

As the leaves turn and fall, we find ourselves in a season that speaks quietly of endings. The vibrant greens of summer surrender to gold, rust, and crimson. Trees let go. The air grows still. And creation itself seems to exhale.

Autumn is beautiful—but it is also honest. It reminds us that life includes loss. That even the most faithful branches must release what they cannot hold forever. And the body must release the soul to return to God from whom it came.

This week, I lost a dear companion, on my birthday no less. He was with me for more than 15 years. His presence was steady and unconditional. His death feels shockingly too soon, too sudden, and has filled my heart with a great sadness, one I have not felt in a very long time. And like the trees outside, I feel stripped bare.

I know that the Scripture reminds us:

*Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain; but if it dies, it produces much fruit (John 12:24).*

But it still hurts ... a lot.

Jesus spoke these words not to glorify death, but to reveal its mystery. In Christ, even dying becomes a doorway to life.

My pal was there at my rising and my sleep. He was always happy to see me, even when I was stressed. He loved eating with me, and even snuck some food from the table. His presence and sloppy kisses oftentimes gave me the smile I had missed all throughout the day. And though he is no longer with us in body,

his memory and the many photos I have remain—like seeds scattered in the soil of our hearts.

Autumn teaches us to trust the unseen. Beneath the fallen leaves, life is preparing to rise again. Beneath my grief, and beneath your grief, grace is at work. And in Christ, we know that death is never the final word.

So, I grieve this week for my cat, my pal, my buddy and companion, Alphonsus, I am reminded more profoundly that while the pain I feel is real, it is but only a fraction for those of you who have lost loved ones – members of your families that we remember this All Souls Day.

- Let us not grieve as those without hope.
- We remember and give thanks.
- Let us carry forward the love we gave, received, and shared ... and let it shape how we live.

Because in every season—even the autumn of the soul—God is faithful. And the promise of resurrection is already stirring beneath the surface.

Amen.