

Winter is Coming

Calves are dropping, farmers are harvesting their crops, leaves are changing colors, days are getting shorter, temperatures are getting cooler, football and hunting seasons are in full swing. You look at all these things, and you know that winter is coming soon.

There are so many wonderful things that I like about the fall season of the year. You get to see all of the gradual changes in the climate and environment that brings such relief from the long hot summer days and the humidity that comes with them. The cooler temperatures and gentle breezes of fall are refreshing and give me renewed energy and a refreshed spirit. Just to wear a blue jean jacket and smell the smoke of a warming fire is something that I always look forward to. There is something about rolling and playing in a pile of leaves with your children and grand-children that make life okay and make those of us who are getting older feel young again. As farmers and ranchers, fall is when we get to see the fruit of all our hard work during the year and we get a change in our daily routines. The treasured family holidays that we celebrate at Thanksgiving and Christmas are just around the corner; the memories and anticipation of them bring a joy of their own. All of nature seems to take on a new look; it is evident that all the animals and birds also change their activities as they eagerly prepare for the winter that is coming. As I look back on my life, fall has always been my favorite season of the year.

Winter however, has historically been a time that has been considered the most difficult season of the year. We often hear reference to getting old and nearing the end of our life as approaching the ‘winter’ season of life. It is a season when most plants and some animals are dormant and appear lifeless. The harsh freezing rain and cold winds blow causing us to want to stay inside as much as possible. It is a time when the old, sick or weak animals are most likely to die or be preyed upon—only the fittest will survive winter. Winter is indeed a difficult and often a miserable time for us and for nature, however, it is a time that we cannot avoid and that will not wait for us to get ready. Winter is coming and we better get ready before it gets here!

How bizarre would it be for a farmer to say, “Well it is fall and time to harvest my crops, I guess I better get to planting”. Or for a rancher to say, “Oh boy, it calving season, I guess I better turn the bulls in to get ‘em bred”. These practices would be unthinkable and silly wouldn’t they? Nobody in their right mind that knew anything about farming or ranching would do such things! Yet in other areas of our life, we are often guilty of such procrastination, neglect and farsightedness, thinking there will always be another day, there will always be more time to do what we know we should be doing today to prepare for the long winter that is coming.

Look at what is going on in our own country, within our government, in our schools and universities, on our streets, in our homes and even in our churches, and you will see that it is already fall and winter is indeed near if things do not change drastically and quickly. Difficult times are sure to become much worse if we do not return to God, to godly teachings, to godly living, and to the Word of God as our guide for every area of life. This applies not only to changes needed within our own culture but also in our God given role as a world power and as a country that is supposed to point the world to God and to godly living. How far we have wandered! How much farther will the Lord allow us to go before He brings judgment?

Sometimes we find it easy to think that if everyone else or at least the ‘evil’ people would just do what is right, everything would be okay. Well that might be right and that is certainly something that we need to encourage and work for, but from all that I see in Scripture, that is never going to happen until Jesus comes back and does away with Satan and with evil once and for all.

Nowhere in Scripture do I see where ‘good people’ is God’s plan to resolve our problems as a

nation or in the world. So where does the solution lie? I believe the answer to our nation's problems lies in 2 Chronicles 7:14. It deals not with what the evil people or lost people in our country are doing, but instead deals with the lifestyles, actions, and hearts of the Church—those called to be holy, called to be righteous, called to be set apart for God's purposes.

Look at what this passage says: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." Who is this passage talking about? Who is called by His name except for Christians? He is talking to the Church! The answer to our nation's problems is for the Christian Church to return to God, to turn from their sin and to genuinely be the Church—not just in word, but in relationship with the Father, in relationship to one another, in relationship with the world, in deeds, in lifestyle, and in purpose. For our nation to ever be what God wants us to be, for our country to ever survive the winter that is quickly approaching, we as Christians, as the Church, must humbly repent and call out to God for forgiveness and mercy.

In a culture where divorce, extramarital and premarital affairs, pornography, abortion, alcoholism, drug abuse, suicide, and contempt for the Word of God are just as prevalent inside the church as it is outside, there is indeed a sin problem within the church. When we turn from our sin and back to God, then and only then does He promise to forgive our sin and heal our land. There is no other way! When we turn back to God, He will turn back to us and restore us. Winter is also approaching in our opportunities to make Christ known to the nations. Before long, Jesus will be coming back to judge the world. If we do not reap the harvest while the harvest is ready, it will be lost. Once He returns, or once they die, whichever comes first, there will not be another opportunity to plant, to cultivate or to harvest the most important crop ever—the souls of people!

Winter is coming for our nation and the world. We have the responsibility to be ready and to help others be ready. Are you ready? Are you readying others?