



## Celebrate Spring!

Doreen Sturge, Toronto, Ontario

**W**hat a glorious day it is when spring arrives. The ground has been hard, the air cold, you've begun to wonder if you'll ever forget about winter boots. Then it happens! Of course, it has been happening gradually — snow disappearing — some rain — then there is the morning when you open the door and the air is fresh, see a few crocuses sprouting, a bud on the tree. You get a boost of energy. It's time to wash the dirt of winter away from the windows, the car and the garden tools await our use. We all look forward to the first day of Spring, March 20<sup>th</sup>. Spring is a time of beginning. A time of rebirth.

Let us join in worshipping a great and mighty God — God of the seasons, Creator of the world

**Chorus:** *Great and Mighty Is the Lord our God*

**Song:** SASB 993/TB Swedish Melody *How Great Thou Art* (verses 1 and 3)

### Prayer:

*As we look upon Your Cross, O Christ, filled with wonder and with awe at the love that brought You to it, humbly we confess that we have no offering meet for such love, no gift fit for such a sacrifice.*

*You were willing to go to the Cross so that humanity might forever be haunted by its sign, might return to the foot of that Cross to be melted and broken down in the knowledge of Your love for us and all people everywhere.*

*With bright skies above us, the fields and woods and gardens bursting with new life and beauty, how can we fail to respond? With the clear notes of bird songs challenging us to praise, with every lowly shrub and blooming tree catching new life and beauty, our hearts indeed would proclaim You Lord, and we would invite You to reign over us and make us truly Your own. May Your healing love invade our inmost hearts, healing sorrow, pain, frustration, defeat, and despair.*

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*May this day create within us a love for You of stronger stuff than vague sentimentality — a love which seeks to know Your will and do it. So grant that this day of hallowed remembrance may be the beginning of a new way of life for each of us, a new kind of living that shall be the best answer to the confusion and to the challenge of evil in our day. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

*by Peter Marshall*



### **Devotion:**

The earth, with its cycles of change, brings rebirth to plant life each year. Rebirth and renewal in the human heart needs to occur as well. A precious moment many have experienced is the time when you held your new born child in your arms — so sweet, so pure, so innocent. Not for long! We quickly see how selfishness, disobedience and defiance of authority emerge. “No!”, “Won’t!”, What a way to treat a parent! What a way to treat God! We have to admit that we are included in the

“all” when Paul said in Romans 3: “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” I’d like us to take a look at David’s experience of cleansing, and renewal as described in Psalm 32. David is looking for forgiveness. He was a great man of God — but he was also a great sinner. David wrote this psalm as a result of his encounter with Nathan the prophet who confronted David with his sin of adultery. Bathsheba became pregnant — so to cover up his sin, David arranged to get Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, in the front of the battle so he would be killed. Confronted with the truth of what he had done, David admits in 2 Samuel 12:13, “*I have sinned against the Lord.*”

### **Spring is a time of beginning. A time of rebirth**

In Psalm 32 David expresses the joy he experienced when his sin was forgiven. He gives us an opportunity to look at sin and its pardon. There are several words used for sin in Psalm 32:

**Verse 1:** “*Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven.*”

**Verse 2:** “*Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and is whose spirit is no deceit.*”

**Verse 5:** “*Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.*”

According to David Hubbard in Psalms for all Seasons, ‘transgression’ refers to rebellion or mutiny — a word used when soldiers turn against their commander and fail to obey orders: David knew the commandment, Thou shalt not commit

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adultery, but did it anyway. The word 'sin' means to "miss the mark." 'Deceit' is the attempt to cover up — to pretend to be upright when we are far from it. 'Iniquity' describes twisting away from God's path, to deviate from His standards. We are rebels who miss the mark, wander from the right path. How vigilant we need to be to stay on track. Such failure weighs on us heavily! Note David's experience in verses 3-4: "*When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long, for day and night your hand was heavy upon me, my strength was sapped.*" We sense his inner struggle, his discontent and failure. Worry and guilt robbed him of his energy. You have seen pictures of guilt: He shuffles throughout the day — head lowered — can't look you in the eye. She feels uneasy. Wears an anxious expression — never sure what she is doing is the right thing. He bows his head to pray — but the words won't come. Guilt blocks communion with God. It ties him in knots. But it is not necessary to live that way. Verse 5 David's admission: "Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave the guilt of my sin." Beautiful!

**David uses a number of words for pardon:**

In verse 1 'Forgiven'—We experience forgiveness when sin is taken away. Sin is described as a burden to be removed—lifted. Think of Albert Orsborn's song — "Thou Lamb of God Thou wonderful Sin Bearer!"

Second — whose sin is (v. 5) 'covered'—concealed from sight. From the Quest study



Bible: We cannot sweep sins under the rug and think everything is fine because they are hidden. When God "covers" sins, He does away with them completely. The image of covering sin was linked to the blood of the sacrifice that covered one's sin. When God saw the blood, He no longer saw the sin—and since God sees everything, what He does not see does not exist. Forgiven and forgotten! And finally, (v.2) the old King James word 'impute' but clearly written in the NIV "*The Lord does not count against him.*" Impute meant to put to one's account. God does not credit our sin to our account. When we are forgiven, the account is clear! He paid the debt, we are free.

Can you recall the moment in your life when you wanted God to make you a good person? Can you recall moments — at camp, retreats, in a small group, on a quiet walk when God has come near



in cleansing and renewing grace? Like David, we need to proclaim — How blessed I am because my transgressions have been forgiven, my sin is covered. I rejoice in the Lord because He has made me upright in heart!. May we all continue to know that abundant grace that keeps that sense of spring freshness in our souls!

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**Prayer:**

*Lord we are so grateful to You for Your saving work at Calvary. We are forgiven, washed clean, made ready to live life well. We confess, dear Saviour that we have often missed the mark and let You down. Give us a spring cleaning—wash the remains of winter from our hearts. As we come up to the Easter season, we pray for the those to whom we minister around the word that they as well as friends and family will experience new birth in these days. Use us to that end, we pray. We cannot forget those who have been devastated through tragedy, and for those who deal with sickness and stress in varying ways. May they know Your presence, O Resurrected and Powerful Saviour. Amen.*

**Closing Song:** SASB 371/TB 666 *Heaven Came Down* (verses 1-3)

**Benediction:** Go, my friends. Enjoy spring and may it be spring in your soul!



***“Forgiveness is as natural to love as fragrance is to flowers.”***

***Bramwell Booth***