

## Toward Spring

First written in 2000, this year's record snow and cold called this to mind, and I share it again.

I leave my car radio tuned to Public Radio. Every time I get in the car I am treated to a strange variety of informational snapshots. Hunting with a hawk. How coffee contributed to the Age of Reason. What would make a male turkey amorous. One day I was treated to a discussion of Inuit igloo building. The speaker was explaining how snow is the perfect construction material it is strong, readily available, easily shaped, and very light. And what's more, it's disposable – people can build a shelter quickly and easily, and leave it behind with no regrets. He pointed out that this has given us too low an opinion of Inuit culture. Since the Inuit leave behind no architectural wonders like Egyptian pyramids, we tend to think of them as having lower skills. In actuality, architects consider the spiraling dome, such as an igloo, the strongest and most elegant of structures. And yet each spring, these monuments to their building skill melt away without a trace of either the structure, or remorse.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians: So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day ... For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. While I have long understood this passage with my head, it has sometimes been hard to grasp this passage with my heart. There is so much about this life, my life, my world, that is good, it is simply beyond my imagination what would be better. What is better than a small child snuggled on your lap? What is better than the smell of lily of the valley? What is better than the pride of a job done well? What is so much better than these that I would not even look back with a sigh of regret at losing them?

The igloo answers my question. How is it that the Inuit people can leave behind these igloos, structures that were not only their best work and ingenuity, but also all that stood between them and cruel, cold and death-carrying winds? Was moving into a pre-fabricated ranch house what lured them out? Would even a fine stone mansion be enough that they would go without a backward glance? No. It is not a better house that lets them leave the old ones behind. It is spring. They leave behind not just an igloo, but all that made the igloo necessary in the first place - the cold, the storms, the ice are all gone.

It is not simply trading in an old shelter for a better one when we move toward what God promises. We leave the old shelter because shelters are not needed any more in the warm, fragrant, light-filled season into which God will draw us. We will leave behind all that seems so necessary in this life to ensure that we are comfortable and valuable and loved, because we will no longer fear pain, insignificance or loneliness. For with God, they are all gone.

It is snowing right now. I love snow. I will revel in it. I may even build something from it. I will continue to enjoy it until the forecast is for green grass and wildflowers. And then I won't look back.