

The Rev. Wayne Nicholson
St. John's Episcopal Church
29th April 2018
Evensong in Celebration of Spring

And see, now it comes, for spring is again in the land. And what was withered takes on new color and what was deathlike for stillness becomes vocal with new life. Here also was a valley of death, and behold life arises as from its winter grave. ...

We are a Resurrection People; our faith is grounded in the Resurrection of God in Christ, our worship, most especially at this time in the liturgical year, centers its focus on the Resurrection, and our Eucharist celebrates the resurrection of each and every one of us into new life as we feast and re-become the Body of the Living Christ.

Spring is a parable that reminds us of resurrection: The seeds and bulbs that lay dormant within the frozen earth begin to break ground. Trees that were dormant begin to green. Animals come out from their hibernations. And you and I, well, I won't speak for you, but I will find my flip-flops and my Hawai'ian shirts. Not before Memorial Day, of course, but still... they must be found.

It has seemed like a long, long winter hereabouts. There are still piles of snow in Ric's parking lot. Early daffodils got frozen by ice. Crocuses in my yard went back to hiding their purple heads. But the past few days... have made me smile.

We go through this every year – it's not a new thing to say, "Winter hanging on for ya?" I've been admonished not to plant before Mothers' Day. Our homeless shelter extended to late April because the weather is just so darn unpredictable. And all is grey and brown and lifeless.

The soul, too, sometimes experiences winter, the soul like a leafless branch. "...A deathlike stillness prevails in the inner life, and no ray of sunlight breaks through the clouds of indifference; when nothing spiritual springs up within us; when we bear no fruit, and when the feeling takes hold of one as though held in place to no purpose." ¹ But God, Creator of the seasons, brings forth the warming rays of the sun, the life-giving breeze, the heart-stirring sound of birds and bees and the beauty of flowers and greening trees. God, Creator of the seasons, lifts our souls and inspires us to moments of hope when all was despair, moments of joy when all was grief. Opening our ears and our hearts to the newness of life can restore our own lives and we, too, are resurrected.

And the fruit of our own rebirth, like that of the natural Spring, will mean the healing of a broken world, for the world, too, needs resurrection.

I have too often experienced grief, sadness, a winter of the soul with you. I have shed tears with you and for you. My heart has been broken with yours. Death, grave illness, unhappiness, mental distress, emotional pain – those have been broken pieces of the chalice that is St. John's.

And yet the chalice is mended again and again; "Behold," says God, "I make all things new." And the new chalice holds the new wine of forgiveness and healing and, yes, resurrection.

I've often wondered how people below the Equator hold the metaphor of Spring-as-Resurrection. Because down under, Easter is in the Autumn, heading toward Winter, not Summer. I'll have to post the question on FaceBook.

But for now, I will stand outside in the afternoon sun and let its light warm my ageing bones. I will get down in the dirt and marvel at the life that is emerging.

And I will offer up a song of great thanks for Spring.

Amen.

¹ <http://centerforfaithandwork.com/article/abraham-kuypers-theology-spring-winter-weary-souls>