

Resurrection Thaw

The Resurrection of Our Lord
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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

I Corinthians 15:19-26; Luke 24:1-12

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The sure and certain sign that spring has arrived is when my husband Randy removes the snow shovels from the garage and returns them to the shed in our backyard. There. Winter is over. It has had its day, but now spring has come and we rejoice in that. Although I have to admit that our snow accumulations this winter made for some quality family bonding time. I'm not speaking about being indoors with hot cocoa and board games. I'm referring to a shovel in each family member's hands and the heave-ho we gave to the snow...all together. Warms my heart just to think about that family time!

But you know, for all our rejoicing when spring has sprung, there are times when we can find ourselves in a rather wintry state of mind. I don't mean simply being a little pessimistic once in a while. I mean those times when we honestly believe winter's lifeless cold and darkness seem somehow permanent. No getting past winter, so keep the shovels in the garage—we'll need 'em.

Maybe I should explain. That wintry state of mind is a sickness to which each one of us can succumb. Sometimes we have hurts inside that are just so big and so deep we cannot imagine life beyond them. Wrongs done to us. Lives and loves ending for us. Like a looming pile of snow, these hurts become obstacles we can't seem to get around, keeping us in a perpetual wintry state of mind.

And sometimes there are things **we've** done that hurt **others** for which we have the deepest regret—and though perhaps we've been forgiven or have moved past the event—we really haven't moved past it at all. It is dredged up by the simplest of things, and we ruminate about it and feel guilty about it all over again. It is still winter in our soul.

Or this. Sometimes we hold tight to things we are desperately afraid we'll lose—visions we have of a glorious past, ideals and beliefs, traditions and people and things. And even if our clinging to them creates problems, even if our clinging to them keeps us and others from moving forward and growing and living, we've convinced ourselves it's winter and we must hunker down and stay put. These are some of the ways we experience a wintry state of mind.

There's a portion of poem I want to share with you. It's written by Dan Bollerud, pastor of Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church in Anchorage, Alaska; a place that knows winter well. This excerpt is from his poem about the Resurrection of Our Lord. Here's the part I want you to hear:

**In the beginning God created all and it was good
From nothingness came good and beauty and joy
tarnished by the desire of us all to be gods
to run our little dominion
And we did
And we died
And Christ came into our self appointed winter
confined not to the cold and dead dungeons of our world
and sprang forth in light and life to a world made new**

"Christ came into our self appointed winter." What a true and lovely turn of phrase. It's exactly what we proclaim today, and have proclaimed for 2,000 years on this whirling globe of ours. We proclaim that into our lifeless cold and darkness comes Christ.

We proclaim Resurrection thaw.

Now, it can be a slow thaw, maybe even imperceptible at times. It was slow for Jesus' first disciples. At early dawn, on the first day of the week, when the women hurried to the tomb where Jesus' body had been hastily buried before the Sabbath, they were prepared for what they thought they'd find. A corpse—the body of their teacher and friend—and even in their grief they were ready to do what was necessary to bury him properly. They knew he had died a criminal's death. And they knew the dead did not come back to life. So they expected to find the dead among the dead. They hunkered down to their task. You could say they came bearing oils and spices and a wintry state of mind.

But what they found was not at all what they expected: An empty tomb and two men in dazzling clothes who said words they could scarcely wrap their minds around: *"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."*

Living? Risen? How can that be, when we saw for ourselves his lifeless body? How can that be, when our hearts are so cold and dark with grief? No, no, it's winter.

But the men persisted with springtime words: *"Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again."*

And the thaw began as the women remembered Jesus' words, remembered Jesus' life among them. They returned from the tomb and told the eleven what they had seen and heard. But a wintry soul listens to **those** words and the first thought is "Ahh, this is an idle tale." Not angry with the women for saying such things, just sadly resigned to the situation. Things don't change. What's done is done. The dead stay dead. And except for Peter peering into the tomb himself, just as surprised as the women, our lesson today ends right there.

Yet in the final verses of Luke's Gospel, just beyond today's lesson, Resurrection thaw quickens its pace. Jesus appears to his friends. He appears to his friends again and again, and brings to their remembrance his words and promises. That remembering, like the warmth of early spring, is enough to find crocuses pushing their heads up out of the ground. Enough for Jesus' followers to let go of grief, leave behind fears, come to expect the unexpected from God, and walk out into the springtime air with hope that new life abounds in His Risen Son.

Today, Luke has given you and me all these words to remember—these words of our Risen Lord's witnesses who go to the ends of the earth to tell this story. They told the story so we might believe and find new life pushing its way through our own cold, hard soil and hope lighting up our darkness. They told this story so we might step out from our self appointed winter into springtime. And find ourselves truly forgiven. Fully healed. Unconditionally loved. With a future of possibilities awaiting us. And a world for which to care. And a God we can talk to, give praise to, and live with forever. He is risen indeed! Put the shovels in the shed, and let the Resurrection thaw begin!

AMEN.