

SEASONS OF THE SPIRIT

April 2nd 2003



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Choir

**Jesus Christ the Apple Tree
Elizabeth Poston**

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
Against such things there is no law.”

Galatians 5: 22-23

St Paul in this passage from Galatians shows how when we live to please God we exhibit a life and character moulded by God's spirit, fruits of love, joy, peace, - Christian habits of mind; patience, kindness, goodness, qualities that affect our relationships with other people; and faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, principles of conduct which should guide us in all we do.

Today we reflect in words and music on three of these fruits. First – peace. Peace is on all our minds at the moment.

Peace is something doubly precious to those who have experienced the terror and heartbreak of war. Here, a twenty-six year old mother reflects on her experience of World War II, when that war ended in May 1945:-

When the war began I'd been twenty, full of the enthusiasm, ambitions, certainties and energies of youth. I'd married and borne children, but the war had stolen from us the simple ordinary joys of a young couple shaping a shared life. Our first home had been burnt to rubble and

with it had gone many of the gifts which relatives and friends had given us and which should have been treasured for life, while what had been salvaged would always bear the marks of that night of destruction. We had known the agony of separation and the too rare, too short, too heightened joys of reunions.

Apart, we had endured illnesses and dangers and fears for each other. As a family too we had been separated and now must learn to live together, overcoming the barriers set up by experiences which had not been shared...

I thought of those who had been dear to us who had not lived to see this...Of John, who had stood at the altar with us on our wedding day, John, who had...been trapped in his cockpit when his plane sank beneath the waves...Of Ron, constant companion of my brother since schooldays...who had vanished without trace when the troopship he was on had been sunk by the Japanese; of Peter, my girlhood friend's kind brother...who had been shot while trying to escape from the prisoner-of-war camp to which he'd been taken... They were all so young. The youngest died at nineteen the oldest at twenty-four. I sat thinking of them...and then went indoors to stand looking at the sleeping faces of my two little sons, whose lives lay before them in a world of peace.

Meg Ryan

Choir Agnus Dei from the Mass for four voices Byrd

But peace is not just the absence of war. If we wish to have true peace, we must give it a soul, and the soul of peace is love. Pope Paul VI said that it is love that gives life to peace, more than victory or defeat. The soul of peace is love, and that love comes from God.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No-one has ever seen God; but if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

1 John 4: 7-12

Choir Love one another with a pure heart fervently S.S. Wesley

Self-giving love is at the heart of God's plan for his world, and it can transform human relationships, as this story movingly shows:-

Once upon a time two young people were very much in love. Christmas Eve was coming and they wanted to give presents to one another. But they were very poor and had no money for presents. So each one, without telling the other, decided to

sell his or her most precious possession. The girl's most precious possession was her long golden hair and she went to a hairdresser and had it cut off. She sold it then to buy a lovely watch chain for her lover's watch. He, meanwhile, had gone to a jeweller and sold his watch to buy two beautiful combs for his beloved's hair. Then they made their gifts. There were tears at first and then laughter. There was no hair for the combs and no watch for the watch chain. But there was something more precious and that was their self-sacrificing love for one another. (Anon)

Choir And I love you so Don McClean arr Morley

Self-sacrificing, self-giving love is the highest kind of love, and it is the soul of peace. Peace, Love and finally Joy. Richard Hooker, the 16th century Anglican priest and writer, said that while peace is that state in which fear of any kind is unknown, Joy is a positive thing.

“In joy one does not only feel secure, but something goes out from oneself to the universe, a warm, positive effluence of love.”

Richard Hooker

Joy is distinctly a Christian word and a Christian thing. It is the reverse of happiness. Happiness is the result of what happens of an agreeable sort. Joy has its springs deep down inside, and that spring never runs dry, no matter what happens. Only Jesus gives that joy. He had joy, singing its music within, even under the shadow of the cross. It is an unknown

word and thing except as He has sway
within.

Samuel Gordon

Choir Rejoice in the Lord always Anon.16th Century

The poet Wordsworth wrote “Surprised by joy – impatient as the wind I wished to share the transport-“and C.S. Lewis borrowed the phrase as the title of a book he wrote which described his own spiritual journey, from atheism to Christian Faith. He describes how from his early years he had experiences of unearthly joy which were sign-posts on the road to an experience of being grasped by the reality of God, which then makes human joys, not less joyful but simply pointers to a deeper and more fulfilling experience which is the deepest longing of the human heart:-

But what, in conclusion, of Joy? For that, after all, is what the story has mainly been about. To tell you the truth, the subject has lost nearly all interest for me since I became a Christian. I cannot, indeed, complain, like Wordsworth, that the visionary gleam has passed away. I believe (if the thing were at all worth recording) that the old stab, the old bittersweet, has come to me as often and as sharply since my conversion as at any time of my life whatever. But I now know that the experience, considered as a state of my own mind, had never had the kind of importance I once gave it. It was valuable only as a pointer to something other. While that other was in doubt, the pointer naturally loomed large in my thoughts. When we are lost in the woods the sight of a signpost is a great matter. He who first sees it cries, “Look!” The

whole party gathers round and stares. But when we have found the road and are passing signposts every few miles, we shall not stop and stare. They will encourage us and we shall be grateful to the authority that set them up. But we shall not stop and stare, or not much; not on this road, though their pillars are of silver and their lettering of gold. “We would be at Jerusalem”

C.S. Lewis: Surprised by Joy

On that road to Jerusalem we travel faster and more directly, if we live our lives according to the harvest of the fruits of the spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

And of these love, joy and peace form a trinity of interlinked virtues, for which our human lives long and for which all of life is a restless anticipation. Truly “thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee”

Choir Listen, sweet dove unto my song Grayston Ives

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Monday April 7th
Lecture at 6pm

Christina Rees

Religion and the Media

Wednesday April 9th
Concert at 7.30pm

**Claire Seaton
and Andrew Watts**

Pergolesi's Stabat Mater

Sunday 13th April
Service at 3.30

Childrens Easter Service