



The Epistle

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**And the LORD will continually guide you,
And satisfy your desire in scorched places,
And give strength to your bones;
And you will be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.**

Isaiah 58:11

One of my favorite February day trips is to Longwood Gardens right outside of Philadelphia. There is an indoor garden there that is easily the size of a couple of football fields. After months of slate grey skies, frozen earth, and brittle light, you walk into a blaze of yellow, lavender and pink tulips, hyacinths and crocus. The smell of soft, tended earth opens your chest, softens your breath, and everything seems possible. You feel whole.

Isaiah likens the people of God, at their best, to a watered garden. What a perfect metaphor! Here's an example.

A couple of weeks ago, I was picking up games and candy for St. John's folks to make thirty Easter baskets for children in DYFS after Sunday services. You might be surprised by how much stuff it is humanly possible to stick in and balance on top of a shopping cart. There were plastic carrot baseball bats, bubble rings, cars, stuffed animals and giant lollipops. More than one person rounded a corner into an aisle where I was and, for fear of toppling the mountain, hesitated before walking past.

Miraculously, I made it to the check-out counter and started unloading. The woman ahead of me said, "That must be some party you're going to have." I told her about the Easter basket plan, and as she reached for her bags she leaned over my cart and handed me ten dollars. "Here," she said, "It's not much but I want to help." After she left the cashier smiled and came around the check-out aisle to secure the crate of chocolate bunnies onto the bottom of the cart. He looked up and said, "You are very blessed."

I know! Unemployment rates are soaring, banks are on the verge of collapse and a general mood of fear has set in just about everywhere. But in the face of all that, here was yet

