A voice says, “Cry!”
   And I said, “What shall I cry?”
All flesh is grass,
   and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades
   when the breath of the Lord blows on it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
   but the word of our God will stand forever. Is. 40:6-8

The change of the seasons always brings with it nature’s reminder that everything in this world is transient. It isn’t fall yet, of course; summer is overgrown and shows no sign of going anywhere. But school begins tomorrow, so you know that autumn is around the corner. All the green leaves, so thick and lustrous now, will soon be raked into earth-toned piles.

What is true of leaves is true of people. No matter how much we appear to be in the prime of life, time moves on. The closest we get to seeing something eternal is seeing something perennial. We all grow old, but people are perennial—every child is a sign that God is not done with the story of the world yet.

Normally, we take comfort in things that come and go but always come back again. You might not be a first grader, but somebody is. We feel a sense of connection, a sense of permanence, when recurring things keep recurring. That’s what makes major changes in life so unsettling, and permanent changes—things about which one might say, “It will never be like that again,”—such a source of melancholy.

Friday we held a little shower for the Arndt family, celebrating the birth of their new baby boy William. What a joy! Today, I found out that my elderly aunt died. She was in her nineties, but the news took me back to my childhood and memories at her house when she was about my age. People really do blossom and fade like flowers, just in super-slow motion.

God tells His prophet to cry out to the people that everything in the world comes to an end. It all lives a season, then dies. There is no place to put your ultimate trust or to be assured of final comfort. Except, of course, the Word of the Lord. Christ the Word Incarnate, endures forever.

The first day of school tomorrow will feature many comforting, unchanging, perennial aspects of human life, such as crisp new clothes, nervous children, excited children, hope-filled teachers, and boisterous laughter at recess. It will also feature alien things, unique things, difficult things, like masks, distancing, and strict regulations. Most importantly, though, it will feature the Word of the Lord.

No matter how difficult the changes happening all around you might seem, remember that the beauty of this life fades like flowers. But the Word of the Lord endures forever. Amen