

Column

Along country lanes it is not uncommon to come upon an old home site. The house may be gone, but there are telltale signs that once a family lived there. The most enduring of these signs are rows of bulbs such as irises, narcissuses and jonquils. If you pull over and walk the site, you might find some other plants, an odd shrub here or there along with the casement to a long abandoned well or cistern.

I am thinking of one particular home site I came upon 40 or so years ago. Here, was not only the usual bulbs but also a yard full of periwinkle, a low-growing plant with blue flowers. I stopped and dug some of these up and replanted them where I was living at the time.

Sites such as this suggest at least two things. The first is that in this present age nothing is permanent. In the words of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Here we have no continuing city." The things we lovingly care for and busy ourselves about are not permanent. The family who made their home on this site – I am imagining now – could not conceive of their secure dwelling and gardens going away. It was their patch of earth; they made it their home. It was to them a place of tranquility and security.

The moral here is: Don't get too comfortable in this borrowed field we call the world. This present age is one of change and decay. As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews continues in the verse I have just quoted: "Here we have no continuing city, *but we seek one to come*", which brings me to my second thought.

The things of this present age are not permanent. Like the water in a waterfall, they are always changing. But, they do point us toward another age . . . a city whose builder and maker is God. Hence, we do right in planting flowers, beautifying the patch of earth God has given us, making the place we live more than a place we sleep but a real home, a place of beauty, love and hospitality . . . a haven of blessing and peace. How so?

Well, surely this one is not too hard to see. We build for and in anticipation of the Kingdom of God, to the time when all will be made new, when God Himself will wipe away all tears and when the element of transience, which at the moment seems to be just the way things are, will be done away with forever. We can, therefore, take comfort in St. Paul's words in I Corinthians 15:58: "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

In the light of these words, every shrub and bulb we plant brings us a little closer to the Kingdom. Our present home, instead of being a final destination, becomes a signpost to something that is yet to come, a future that is now reserved in heaven for those who put their trust in Jesus.

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may

glorify thy holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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