

Smoky Mountain Reflections

Summer Vacation

Vacations, what is a vacation? I find myself reflecting on this as I will be going on a vacation for two whole weeks. This will happen in only 15 days from when I write this, but I will probably be on that vacation or about to leave when you read it.

Where do we get the word? Maybe this can shed some light on the question. If you check the online etymology (history of words) dictionary it will give you some interesting information around 1386, is the earliest recorded use of the old French word *vacation*: meaning "freedom or release" from some activity or occupation, this is derived from the Latin *vacationem* (nom. *vacatio*) meaning "leisure, a being free from duty," further derived from *vacare* "be empty, free, or at leisure". Vacation also means "formal suspension of activity" in reference to schools, courts, etc. it is recorded from c.1456. As the U.S. equivalent of what in Great Britain is called a "holiday,". (Interesting that the words Vacation and Holiday are different by only one letter and seem so opposite of each other, but that is a thought for another reflection.) So now you know more about the word vacation than you ever wanted to. When you love history even the history of words interests you.

But are we really free from activity when we are on vacation? As I think over my life time, I can remember some vacations that were so exhausting that I was glad to get back to work. Packing a reduced version of everything we need to survive away from home. (some seem to need much more stuff than others) Whether camping, visiting family, seeing sights, at the beach or in the woods, the daily excursions that accompany these trips; amusement parks, museums, national parks, hiking, swimming, cycling, boating, etc. all in an attempt to squeeze every bit of fun we can into that little window of freedom. I once could not understand why someone would desire to travel great distances to sit and read a book or even just sit and do nothing. I now find myself craving such quiet times of reflection.

To just sit on the beach and listen to the waves crash, to just sit on a remote trail and listen to real silence, to just sway on a porch swing and listen to the cicadas whirring in the trees, to drink in peace and quiet, a cool breeze, a gurgling stream, the sights sounds and smells of relaxation. I wonder how many of us have such real freedom from activity while on vacation, take time to reflect on how blessed we are and be still and know that He is God.

I will clime on an aircraft bound for Munich on August the 3rd and spend 14 days with some of the most important people in my life, Gerda, Stephanie, Elisa, Brandon and a large German family I have been privileged to be a part of for over 25 years now. There will be times of much activity that will leave us all exhausted, not a fatigued exhausted but a "wasn't that a great time" exhausted. But I most look forward to those quiet times, in the garden house, on an alpine trail, these are the things that rejuvenate my soul, my quiet times with God, these times will be interrupted, by welcomed intrusions of friends, family, food, fun and fellowship.

Enjoy what is left of this summer
Take time..., No, make time to drink in God's creation
Acknowledge and thank Him for all He has blessed you with.
Enjoy those blessings of people, places and pleasures
And be still and know that He is God