

April 2021

Beloved,

As I prepared for Ash Wednesday this year, it occurred to me, that last year's Lenten season had never really ended. Emotionally and spiritually, 2020 gave us twelve months of Lent! Resurrection never seemed to come. We've trudged through the wilderness, tried to protect the weak, encouraged the other pilgrims along the way. We have made it once again to Holy Week. So, I've been thinking and wondering. Will resurrection come this year? And just what will resurrection look like? What am I hoping it will look like?



The Jericho Rose

Years ago, a friend put a strange looking package on my desk. She explained that it was a "resurrection plant." It didn't look like much, kind of like a miniature tumble weed. I immediately thought, "Cool, I can use this on Easter Sunday." The instructions explained that the Jericho Rose was a plant that could survive years in a dormant state, and then come to life when moisture was provided. I was game. I dithered for a bit trying to decide if I should try it ahead of time, but then reflected that since I didn't know how long it would take to go back to dormant, I had better just save it for the "day of." I read the instructions, it seemed pretty straight forward—basically, they consisted of—add warm water, and I waited for Sunday. For children's time, I had the warm water ready. I explained to the children a little something about the plant, and then poured on the water. Nothing much happened. A few scraggly shredded-wheat-like arms uncurled. But that was about it. Ah well, it was worth a try. We were a bit disappointed, but I invited the kids to come back up after the service to see what progress it was making.

At the end of the service, we took another look. It was a bit more open. But it didn't really look like much. I wasn't sure what it was supposed to look like, but definitely not a "Rose of Jericho" a name that conjured up images of a beautiful flower of the desert. Maybe I just didn't follow the instructions well enough.

Cue the fast forward effect of calendar pages flying past (I think all this video editing has gone to my head) to last week. I realized I could use some help encouraging a bit of soul-blooming in preparation for Easter. So, why not try the experiment again? I got online, and in two days, my small scruffy package was in my mailbox. This time, I wouldn't rush. I would add warm water at home, and then take pictures as it emerged from dormancy. Every half hour or so, I would check in with the little mini-tumble weed, and check its progress.

Sure enough, over time, the little shredded-wheat arms began to unfurl and stretch outward. And after a couple of hours, it even turned green! Okay, then. This is more like it, Resurrection! I gave it a few more hours, changed its water bowl, and by evening, it looked about as good as it was going to get. Um. Hm. To my chagrin, it wasn't anything like what I was expecting. It wasn't what you could call pretty. It wasn't glorious, or even charming. It

looked like one of those childhood experiments I used to do with my friends, where at the end we all just look at each other and say, "well, there's that."

I hate to admit I was disappointed. I did everything right this time around. I was patient. I followed directions. I made sure it had fresh water. And it "worked." The plant emerged from its dried state to become green. But the outcome was not what I was hoping for.

This week, we are very slowly emerging from the long Lent of the pandemic. I know we still need to be patient. We can't rush this. For the first time in over a year, we will be in the sanctuary. But we already know, that it isn't going to look anything like what we have been hoping. In comparison to what we all hold dear in our imaginations, it may even look down-right scruffy. But, oh Best-Beloved, it will be Resurrection! I'm going to reach out my scraggly shredded-wheat arms and give thanks that Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, Indeed!

Blessings and peace to you all! Alleluia! The Preacher Woman.