

Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Society  
**Celebrating Spring's Resurrection**  
Rev. Jeanne Lloyd  
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As Unitarian Universalists we revere:

- the teachings of many great religious and philosophical leaders,
- the wisdom of science, and,
- each person's own spiritual journey.

And so, that means that what you will hear from this pulpit covers a wide range of theologies, philosophies, and moral conditions. And, from time to time, I speak about the life and teachings of the historical Jesus and what we can still learn from him. You'll note that I mentioned "the historical Jesus". As Unitarian Universalists we distinguish between the great historical prophet and revolutionary who lived over 2000 years ago and the man celebrated by a church that called him Christ, and the son of G\*d.

What's the difference between the historical Jesus and the man called Christ? To figure that out, you have to put yourself in the shoes of his disciples on that fateful morning when they went to the tomb three days after his crucifixion.

From my colleague, Kendyl Gibbons, I offer you this observation,

[The disciples were] grief-stricken, and afraid, knowing that [their] world [would] never be the same . . . It would take years and decades for them to work out what the reality of the empty tomb . . . actually [meant], for them personally, for the world, for the future. At first, the rolled back stone and the missing body was just one more indignity, one more complication, one more heart-break to deal with. [Fears arose.] Had their beloved leader's [body been stolen] by the Roman or Jewish authorities? Amidst all their . . . disappointment and grief, were they not to have even the simple comfort and closure of seeing him properly buried? The world as they had known it, transformed by the *possibilities* of healing, justice, grace and freedom, blessed by god's loving compassion, evaporated as their teacher [said his last words] on the cross. Nothing of his bright vision remained, only the memory of betrayal, and suffering and death.

And yet, it is in the confusion and anguish of that disappearance, that inexplicably empty tomb, that the first whisper begins, on the lips of . . . broken-hearted women, trembling at their own audacity. Risen? What if, the story isn't actually over[, they thought]? What if, the message still lives within us, is made real by who we are, together? What if the vision he taught us is still as true as it ever was; what if he is still among us, instructing, encouraging, calling us to *rise again*?

PAUSE

For you see, *to rise again* is the essence of the meaning of the word "resurrection". It doesn't mean to simply rise from where you are, but to rise again, from where you once were. As later Christians interpreted it, resurrection for Jesus meant he had faced death and risen past it to live again on another plane with G\*d. But, that's not all! One's belief in him and his resurrection could offer each of his followers, life after death, too. That's why Easter is important in the Christian church. The Christian Easter is *not* the celebration of the historical Jesus whom we revere for the prophet and great teacher

that he was. The Christian holiday of Easter celebrates the Jesus that died and rose again to be with G\*d, and who offers the same to his followers.

PAUSE

But, for us, generally speaking, our experience with death is different. Our world view is different . . . broader. Usually speaking, we see ourselves as members of a human species that is part of the interdependent web of life. As such we understand ourselves as part of the vastness of nature, and therefore . . . death and life are part of a sacred spiral of life that calls us to live this life as fully as is possible.

We see resurrection somewhat differently. We understand that while each of our individual lives are finite . . . nonetheless, death is part of the whole of life.

Forrest Church has written that "Life draws death in its glorious train." "*Life draws death* in its glorious train." Resurrection is part of nature's evolutionary process, we evolve through the generations, we live through the life cycles of nature. We rise again as the generations rise; we rise again even as our ashes create the organic matter from which new life emerges.

That's why, at this time of year, as spring emerges in all her glory, we often speak of the rising, again, of Spring, as part of nature's cycle of life. She comes to us again, blooming out of the dark hibernation of winter, and before that, the harvest of fall, and before that the splendor of summer.

Unlike some theologies, nature reminds us of the continuous and predictable resurrection and renewal of life. We *know* the cycle of life is real. It is reasonable, it is proven, and we know we are a part of it. It is **our** grounding.

PAUSE

As we persevere in our efforts to protect ourselves and humanity from a virus that threatens us, we nonetheless know it is as much a part of nature as are we. It is not inherently evil. It does not come by G\*d's hand. It simply is. We are part of the cycle of nature that is in these times presenting us with unfamiliar and life threatening challenges.

Our resurrection, our rising again(!) lays *not* in a ticket to an after-world, but in our faith in the best of humankind, in reason, in science and in the love that Jesus and Buddha and so many others have taught us to have for one another, *so that* we may collectively make the right choices, the compassionate choices, the just choices, on behalf of ourselves and humankind. We do not have all the answers. No human does. But, there is knowledge, there is science, there are best health practices, and there is human compassion to teach us, just as Jesus taught, how to rise again. These times are difficult, but they are part of the cycle of life and as such, we will . . . it will rise again. I encourage you to revel in nature's beauty as a partial anecdote to these times.

PAUSE

These words by Carole Mullen (from Sue Schaedler)

Spring is budding green joy  
Fresh breeze and sunshine  
Birds singing  
Water running  
Children sloshing through puddles on the sidewalk

Spring breathes anticipation  
Green shoots sprouting from the earth  
Unfurling into flowers  
The sweet scent of hyacinths  
A baby bird learning how to fly

Spring sweeps the dust out of our corners  
As we wake up  
As we look and listen  
to the promise of a morning sunrise  
To **joy** unfolding  
To a glowing new life.

Let us watch the cycle of life of which we are all apart. Spring is here now, and in time, it will come again.

May it be so.