

“Those Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days Of Summer” **(June 2016)**

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By Rev Paul Graham

“15 love.”

Thwack, wallop, puff-pant, ooh, lob, aah, smash!

“30 love.”

And so on...

Nothing for me marks the transition from spring to gloriously endless summer as much as the whiter-than-white delights of Wimbledon fortnight. Gone are the grey skies of winter, the washed-out drenching of April showers and the unfulfilled promise of May as we bask under the blue skies of June. It almost makes one feel all poetic.

There's nothing quite like it.

Not only do we have Wimbledon to distract us from the normality of life; for many of us the sound of leather on willow will remind us that the Great British Raindance (otherwise known as the Cricket Season) is well and truly upon us. For others, there is the promise of holidays coming ever closer. For teachers and students alike there is the expectation of six weeks away from each others' company. For gardeners, strawberries are going from flower to fruit, unless the slugs get to them first.

For churches, we anticipate something of a lull in our ecclesial calendar. Since September, it seems that we've hardly stopped: Harvest morphs into Advent, the excitement of Christmas becomes the grim anticipation of Lent which in turn moves from the glory of Easter into the resounding chorus of Pentecost.

And then it all comes to a bit of a stop. The summer months are well known in church life as “fallow” time. Congregations spread out across the globe, visiting friends, relations and far-flung destinations.

But that's not to say that we're complacent. Oh, no, there's no chance of that, with Queen's Birthday celebrations to be involved in alongside the everyday activities of services, kids' clubs, craft groups, etc, etc. Holiday Clubs are planned, but even they are some weeks' away. And, let's face it, we're already starting to plan Christmas...

Be that as it may, there is a sense that with the summer comes the chance to recharge batteries, to take stock and, remembering the past few months, anticipate all that God is going to do over the coming months. I'm reminded of the verses in Ecclesiastes 3 at these times:

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens...

The Teacher goes on to tell us that there is a time to be born, a time to die, to sow and to reap, to weep and to laugh and much more. As this is not intended to be an exhaustive list, I think that we can safely add “a time to be busy and a time to rest” without causing too many theological problems. And for many, summer affords us the opportunity to take some time out, to sit back a bit, maybe even pick up that book that you promised you would start reading at Christmas.

But this is not the case for everyone. Just ask a farmer, with their crops ready for harvesting, or any of the seaside towns that rely on the influx of leisure- and pleasure-seekers to see them through the quieter winter months. Frantic activity is still the order of the day, with the promise of rest still to come.

Whatever we are doing, we mustn't forget that rest is not just good for the body, it is also a God-supported activity (or inactivity, if you prefer). We read in Genesis 2:2 that God rested. Of course, he didn't need to replenish his spent energy; there's no way that an all-powerful God would need to stop for a breather even after putting into motion the wheels of creation. What we learn from this is that rest provides the opportunity to put an end to one activity before commencing something new and to respond in celebration or grief in reviewing what has gone before. To do this we need space; time to think, to come to terms with the change, to absorb the lessons that we need to learn and to be grateful.

So, whatever our rest will be, whenever we may enjoy it and wherever it may take us, we thank God for the things that we have done and we thank God again for the things that we are going to be doing once we're back, refreshed and renewed.