



I think of the season of Summer as a season of seasons. What do I mean by this confusing statement? Basically, when I think of summer, I don't think of the entire season itself, but rather think of the different moments the season of Summer presents, usually tied around food/garden. It begins with Memorial Day weekend, when I give my grill a good tuning as we march our St. John's, Ringtown float through the Memorial Day parade and fresh lettuce is there for the making of salads. This is followed shortly thereafter by the advent of strawberry season and Vacation Bible School. The Fourth of July moves the season along with more vegetables ripening in the garden and fresh cherries available to delight my taste buds. This week, our broccoli is ready to be picked and peas are tasting so sweet as we continue to enjoy fresh salads and wonderful herbs. Some further joys await in the near future as soon we will be pulling our garlic for drying and use and watching the tomatoes ripen on the vine. If you are anything like me, you find yourself thinking about that moment when your first tomato is ripe enough to pick, and when the local sweet corn can make its way from the field to your plate. Right now, I'm dreaming about the first Cherokee Purple tomato coming off our vine, to be made into a salmon BLT, with a few slices reserved for simple salt and 25-year balsamic vinegar. It is a flavor burst which will bring pure joy to the taste buds. The season continues through the harvesting of our potatoes (that first plate of garlic mashed potatoes, both ingredients from our garden, will be wonderful). While your gardens/fields may provide other tasty delights, ours usually last until the end of summer and the Labor Day holiday. Summer becomes a gift which keeps on giving, as God's wonderful blessings grow abundantly and provide us with rich delights to tickle our taste buds and fill our bellies. Along the way, we get to hear the song of the birds fill the air, the warming rays of the sun and the fresh air bring us comfort as we feel fully alive in their midst and see the deep green colors of life, interspersed with other hues brought by flowers, plants and animals, all

reminding us of the amazing wonder of God's gift of life.

This is the season of Pentecost as well. It is appropriate that Summer and Pentecost are linked. During the season of Pentecost we pay attention to the Spirit of God at work in the world. This Spirit, God's breath of life, is shared with us through the Gospel lessons each Sunday which remind us of the life-giving grace and love God touches us with again and again. Through stories of Jesus speaking in familiar parables, healing the sick, feeding the hungry and teaching his disciples about God's abundant love we are blessed with a deeper, better understanding of God's active love unleashed in our lives, and of our mission to share this love with the world. This love, like the tomato plant, grows in the presence of the Son (sun) in order to bear fruit and bring joy and nourishment into the lives of God's people. It is no wonder that Jesus used so many agricultural references in his teachings to help his followers understand the presence of God in their lives and how the very kingdom of God is touching them in the present. We, too, know this presence when we encounter acts of love and kindness, and when we are able to share actively this love with others. In these encounters where God's love is made known, it is as if we taste that first tomato or ear of corn, and are surprised once again by the fullness and the richness of its taste as we are filled with joy. We think we know what it will be like, but in the first bite of the tomato or in the first impact of the sharing of God's love, it is as if we taste or feel for the first time. We sense the pleasure, the joy anew.

This year, may your Summer proceed with delight, and may you be touched by the riches of the season as it unfolds. Along the way, may you encounter this joy anew, in surprising ways which help you to appreciate greater God's wonderful blessings. May you also encounter God's breath of life, God's Spirit in these days, so you may find in his gift of Jesus ever newer ways of experiencing God's love for you.