lost during autumn and winter, it is now restored. Have you ever seen in a garden where there's all the beautiful flowers and at the end of summer you see them die and wilt and fade away and disappear and you're so sad about it.

And then springtime you begin to see from this barren, desolate garden, you can suddenly see it spring into life. It was all there. All the life was there, but it's come through other dark seasons.

You're not meant to have all the flowers bloom and churn winter. Certain flowers do, and they're ordained that way. But on the whole, most of my garden flowers, I want to tell you, in my hands, they usually die anyway because of my ill treatment.

Do you know, I thought I was doing good all my flowers. I went, I'm going to keep all these flowers Candice has left me. So I was watering them constantly.

I'm wondering why they're beginning to wither. Then I had, say, I apologize. I'm not a farmer, and I'm not a gardener.

And they're saying, no, no, no. You're watering them too much. That's why they're fading.

You need to reduce that. I thought I was helping them. So don't leave your plants with me anytime soon.

You see, there's the time of renewal, of fresh starts, of new growth, of a springing forth. God has ordained it. But listen to something very specific that's very interesting.

Something has to happen at a very important and vital time. Pruning. Do you know what you do in springtime? You prune.

So springtime, it's a time where everything is beginning to grow. It's a new beginning. You need to be very careful.

You're happy about springtime. Winter's over. Springtime's here.

Everything is new. Oh, but I want to tell you, springtime is always the time for the gardener to prune. You're now rejoicing on the change of season.

You're looking forward to the future. If you neglect pruning, or allowing God to prune you at springtime, do you know what it could mean in the months and the seasons ahead? A restriction on you spiritually. You could say, but look, there's life.

The branches. Aren't the branches good? They were last year. But they're not anymore.

Springtime is the time to prune. Pruning. When do you prune? At the end of winter.

It marks the beginning of spring. You wait to the very end of winter and the beginning of springtime. We've got one apple tree in our garden, and two years, I don't know anything about gardening, so please, if you can correct me online or here, don't come with a list of things.

I'm a very ignorant man. So just be very gracious. If I get any of my facts wrong, I'm trying my best.

I'm a Bible man. I'm a preacher, okay? This is my subject. I just try to understand these other things.

But we've got an apple tree, and Candice used to tell me what to do, when to do it, and what to do it on. I just followed orders. I don't know enough.

I trusted her. Two years ago, she said, see that apple tree? You need to prune it right back. I said, come show me.

Show me what to do. You show me the length. I'll do all the hard work, but you show me.

So we went to the end of our garden, and said, do this, and cut that back. Cut that branch right back. Just do all of this.

I said, are you sure? She said, yes. I'm going, but won't we lose apples? No, you won't. You've got to do it now.

Before all the new growth comes, you've got to cut back. See, I was scared. Oh, if we cut back right now, surely this is the wrong time.

Surely not that much of the branch. Surely I like that branch. I've watched it grow for the past three years.

It was good to be there. You didn't ask me to cut it last year. Surely that branch should stay there.

No, not this year. And so we cut it back. Do you realize, this summer, I could not gather the harvest of apples.

They are the ginormous apples. I really mean it. I felt like framing one or two of them.

I have never, Shiloh can't even lift them. They are large, these apples. Where did these apples come from? One small apple tree that was really pruned back at the beginning of springtime, before the time of new growth.

If I hadn't have done that, we wouldn't have apples like this. Do you know now, over the past couple of days, I've been going out, because I'm changing a lot of things. I'm thinking like a, okay, I'm in training, okay.

But I'm trying to think like Candice. I went to bed last night, designing the cut of that apple tree. I was out about two weeks ago, and I'm there looking at that branch.

I'm going, you're going, and you're going. I mean, there's a whole chunk of that. It's coming off.

I'm literally now, it's wintertime. We're not even halfway through winter. And already, I'm going, I know how I'm going to prune that apple tree back.

You know why? Because I saw all the fruit. Oh, the fruit doesn't come in springtime. It doesn't.

You don't prune to get something now. You're going to get it in harvest time, a different season. You're going to see here that what you need to do, you never get back in that season.

What you put into a season is not what you get back in the same season. You're putting something in that season, never seeing the return in that season, but it will come forth in a different season. Usually, you get back in a season that you've never labored into on that particular thing.

You've got to think ahead of time. Jesus said in John 15, 2, Every branch of me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth.

Notice I'm talking about pruning. The branches that have no fruit on them, you get rid of. You lop the entire branch off.

But I'm not talking about lopping branches off. I'm talking about pruning. Pruning is not a removal.

It is a cutting back. What do you prune? You prune branches that are producing fruit. You don't prune.

Jesus does not prune individuals who are not bearing fruit. The only individuals in this church Christ is going to prune back at the beginning of springtime are those who are already bearing spiritual fruit. If you're not bearing fruit, he'll just lop you off.

Good for the fire. Good for firewood. But see this branch.

I'll cut him so far back you won't even recognize that branch. But it's not because I hate it. It's because it has borne fruit and it will bear much more fruit.

But I've got to prune it. Are you scared of God pruning your life? Or removing something from your life that you think you want to keep? You think it's precious and important. Yes, it was a year ago.

Yes, it's been important in your life for three years, but not this year. This is a new year. It's springtime.
And that area of your life is bearing fruit. But we need to prune it back.

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