

**Easter Day Year C – April 21, 2019 – Sarah D. Odderstol – St. John’s
Isaiah 65.17-25 – Psalm 118.1-2, 14-24 – Acts 10.34-43 – Luke 24.1-12**

*The day of resurrection! Earth, tell it out abroad
the Passover of gladness, the Passover of God.*

Cycles of death and resurrection are the rhythm of creation. From the beginning of human experience, human beings had to reckon with the daily loss and recovery of light and came to trust that after the night would come the dawn.ⁱ The change of seasons and the daily cycle are not the only symbols in nature of resurrection. The ancients measured time by lunations; they watched the moon wax and wane and disappear for three days and wax again.

The moon extends over a longer period of time the pattern of death and resurrection, and it does so in a way that awoke the wonder of our spiritual ancestors. Therefore, we are not surprised to find that in ancient times, almost every important ceremony took place at certain phases of the moon. Passover, and therefore Easter, are related to the moon, specifically to the first full moon after the spring equinox. The moon has a pattern that for the ancients seemed to mirror human experience of growth and decline and death and “its disappearance and return served as the pattern that promised that the disappearance of individual people and communities was never total and [never] final.”ⁱⁱ

In our day and age, one can easily lose sight of these natural symbols of the resurrection. Even before the sun has set, we turn on lights. We have a choice about how and when we experience darkness. One can easily forget that there are patterns and cycles that are beyond our control. One can easily forget that patterns of death and resurrection are natural. Moreover, the media constantly barrages us with bad news. All we seem to hear about is death, crisis and decline. Why would you even think to look for the resurrection if you are consistently told you are living in a graveyard?

The prophet Isaiah wrote to a people who believed they were all but dead. They had lost sight of God’s resurrecting work in creation. The portion of Isaiah that we just heard read was written shortly after the Jews returned to Judah after the Babylonian exile. Although they returned with high expectations for a rapid rebuilding of their homeland and an inevitable restoration of their national honor, the realities of their lives failed to live up to their dreams.

Isaiah spoke and wrote to remind his people that God’s work in creation was not finished at the end of the seven days. Not only is God not finished but God’s work of creation is ongoing and constant. The people of Israel would be selling God short if they only looked for restoration and rebuilding as evidence of resurrection, they were to expect to be apart of God’s new creation. In rich and exuberant poetry, Isaiah describes God’s creative work as a party – a celebration of God’s abundance –

where God's joyful nature overflows. No one is left untouched by the creative power of God's resurrecting work.

We come to church on Easter to celebrate the resurrection. Most Christians associate the resurrection only with the story of Jesus' death and his rising to life again. The prophet Isaiah reminds us that resurrection is God's power to create new life and redeem even the direst of situations. It is the work of all Christians to look for the living among the dead. Evidence of resurrection is all around us all the time.

Over the last week or so I have been collecting evidence of resurrection. Here is my top ten list:

Number 10 – My cats are shedding bales of fur – a sure and certain sign that winter's grip has loosened!

Number 9 – Last weekend Tiger Woods won the Masters for the 5th time. This was Tiger's first major win in over a decade...I imagine even he would call his win a hard won resurrection.

Number 8 – My son, Gibson, baked Gluten Free snickerdoodles...and they tasted like resurrection!

Number 7 – Our landscape is covered in a green haze of pollen. While I am not a big fan of pollen...it is evidence of new life!

Number 6 – How about that image of the altar cross gleaming as the smoke cleared in Notre Dame Cathedral? That looked like resurrection!

Number 5 – Dogwood burst into bloom

Number 4 – Millions of dollars are pledged to rebuild Notre Dame.

Number 3 – My young friend Benjamin gets to ring the bell. After three-and-half years of chemo, he is cancer free.

Number 2 – Millions more are donated to rebuild churches in the southern United States that have been damaged or destroyed by arson.

Number 1 – Look at this day! Is it not a beautiful gift of resurrection!?!

We live in a world created by God. From the mundane to the silly to the sublime, signs of God's resurrecting love are all around us. Creation is God's party and we are all invited. Jesus Christ is risen today! Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen everyday! Natural cycles of death and resurrection are the rhythm of life. When we celebrate resurrection, we free ourselves from the mire of a culture focused on destruction and death. We become Easter people – hopelessly joyful people who ooze gratitude for the resurrecting work of God that we see positively everywhere in creation.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

ⁱ Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Liturgical Spirituality*, (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), p. 73.

ⁱⁱ Pfatteicher, 74.