



Creation Time & Harvest Reflection

*Sow for yourselves righteousness;
reap steadfast love;
Break up your fallow ground;
for it is time to seek the Lord;
that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.*

Hosea 10.12

Creation Tales – Garden Peas

In the early weeks of lockdown, we took our first exciting and wobbly steps towards gardening and growing some food. We were complete novices and if I'm honest, we didn't research much before launching into it.

We cleared weeds and lifted blocks and mixed soil and compost and planted flowers, garden peas, beans and potatoes.

After about 4 weeks the garden was actually looking well. Things were tidier, weeds (I know some people don't like that word!) were being regularly removed and some life had started to poke up out of the soil, which was very exciting. There were daily inspections of the growth. It was difficult to keep an 8 month old from launching himself repeatedly at the soil and the dirt, pulling up the precious stalks that were growing, and to prevent an enthusiastic three year old from drowning things with the watering can or pulling them up to inspect what was going on underneath the soil but all in all we were a model lockdown family.

The flowers never grew, well, one kind did but barely and the others were complete no shows. Because of our lack of knowledge we accidentally grew the beans in the shade and they didn't keep well once picked. We pulled up one set of potatoes too early and are now unsure about when to harvest the rest, suspecting now that they needed us to feed the soil more. But the garden peas thrived and for several weeks we were picking pods, cracking them open and snacking on them in the garden. We harvested a larger amount for a few dinners and we made plans to grow more next year.

Then I put my back out because I wasn't kneeling properly. After that, I returned to work from being on Maternity Leave and juggling parenting and trying to keep on top of work did not include weeding or tending to the garden. Days of heavy rainfall after the sunny spells meant it became a

wilderness in a shockingly fast amount of time. I felt guilty looking out at the lovely space we were privileged to have, that was completely overgrown.

A couple of months passed, my back healed and I was in more of a routine with working from home. I was putting a scooter back in the shed when I noticed the pea patch, looking sad and abandoned, plants twisted around each other and matted down with their collective weight, yellowing old leaves, withered stalks, weeds curling up in around them - a pitiful sight.

And then something caught my eye and I bent down to have a closer look. On some of the old stalks were fully ripened peas. Beside them and underneath them, new stalks had grown up and were laden down with younger peas. I harvested a large bowl full, shelled them and shared them with my family.

Reflection:

There are a few things to reflect upon from this story.

1. God is not confined by my limitations.

My lack of knowledge, my mistakes and my intense bursts of interest followed by seasons of apathy, are not enough to stop a Creator God. He is bigger, more able, more powerful, more creative, more loving, than I can ever comprehend. Isaiah 43:18 – 19 says

¹⁸ "Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.

¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.

2. New signs of life arrive after we have given up and abandoned hope. This is particularly a message for people who feel they are 'past it'. The amazing thing about Creation is that it is an ongoing, continuous thing. There are seasons of hibernation and seasons of slowing down and some of these seasons mark us and change us forever, but new life never ceases to grow because the Creator never ceases to Create. Maybe your body is telling you you're past it,



maybe society is sending you messages that you're not an integral part of it – due to age, infirmity, or the season of life that you are in, such as retirement, new parenthood, youth, or changing circumstances that mean you have become a full time carer or redundant. Maybe sadness, loneliness, grief and numbness have made you step away from living. Now listen to the Creator who brings new life out of dried, cracked earth. Let

him hold you, let him sustain you, let him heal you, let him re-create you. Let him show you your creative worth, which cannot be replicated.

In Church of Ireland Children's and Family Ministry, families who didn't have access to seeds were encouraged to take carrot tops and put them face down in water in a sun lit place and to watch the new shoots sprout. I found it miraculous. These were the stumps, the waste parts of the plant, the bits that gets chopped off and tossed into the bin, and here they were bringing forth new life. What a powerful image for when we are suffering and 'past it'. But also, what a powerful image when we are called to reach out to others in their suffering. Creator God, you are never finished with us.

3. Be faithful to tending to your own little patch and be mindful of others as they tend to theirs. The new harvest of peas grew in spite of me not because of me. Had I tended to the patch, there would have been more of a harvest and they would have grown in more nutritious soil. Some of the pods looked round and juicy but when we opened them, they were empty. Other peas were not harvested in time and the peas were a bit bitter. We add value where we are. But we are part of a bigger Creation, woven into a Master Design.

In Bishops' Appeal we strive to link local and global initiatives, recognising that mission takes place where we are at, but that we are called to be part of a global family that reaches out and supports other members as they are missional in their own patch.

For example, we encouraged people to reduce their own single use plastic usage and waste, and then supported creative ways people are turning plastic waste into paving stones and handbags in the Gambia. Taking our place in God's plan and in his Creation is about reconnection with Creator God, with ourselves, with others, and with all that God has made. Finding those connections is important.

Recently, Bishops' Appeal funded a reforestation project through Christian Aid in Zimbabwe. The project also included irrigation systems and bee keeping, recognising that they are all part of an interconnected eco-system and when they thrive, we thrive. God has designed us for connection, and disconnection can bring poverty - if not monetary poverty, then perhaps mental, emotional and relational depletion and lack, things that we see more and more of in a disconnected world.



Near the village of Melea people irrigate seedlings on the dried lake bed of Lake Chad

The Great Green Wall is a wonderful example of people tending to their patch but being mindful of the bigger picture.

By 2030 the ambition of the

Great Green Wall is to restore 250 million acres of degraded land, spanning almost 5,000 miles from coast to coast of the African Continent, across more than 20 countries.

But these people pictured in Chad are not planting all of the trees. That would be an impossible task. Instead they are focused on doing their bit. So today, faithfully, for their wellbeing, and the wellbeing of their children, as well as for nations they may never visit and people they may never meet, in holes dug out of sand and lined with goats droppings, they are planting seeds of acacia, desert date, guava, citron and mango trees.

¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness

and streams in the wasteland.'

Isaiah 43:19