



In the Garden

I was huddled with a small group of people on a cold winter day, our backs to the wind. We had pushed in as close as we could get, respectful of the family sitting in the chairs under the tent in this little country cemetery. Wife, mother, grandmother, aunt, friend – her name was Mary.

The minister asked us to bow our heads and it was then that we heard his clear tenor voice quietly singing “I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses.” I have known this hymn all my life, but I don’t remember ever hearing it sung at a graveside. And yet I was taken immediately by the calm that took away the cold for a moment. I came home from that funeral and read the hymn slowly. Over and over. The reading of it did for me what the hearing of it did in that place of sorrow. It spoke peace to my heart. And I knew . . .

A funeral service is not for the one who has died. It is for those who must now live on without this one they love. I too have been there, the one in the chair, the one leaving to the ground my husband, the father of my children. What I had to have sitting under that tent was something that would give me the assurance that the God I had met in the garden when life felt good would still be in that garden for me in my pain. As much as I needed the comfort of those around me, I more needed the sense of God, who is the same yesterday, today and forever.

“He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own,” can very well be sung at a funeral to say to the grieving: “I am where I have always been. I am wherever you are, be it joy or sorrow.” And it can be sung any old day of the week to call me into that place in the core of my being where only God and I can go together.”

© 2010 Verdell Davis Krisher