

Reflections on the Death of a Friend.

As a late Autumn storm causes the fruit that survived Summer to fall to the earth, so old friends are dropping all around me. I wonder who will be next, as I ponder my own mortality.

April 2019

Dear fellow Pilgrim,

Grace and peace to you in Christ Jesus our Lord. In Him alone we have the forgiveness of sins, and the assurance of life everlasting. He is the One who upholds the mighty universe by the power of His Word. Without His knowledge and permission not one sparrow falls to the ground. He rules in the affairs of men and bends all things to His will. Wicked rulers are putty in His hands. He permits the rolling waves of lawlessness to go only so far as they crash against the rocks of His sovereignty.

You dear child of God are never alone, never forgotten, never forsaken. You are the focus of His attention. He gives to you the undivided resources of His infinite mind. He can hold in His gaze and contemplation a zillion souls at one moment in time, and yet give to each individual the attention that youthful ardent lovers give to each other.

God is not like us. He is very big, very old, very young, very powerful, very patient, very wise, very intelligent, very kind, and very good. He is a trillion times better than the person you admire the most. He has emotions like us. He is a real person. He can sing for joy, and sometimes He cries when He tastes the pain that sin has made.

This "sin thing" is not a part of His doing. It resulted when a third of His children decided they were smarter than He was, and embarked on a journey of, "my way" experimentation. The human race has been singing Frank Sinatra's, "I did it my way," for a very long time now. They have finally

reached the stage where they are destroying the planet. Humans once made in His image are running out of options as they face annihilation.

But God. That is the one great comfort. But God. He is not finished with us yet. He has a plan. His big plan went into overdrive when He decided to join us. He actually became a human. He was born in the same way we are born. With pain and discomfort. In a shed at the back of a run-down motel in an average little town, a million miles from Rodeo Drive.

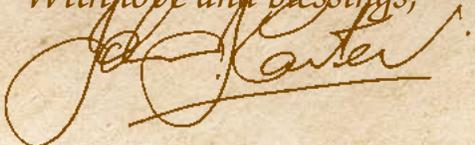
It's almost too hard to believe, but it's true. He is coming back. He has a rescue plan. He is returning to the battle field (Hacksaw Ridge) where He died on a horrible Roman cross for our sins. It's almost too hard to believe, but it's true.

Today He is thinking about you. He is thinking about your worries, your family, all the things you need to get done today. He especially enjoys imagining how happy you will be when you finally get home and He throws open the door and says, "Welcome home." He has written your new name on the door of the place Jesus called, "The Father's House."

All this is true. These few words I have written are a synopsis of what I have studied for more than 60 years in His book, the holy Bible. These truths are what sustain me. They give me light in darkness, and comfort when I hear the news that another old friend has died. Safe in Christ. Glory at the Homecoming. No more tears.

It is my hope today that you, dear friend of mine, will be filled with a sense of His closeness and His love for you. Remember, we are going home soon. Our best days are still to come.

With love and blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Carter". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed text "With love and blessings,".