

10/17: This week, we've had the first few really chilly days of Fall. I've broken out some of my beloved flannel shirts, lit an apple and pumpkin scented candle, and have been sure to look up to the trees that are really showing off their autumnal foliage! I am, personally, a big fan of Fall as a season. There is a fragility to autumnal joy, though. It only takes one early frost or freeze to abruptly end the gardening season, or one Fall nor'easter to blow the foliage away and to launch us into the bareness of winter. The seasons will change, whether we are ready or not.

One of the only constants in our human existence is change, and sometimes change is desired and wonderful but change also necessitates leaving something behind, what once was will be different, and that often raises less fond emotions in us.

Autumn captures this tension in a way that words struggle to convey. There is such delightful beauty in nature at this time of year. At the same time, the beauty is ultimately a sign of decay, of death, of the coming barrenness of winter. It is the last great display of nature's annual cycle of life starting in the hope of buds of last spring. These leaves have witnessed an important time of life for us. But now they've lived their season, shared their fruit, their shade, their blooms, and now prepare to fall and pass away. Autumn is a complex time emotionally.

Author and Poet, Parker Palmer, captures this complexity in his reflection, "The Paradox of Fall," which I want to share an excerpt of with you.

*In my own experience of autumn, I am rarely aware that seeds are being planted. Instead, my mind is on the fact that the green growth of summer is browning and beginning to die. My delight in the autumn colors is always tinged with melancholy, a sense of impending loss that is only heightened by the beauty all around. I am drawn down by the prospect of death more than I am lifted by the hope of new life.*

*And yet, if I look more deeply, I may see the myriad possibilities being planted to bear fruit in some season yet to come.*

*In retrospect, I can see in my own life what I could not see at the time—how the job I lost helped me find work I needed to do, how the "road closed" sign turned me toward terrain I needed to travel, how losses that felt irredeemable forced me to discern meanings I needed to know. On the surface it seemed that life was lessening, but silently and lavishly the seeds of new life were always being sown.*

*This hopeful notion that living is hidden within dying is surely enhanced by the visual glories of autumn. What artist would ever have painted a season of dying with such a vivid palette if nature had not done it first? Does death possess a beauty that we—who fear death, who find it ugly and obscene—cannot see? How shall we understand autumn's testimony that death and elegance go hand in hand?*

*Autumn constantly reminds me that my daily dyings are necessary precursors to new life. If I try to "make" a life that defies the diminishments of autumn, the life I end up with will be artificial, at*

*best, and utterly colorless as well. But when I yield to the endless interplay of living and dying, dying and living, the life I am given will be real and colorful, fruitful and whole.*

We might call this paradox “the hope of resurrection.”