



## 186: A Late Summer Reflection

We've been wearing our burdens like thick, heavy furs, and summertime stepped up beside us whispering kindly, "May I take your coat?" I hope you've let her. It's been a few months of cool shadows under canopy of trees, long, late light, past their bedtime. The ripe taste of sun, and water, and dirt that's become fruits and vegetables deep red and bright orange. June arrived empty handed, a grand wide across her young face. Did she pull you to the coast, back in the sea to smooth out the jagged edges that have formed within and around you? Did you let the salt burn the wounds? Let the sand rub off the dead skin. Let the nighttime hold you still in quiet until the first promise of morning showed up on the horizon. Did she lead you to the hills? The smell of wet earth beneath the shadow of leafy trees filling you up and grounding you down. Or did June look more regular this year?

Keeping you close to home, to work, and obligation, eagerly poking her head into your kitchen, your backyard, your informal celebrations and family reunions. Bringing in watermelon and lemonade to remind you she's still here, even though you've got a lot going on. Maybe June didn't get much attention this year, refuse to carry shame about that. You'll be glad to know June is always happy to play a supporting role, content to be the warm, colorful backdrop of our lives. Humbly delivering us onward, bidding farewell with a wave and a sun kissed smile. Before she left, she handed us off to July, who may lack her energy, but still carries her hope. July showed up sweaty in a navy blue shirt, sat down beside us listening. Be honest. Do you have a complicated relationship with July? If so, you're not alone. Like the quintessential metal child, July stands between the young excitement of June and the seasoned wisdom of August. Holding the tension of work and play, planning and reflection, refusing to make a full choice.

July cast a vision for us about how to live in summertime, how to be people with conflicting desire, how to work when we'd rather be playing, and how to play without obsessing about work. July invites us to release our insistence on knowing everything, to settle in where we can, and to let go of the reigns of perceived control. Chances are we still haven't made our peace with July. The expectations are always high and the reality rarely lifts up, but still we made our way through together, and now we've arrived in the of August. If June came in like a child, August comes in like a mate. June and July made our house feel like home for a while, shared their memory making stories, and some heartbreaking life changing ones too. But August has arrived, and some of us do crazy things when she gets here, like pulling out false smelling candles and starting to make soup, even though it's hotter than a parked car after Sunday church. It's no wonder we do it.

August has eyes for the future and launches into a monologue as soon as she gets here. Talking at length about new shoes, changing seasons, and sharp yellow pencils. August comes in like a maid and readies the house in all her tenants for the transition. She sweeps under our couch and taps our crossed feet off the

coffee table. As she wipes the surface clean, she whispers, “Get ready, sweetheart. Change is coming.” We hang on her every word. In summertime and always, the sun doesn’t just appear in the sky in a shock of fire, but rises up slow every morning and sinks down the same way every night. If you stare as it happens, the change is hard to see, but if you close your eyes and count to 20, everything’s different when you open them back up again. It’s because a lot happens in the transition, secret things, beautiful things, formational, and spiritual things.

So we clear the decks. We clean out the car. We ready to schedule as best we can. But as we do, we’ll remember there’s no magic formula accompanying the turning of a new month. There’s only carrying on as we already are, another year of summer drawing to a slow close. We welcome August now because we must, we’ll bring both the gifts and the burdens of June and July with us as we move ahead. As the list fill up and the schedule shift, we’ll continue to pay attention to how August reveals God differently than does October or February, and August reveals us differently too.

Before summer closes her eyes, before the trees begin to weary of holding up those armfuls of leaves, and fruits, and flowers. What gifts of summer have you unwrapped? What mirror is summertime holding up for you? What do you see when you gaze into your own reflection? What do you miss as you move into an unknown future? What are you glad to leave behind? For now, may you find moments in August that are for you a beautiful waste of time. May you feel free to linger with your people, to doddle over meals, to loiter in your own front yard. As your calendar reports for duty again, and your to-do list fills right up. May you remember how you are a human, not a machine, plan accordingly. As always, when you do your next right thing, do it with love.