

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered-Down

Tuesday, June 30, 2020

A Joyous Easter to You!

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season.

—Paul to Timothy, 2 Timothy 4:2

'Tis the spring of souls today, Christ hath burst his prison, and from three days sleep in death, as a sun hath risen. — John of Damascus, 8th Century

One of the warmer months' delights is watching the flowers and foliage grow and bloom, each by their own divinely appointed timing. The daffodils and crocuses broke the grip of the winter gloom, later came the iris, the roses, and now the summer flowers which are brightening up our yard. And now, looking very much out of place and well off schedule come the Easter Lilies! Many Easters worth of flowers have been planted around Haun Manor and we are finally able to see and enjoy their glad display. These blooms are especially delightful this year as we were cheated out of our gathered Easter celebration in April.

The Easter Lilies are beautiful, but they do seem so out of place. While they may be following nature's calendar with great diligence, we think so much of them as a spring flower. Their usual early arrival has everything to do with the greenhouse industry and nothing to do with the natural order. It feels so strange to see this Easter spring flower (or so we think) making its appearance in the summertime. Something seems to be out of kilter, or perhaps we are missing something important.

Easter is a celebration traditionally bound to the season of spring. While scholars can argue endlessly the exact day of the Resurrection, all can agree that it was in the spring, as Passover is a spring observance. Spring also feels like such an appropriate time to rejoice in the Resurrection as we see so many plants coming to life at that time of year. But might we be a bit too married to the springtime in our notions of Easter celebration? The outdoor "off-season" lilies want to celebrate Resurrection later than the rest of us, and perhaps they are on to something!

The celebration of Resurrection was never meant to be glued to the springtime. Sadly, the Church over the centuries has argued endlessly and vigorously over the proper spring Sunday on which to celebrate Easter, and in this zeal to find the most appropriate Sunday for Easter celebration a major truth is obscured: *every Sunday* is Easter. And let us take this another step. For the one who trusts in the risen Christ, *every day* is Easter! Our life in Christ and the assurance of eternal life is real and near, every day of the year.

At graveside services I will often quote the second stanza of the great Easter hymn, "Come Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain."

*'Tis the spring of souls today, Christ hath burst his prison,
and from three days sleep in death, as a sun hath risen.
All the winter of our sins, long and dark is flying
From his light, to whom we give, laud and praise undying.*

At first, I used this reading only in the spring months, but soon realized the foolishness of limiting it to that time. This is a most powerful reading for a bitterly cold middle of January, for it reminds the cold grip of death that spring has come and its days are limited!

My flower gardens have taken it upon themselves to celebrate Easter, and while I first flinched at the invitation, I now realize the wisdom and fullness of their faith. In a season of anxiety and virus mortality counts, what better time to celebrate Christ who triumphed over the grave and invites us to join the victory celebration. *'Tis the spring of souls **today**.*

Blessings, and a Happy Easter to All,

Pastor Jim

Christ is risen:

The world below lies desolate.

Christ is risen:

The spirits of evil are fallen.

Christ is risen:

The angels of God are rejoicing.

Christ is risen:

The tombs of the dead are empty.

Christ is risen indeed from the dead,

The first of the sleepers.

Glory and power are his forever and ever. —Hippolytus of Rome, 190-236