

“Seasons”

Oh yeah, seasons come and go so fast these days that keeping up with what season we are in at any given moment is becoming a sign of the aging process. Yep, like a lot of folks, relearning to no longer date stuff 2018 is a simple reminder that the seasons move on in rapid succession. And the changing of the seasons is both exhilarating and sad at the same time. I mean, when you stop and contemplate that the college football season is over, it's in the books, done for, kaput, nothing but memories, I mean, one can get all depressed. But then, when you think about all the fun had by those who attended college games, or whose teams did extremely well (or extremely poorly...no additional comment needed), or for the team whose fans are celebrating a third national championship, I mean, those memories can be exhilarating.

In the same way, another favorite season has now come and gone...fall. Now folks love fall because it gives relief from long, hot summers. It brings frosty mornings and long periods in your easy chair listening to and watching and feeling the warmth of a crackling fire, either at home or in some mountain cabin, while you warm up from a cold morning hunt or watch your favorite team play. Yep, fires in fall are exhilarating, unless of course, you have fake fire, otherwise known as gas logs, which in my way of thinking is just a glorified heater, or even worse, a television screen with a fire ablaze on the screen. I guess if that is all you got, well then, that's all you got! I reckon I shouldn't be so hard on fake fireplace proponents, cause some of them, like my little brother Alan and friend Chuck Sprouse, kinda think such things are all the rage. But alas, I guess to each his own and all goes into making the fall season of the year special. But now that fall is gone, it's kinda depressing.

Cause with it went hunting season! I kinda get in a funk about now because of that very thing, yet when I look back at all the good times I had sitting on stand, watching the summer turn into fall and fall turn into winter, or feeling the gentle cool breezes of fall turn into the harsh cold air of winter, it's all so exhilarating. As is all the fun of hunting with friends and family, like watching Addie's excitement when she got the Big Six, or laughing at Emily sitting in a tree stand with Justin when she was 8 ½ months pregnant and getting herself a buck, or helping Zack track down a bow shot deer at midnight wondering if the hungry coyotes that were howling were going to find his deer first or us first. And then, the memory of killing the biggest buck I have ever killed, all blends together to make the memories of hunting season exhilarating, and yet the fact that we can't hunt anymore till next season is definitely a bummer.

To which my loving wife would say, “Oh please, start them itty-bitsy violins back up, cause hunting season is never over if your name is David Little. Cause now it's duck season, and squirrel season, and soon it'll be turkey

season, and then fishing season, and all the while, this husband of mine never stops thinking, dreaming, planning and worst of all, he never stops talking about next deer season.” Well, she ain't wrong, as they say. It is what it is!

But to that, I'd like to add that soon it will be gardening season, which is not my favorite thing, though I do enjoy it. But the early part of spring prep and planting gives way to long, hot summer periods of tilling dry ground, hoeing the rows, back breaking bean picking...yada yada yada, all of which will make me long for the fall hunting season all the more...if you get my drift. I didn't plant a garden last year and life didn't end because of it, but Emily, Katelyn and Lacy have already put the screws to me, saying their worlds nearly came crashing down because they didn't have fresh garden veggies to eat. Soooo, Todd and Grayson, stock the feed and seed store cause I'll be heading ya'lls way soon! I'll be like John Denver, who was known for singing about the glorious outdoors. One of his little known songs was one of my favorites, and it went like this, “Inch by inch, row by row, gonna make my garden grow, all it takes is a rake and a hoe and a piece of fertile ground.” Yep, gardening season is approaching...quickly! So girls...I'm on it!

Speaking of girls, eight days after she harvested her buck, Emily gave birth to a beautiful little itty-bitty baby girl, whom she and Justin named Annie Reese Gingerich. So now, my season of having the joy of many little grands is in full swing, and with it, comes things for ole Gramps to do, like building a new playhouse for the grands after the last one burned down two years ago. Yep, a big, wooden playhouse, burned to the ground...which also included the fire department showing up and....and oh my, that's another story for another day! But this new playhouse is gonna be bigger and better...much improved. It will be a three story tree house...a playhouse with a big oak tree going up through all three levels...with all the bells and whistles. I mean, this is gonna be the last tree house/playhouse I will ever build...so it's got to be a humdinger, cause I mean, the seasons of Gramps' life are moving on as well...nuf said.

Churches go through seasons also, and after nearly forty years of ministry, I see this more and more. Churches go through mountains and valleys, just like people do. And some churches never come out of their valleys and their season for existing ends. Seasons for churches are like all other seasons. The memories of some churches through their more glorious seasons are exhilarating, but the season some churches are in currently can be somewhat depressing. I don't know what season your church is in, but if it is in the mountain top season of its life, then enjoy it. However, if you are walking in the valley of your church's life cycle, relish those sweet memories from the past, but start looking forward to, planning for and working towards making that needed season of renewal a reality. Seasons come and go and so maybe it's the season for your church to do some things differently, because, inch by inch and row by row, God will make your church to grow! I pray so!