

Smoky Mountain Reflections, April 2011

Bright colors....when I think of bright colors, one of the first things that come to mind is Play-doh. I know that may seem a bit strange, but I can remember as a child being amazed at how bright they could make that squishy substance, and all that you could squeeze out of the Play-doh Fun Factory in bright pastels, and neon greens, purples, reds and yellows and in just about every shape you could imagine.

What got me thinking about Play-doh? Well, as I marveled at the amazing colors of spring this year, that was what came to my mind because it seems as if the trees, bushes, and plants in our area are just oozing with color, as if nature were being squeezed through one of those fun factories. Except that in this case, it is much more miraculous, much more amazing. The colors are so bright and beautiful that some are just indescribable. And it all happens in what seems to be a scripted choreographed sequence of color, texture, and vibrance that is really hard to explain.

It is this time of year when I marvel most at creation. I see the dead, hard brown tones of winter and the crusted and bark-covered surfaces start to burst forth into the vibrant greens of early spring. The warmth of spring gets the sap flowing in the trees and bushes. They give off wonderful fragrances as they burst out in the white blossoms of pear and cherry, the deep violet of red bud, and the sunny yellow of forsythias. The green fingers of daffodils, called jonquils around here, start to grow a green vase to hold their beautiful yellow flowers. Not far behind, is the rainbow of colors contained in tulips, lilies, crabapples, magnolias, and a whole host of other plants, spilling out in colors and aromas that can only have been created for us to enjoy. To think that these things would exist at random and were not to be enjoyed by the Creator and His creation, would seem to me a terrible waste of His amazing creative power.

It is in His creation that we often see things clearly, and we seldom question its wonder and simply marvel at it. Would that we could apply that same wonder to all blessings and aspects of our existence, but sadly our sinful nature gets in the way.

Instead of saying "Thank you, God!" and being amazed at His grace, kindness and benevolence, we question: "Why God??? Why do you have to be my Number one priority??? Why can't I just make you # 2 or #3???...You don't need my worship—I will just enjoy your creation on Sunday and pray at home. Loving the Lord with all my heart, soul, and strength?? That is too much work—how about if I love You when it is convenient for me?" When we do this, we cheat ourselves out of all the blessings, care, enrichment, edification and wonder that He seeks to shower on us in worship, fellowship, prayer, and in the reading of His word.

We should be amazed at how God blesses us through family, vocation, growth, learning, service, and submission. (That's right, I wrote the evil "submit" word!!) God blesses us with roles so that our lives can be peaceful and in good order, productive and in accord with His will. But loving our neighbor as ourselves is too selfless for our liking. We prefer to make ourselves Number #1! I need to take care of Number #1 first! Find a biblical passage to support that selfish statement! Instead of saying, "Thank you God," we chafe under authority. Why can't I... (fill in the blank). *Why can't I?* is a man-centered, me-centered question. Would it not be better to ask what does God give, that we might seek His perfect will, guidance and timing?

Would it not be better to willingly submit to our parent, spouse, teacher, pastor, employer, government, while trusting that God, who put them over us and has our best interests at heart? This is a foreign concept to the me-centered, instant gratification world we live in. It is actually possible that those whom God placed in those roles may not be evil monsters who hate us, but are actually fallible beings who, just like us, are struggling to do God's will in their lives.

So if someone presents to you guidance that you are not particularly happy with, simply ask yourself: am I not happy because I did not get my way, or am I not happy because that is a violation of God's law. If you are being given direction that violates God's law, submit loving correction, but if you just do not like the guidance....temper your rebellious sinful nature and ask God to help you to appreciate and honor in a biblical fashion all the authority He has placed in your life.

Be appreciative of His presence in your life in the same way that we all marvel at His vibrant, beautiful creation every spring.

Have a blessed spring and a wondrous Easter!