

# Shepherd's Staff

May 2025

*We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.*

*"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!"*

*Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church*

*Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m*



## APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS

**Source:** <https://www.hbcass.org/news/april-showers-bring-may-flowers>

**Author:** Brian Hedges

Spring manifests life in many forms. On May 18, we will witness the graduates of Parkersburg CRC, Savannah Ascher and Kellen Reints, step forward into the next phase of life. Their graduation affirms they are stepping fully out of adolescence into adulthood. Just like the old hymn goes, "No turning back, No turning back." The cycle of life produces tears of joy and sadness, feelings of relief and anticipation along with some fear and trepidation. Life is wild, full of twists and turns so no one can be 100 percent certain of what lies ahead for every student, but the fruit of a faithful saint growing into responsible adulthood brings a fragrance and beauty to life that is hard to describe, but it is appreciated by all.

It is spring, the time of year when the rain flows and then begins to slowly reveal the growth and beauty of creation and our Creator. Parents who can remember their child's first day of school like it was yesterday are now preparing to wish them well as they travel off to college, work and the next phase of their adult life.

You have heard the phrase "April showers bring May flowers." That saying is traced back to a poem written by a man named Thomas Tusser in 1557 who wrote, "A Hundred Good Points of Husbandry," which gave all sorts of advice about gardening. As I write this article, I'm reminded of the truth in this statement as the temperatures have moderated, rain is falling and we are making up for a dry winter. The scripture promised "early" and "latter" rain as a blessing to the children of Israel (Deuteronomy 11:4, Job 29:23, Proverbs 16:15, etc.). The early rain would occur in the spring as it does in the Midwest to aid in the spring growing season. Likewise, the fall rain or "latter rain" would bring another growing season, which provided another full growing season in the fall. It was in these two growing seasons God blessed Israel with enough moisture to plant and harvest their corn, wine and oil (Deuteronomy 11:4).

Like Israel, each season we see God bless with beautiful fruit. Like the climate in Israel, we have a spring and a fall season where we focus heavily on the word of God. We could liken that to the "early and latter rain."

### Parable of Sower

The parable of the sower speaks to the condition of the heart-soil in Matthew 13. In husbandry, moisture content is an important aspect of soil preparation. Soil that is too dry is dusty or hard, making it unable to sustain fruit like the hard heart mentioned in Matthew 13:3-6. Likewise, soil that is too wet loses nutrients and

becomes equally ineffective for fruit production. The right soil conditions for growth are a balance between moisture, temperature, and God's divine providence. In the case of physical fruit production, God employs the creatures of the earth to provide nutrients for the soil and plants grown. God takes everything from worms to refuse to formulate the right conditions for growth. The human heart, like the soil, needs a touch from God to both hear the word and reproduce fruit that remains.

The resurrection of our bodies is also likened to the processes we see in husbandry. Paul likened the process of sowing and harvest to the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15. The seed going into the ground doesn't have nearly the scale and glory of the plant that is produced in the time of growing and harvest. We see that as glorious as Jesus was at his first coming, his resurrected state far excels the glory of his earthly incarnation. It is this reality that reminds us *"that it doth not yet appear what we shall be"* (1 John 3:1-3). The hope of our lives and the human race is found in the Lord Jesus Christ and his death, burial and resurrection. Jesus is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25) and he not only promises resurrection, but personifies it. No matter what season of life you are in, you can rest in the comfort of knowing you serve a risen Savior who brings life from death. Every time we plant a seed and watch the miracle of growth, we are seeing witness of God's resurrection power in the pictures offered through creation.

As miraculous as the fruit of the garden can be, the reality is that gardening requires effort. April showers may bring May flowers, but if we don't work continuously tending to the garden, that quickly gives way to a garden of weeds pictured by the tares in Matthew 13. In my home the gardener is my wife. Every day after her morning bus route and the first thing in the mornings through the summer, you can find her in the garden, tending to the tender plants. As they grow she waters and weeds them. It's hard to believe something so natural could need so much work! If you leave a garden unkept, it turns into a jungle! This is the reality of our hearts and ministry.

God placed man in the garden to "keep" it. There was work to be done. The scripture tells us to *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23). If we are not diligent in keeping our heart, it won't be long before we are overcome with weeds. God certainly does his part, but fruit will not come without diligence on our part. Salvation is free because Jesus purchased it, but spiritual maturation and fruit producing comes when we keep our heart with all diligence. So here are some practical things we could consider as we spring into May.

- **Moisture content.** Make sure your heart is watered frequently and consistently. A devotional life early in the morning, which includes scripture reading, meditation, and study apart from other assigned ministry study responsibilities, will go a long way to keep the soil of the heart fertile for fruit production.
- **Soil conditions.** Sometimes the soil is rocky or lacking in key nutrients. Sometimes we must go deeper in tilling up the fallow ground. If you sense your heart is growing hard to the things of God, seek out truth that breaks the heart in pieces. *Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?* (Jeremiah 23:29) The hard heart can be tenderized by the skillful application of God's word as it pierces beyond the superficial into the depth of our heart, cultivating a tenderness to the Spirit of God. Forsaking the word is a sure way to guarantee the heart grows harder and harder. Submitting our will to the will of the Father breaks up the fallow ground and crushes the rocks of bitterness, self-will, and pride. Even the well-tilled heart needs rock removal from time to time. The more you work the soft soil the more access you get to the rocks buried deep beneath the soil that rob us of the fruit of the Spirit. Just last week when I tilled our garden, I dug up a huge rock buried deep beneath the soft and pliable soil. While we live in this world, we must always be asking the Lord to relieve us of the stony heart. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.* (Ezekiel 36:26)

- **Temperature.** As Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:* This applies to planting as well. We all know cold temperatures will damage and kill plant life; however, we don't usually plant in the heat of summer either because the harsh temperatures are not conducive to new growth. Timing is everything. Mature plants can bear harsher conditions than tender plants. Mature plants will survive the heat of summer as long as they are watered frequently, and spared pestilence and predators. The tender seed plant prefers a more gentle and moist climate. The mature child of God understands the best time to cultivate the seed of God's word is in the early morning before the heat of day. The time to prepare for eternity and the Day of the Lord is now! Don't wait until later to prepare for fruit, the season to sow, water and reap spiritually is now.
- **Get to work.** *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* (Ephesians 2:10) We are to approach the study of God's word as a workman according to 2 Timothy 2:15. We cannot be a biblical disciple unless we are a working disciple. God placed Adam in the garden to keep it, to work it and maintain its order and beauty. Our salvation is to be worked out with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Taking care of the fruit God provides is a calling unto itself. Ask any parent, it is the vocation that occupies the majority of their working years.

Our students, Savannah and Kellen, are preparing to enter a phase in their lives where work will become a necessary part of providing fruit that sustains them for the rest of their lives. Let's not sin against them in ceasing to pray for them and supporting them as they take their next steps. May God continue to cultivate our hearts to bear fruit, much fruit and fruit that remains for his honor and glory for all eternity as we sow, water and reap in his field.



**Class of 2025**





- 5/3 Steven Kramer
- 5/4 Dale Meester
- 5/9 Emma Haan
- 5/14 Sharon Schipper
- 5/17 Ken Roberts
- 5/20 Amy Mulder
- 5/21 Irvin Haan
- 5/28 Rollyn DeGroot
- 5/29 Ryan Edeker



- 5/14 Steve & Charlene Kramer
- 5/16 Delbert & Sharon Cordes



**Reminder:** If you have anything you'd like included in the Shepherd's Staff, please try to have it to Wendy Armstrong by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. The goal is to have the newsletter in your mailboxes on the last Sunday of the month.

