

## PASTOR'S CORNER



*The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom.*

The language of the coming messiah in the prophets often reflected the corporal evils that would be cured: *Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; Then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing.* Even in reading the words of scripture we can picture such things; with ease we can recognize the gravity of the suffering of ailments that usually had no hope for healing and the joy that healing would bring.

The imagery of the desert becoming fertile and in full bloom similarly gives us an image of flourishing where it was thought impossible – an unlooked for, un hoped for change from death to life.

The great philologist and fiction writer J.R.R. Tolkien has an essay called “On Fairy Stories” that I would highly recommend if you have not read it – especially the latter half and the epilogue. He speaks there of the mark of all fairy stories as being that happy ending – and more poignantly “the sudden joyous ‘turn’” of events: which he called the eucatastrophe: the ‘good catastrophe’. The “sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. . . . [which] denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief. . . . It can give to child or man that hears it, when the “turn” comes, a catch of the breath, a beat and lifting of the heart, near to (or indeed accompanied by) tears, as keen as that given by any form of literary art, and having a peculiar quality.”

For Tolkien and many others, all the virtue of the literary genre of myth and fairy-story is found in reality as God himself writes the story of our history. Tolkien goes on to say that “The Birth of Christ was the eucatastrophe of Man’s history.” The sudden, unlooked for, un hoped for, good turn of events that changes everything bringing hope and peace and joy where there was otherwise, almost rightfully, despair: fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah not just with the disorders of the body and the barrenness of the desert, but with the disorder of sin and the barrenness of our souls.

As we approach the celebration of the eucatastrophe of our history, may the despair that we may rightly have for this world receive that unlooked for hope and unlooked for joy that can only come from the God who entered his own creation bringing healing and life to each of us where we had thought there was universal and final defeat.

In Christ, through Mary,

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