



Resurrection

For I know that my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;
And after my skin is destroyed,
this I know,
That in my flesh I shall see God,
Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold,
and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!

Job 19:25-27 NKJV

THERE IS NO FEELING QUITE LIKE SPRING. There is nothing quite like the exhilaration that comes from throwing open the windows after the long winter, and once more feeling the rush of warm air across the face. And there is nothing quite so delightful as watching the brown carpet of grass turn slowly back to green, seeing the barren trees and bushes begin to bud and leaf out, and breathing in the rich musk of fresh, black soil newly thawed.

Naturally, here in the Midlands (where all storm systems meet), the weather's progress—from winter, through spring, and into summer—cannot be plotted with certainty. Think “two steps forward, one step back.” While Tuesday may feel like swimsuit weather, Wednesday may come in with a hard freeze, or even a blizzard. This year, after days of warm and wet temperatures, the buds on the fruit trees were beginning to emerge when we experienced several nights of temps well below freezing. Daffodils, rhubarb, and emerging annuals quickly wilted and withdrew. Then yesterday we received several inches of snow. This weekend we are to be back in the seventies.

Hiwagwaga

The temporary frosting of snow notwithstanding, all around us are the sights and sounds of the land coming back to life. The bushes and trees, so recently bearing the appearance of death, now bear new buds upon their branches. The lawn is already green again, and almost ready to be mowed. The air is filled with the songs of returning birds.

All around us is the joy of returning life! Even the overweight Thornton feels it as he pins back his ears and races across the grass to scramble up the tree trunks, releasing the pent-up energies that have laid huddled and dormant over the cold winter. Gradually he will shed both his thick winter coat, and his few extra pounds, as he spends more time outside playing with the mice and birds.

To the eye, spring is not so much the emergence of new life as the resurrection of the old. Plants that last fall showed every sign of death, as they withered to dry stalks, left roots below the surface that are now releasing their next generation. Trees that all winter long bore every

sign of death were not dead at all, and now bear the beginnings of new branches, leaves and spring blossoms that will gradually become this year's fruit.

Then again, some plants and trees really do die, but last year they left behind seeds that lay dormant over the winter, and now will germinate in the warmth and moisture of spring.

Declared Dead

Close to two thousand years ago there was a man—a rabbi, a teacher, a prophet—who bore every appearance of death. He had suffered through hours of torture at the hands of abusive guards. He had been nailed to a cross for that generation's most hideous, depraved form of execution. While still there, He had been speared in His side to prove His death. Declared dead by the Roman soldiers and the man's attending family, He was quickly wrapped for burial, and sealed away in a borrowed tomb. A large stone was rolled into place. He was dead. Gone. Finished.

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away.

Matthew 27:57-60

There were many who breathed a sigh of relief that they had finally succeeded in putting to death this annoying prophet and teacher called Jesus. Finally he was out of their hair for good, sealed into a well-guarded tomb. And this time they were right: He really was dead. It was not just appearance; it was not just sleep, or trance, or hypnosis.

He was dead.

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died...

2 Corinthians 5:14-15a

Conquered Life

But it did not end there.

During the winter months, a tree may *look* dead, but it is not. It is dormant. And when an annual is frozen into true death by winter temperatures, what comes to life in the spring is not the original plant, but its offspring. In the natural world, whatever is truly dead, remains dead.

...and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

2 Corinthians 5:15

In that tomb near Calvary, however, where the lifeless body of Jesus was shrouded and sealed away, true life returned where before there had been true death. No natural phenomenon, this was the eternal Son of God fulfilling His promise.

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again."

Luke 18:31-33

There is no feeling quite like spring. There is no feeling quite like the return of green, exuberant life to a gray, barren world.

And there is no feeling quite like having a Lord who gave all of His life—every last bit of it, under the torture of the cross, and the excruciating burden of mankind's sin—who then rose from the grave to complete, resurrected life.

*He dies! the Friend of sinners dies!
Lo! Salem's daughters weep around;
A solemn darkness veils the skies,
A sudden trembling shakes the ground:
Come, saints, and drop a tear or two
For Him who groan'd beneath your load;
He shed a thousand drops for you,—
A thousand drops of richer blood.*

*Here's love and grief beyond degree:
The Lord of glory dies for man!
But lo! what sudden joys we see:
Jesus, the dead, revives again.
The rising God forsakes the tomb;
(In vain the tomb forbids His rise;)
Cherubic legions guard Him home,
And shout Him welcome to the skies.*

*Break off your tears, ye saints, and tell
How high your great Deliv'rer reigns;
Sing how He spoil'd the hosts of hell,
And led the monster death in chains:
Say, Live forever, wondrous King!
Born to redeem, and strong to save;
Then ask the monster, Where's thy sting?
And, Where's thy vict'ry, boasting grave?*

Isaac Watts