**The Resurrection of Daffodils**

**Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37**1 John 3:1-3

 In many respects it looked like a funeral. With shovel in hand, I was called upon to perform a function I have performed many times before. I put my foot on the head of the shovel, pushing down, loosening the dirt, until it could easily be removed. The soil was then set to the side as Michele prepared the freshly dug hole for the Daffodils. One by one they were placed in the ground, a small little community of bulbs. When Michele was finished, the soil was returned to the hole, tapping it down, so that the only evidence of a burial was the fresh dirt on the top. It could have been a funeral.

 We, of course, place the bulbs in the ground with the hope and the confidence that next spring they will appear in all their glory, signaling a new day, a fresh beginning. Something which is as good as dead is reborn, with new life. One could call it a resurrection.

 We take it as a given that winter is part of the process. The darkness of the earth, the coolness of the ground, the dormant season of rest, have a vital and important role to play in the hope that we have for a spring abounding with daffodils. Without the winter, without this season of waiting, this time of patience, there would be no spring, nor blossoming flowers.

 Many of us complain about this winter season. We mown about how cold it is. We gripe about the short days and the limited hours of sun light. We grumble about the snow and the ice. Yet, even when winter is extra long and extra cold as it was last year, all of us fully expect that spring will come, the daffodils buried in the fall, will find their rebirth. There are a couple families here who seek to avoid all the cold, snow and ice by escaping to warmer climates. But, they too fully expect that winter is a season of rest and renewal, patience and endurance, doing the best they can to time their return just as the daffodils emerge and the warmer days of spring arrive.

It is, of course, one thing to trust in the resurrection of daffodils, it is another thing altogether to trust that resurrection is at work in our own lives. Sometimes it looks like winter will have no end and this is never more true than when one encounters personal loss. It is one thing to place bulbs in the ground. It is another thing to place one we love in the ground. It is one thing to cover bulbs with soil; it is another thing to bury our dreams and our hopes for the future under heaps of disappointment, failures, and regrets.

Like us, the early Christians to whom the epistle of 1 John is written struggle with the question is resurrection real? Will spring arrive again in our lives or is this season of winter, this time of darkness, endurance and patience something that will never end? Sometimes that is precisely how it feels. This past week I officiated at a memorial service for a young 31 year old woman who took her own life. It is hard to imagine anyone taking such an action unless she has come to feel and believe that winter will never end, the day of renewal and resurrection will never arrive. Yesterday, I visited Pastor Mike Owens in the hospital. Pastor Mike was returning his granddaughter to her home this past Friday, when he was hit from behind at a stoplight by someone who was at best inattentive. After a three hour surgery, he has a rod in his neck, and is looking at several months of recovery. Pastor Mike was only now beginning to get his strength back from previous surgeries from cancer that has left him with only one partially functioning kidney. Mike is someone who believes in resurrection for daffodils and for us. But, no one would fault Mike if he has times when he wonders will this winter never end? Will there really be a day of resurrection? Do I have reason for hope?

 We are a congregation filled with people who believe following the path of Jesus means caring not only about the personal challenges we encounter, but also the systemic injustices and inequities that are part of our world. We have members who today are joining thousands at TCF stadium protesting the racist name Redskins. We have members who will today be joining other faithful folks outside of Ramsey County jail in prayer and protest against an unjust immigration system. It can become discouraging when one looks at how impossible it seems to change deep rooted systems of injustice. Certainly, the early Christians, looking at the power of Rome, must have asked more than once, will this winter never end? Will there ever be a day of resurrection, a season of renewal and new life where powers of exploitation no longer rule?

 This coming February, our Leader’s Retreat will be framed around a new book entitled “The Rebirth of God” by Celtic Theologian, John Philip Newel. Newel argues that Christianity is in a state of collapse and that the only question is will something new be reborn. Newell says the signs are all around us. Some people are in denial, some have decided to work harder than ever doing the same things with the same results. Newell asks, will there be a day of resurrection for faith itself?

 What we, of course, forget is that just like with the daffodils, the winter of our lives holds in the coolness of its depth, the promise of new life. There in the darkness, there in the fertile ground of our disappointment and loss, lies the potential of fresh starts, new beginning.

Loss, disappointment, death are commonly isolating experiences. They drive us into a deep sense of aloneness and separation.

 This is why it is so important we plant daffodils. You may recall, daffodils are not buried in isolation. They are planted in community. In his book, Newell draws upon the writings of Christian mystics who throughout the ages recognize the deep bond between all creation and human existence. “Humanity,” says Newel, “has emerged from the within the matter of the cosmos. We express the nature of the universe. What is deepest in us – our longing for relationship – reveals a yearning that is in all things…..(Jesus) is the memory of what we have forgotten – that everything moves in relationship. He comes to lead us not into a detachment from the earth or a separation from the other species and peoples of the world, but into a dance that will bring us back into relationship with all things.” Resurrection happens in community, in relationship with one another and with all that exists.

 Again, quoting Newell, “Julian of Norwich, the fourteenth-century Christian mystic, said most simply that we are not just made by God, we are made of God. We are not just fashioned from the afar by a distant Creator. We are born anew from the very womb of the divine”.

 I love the words of William Pen quoted by William Jackson in his commentary on our text from I John. William Penn writing at the death of a beloved member of his family says, “Those who love beyond this world are never separated….Death cannot kill what never dies.” What is it that never dies? It is the love of God planted within each of us, reclaimed, reborn, as we celebrate the promise that we are all part of God’s family. As first John reminds us, there is much yet to be revealed, the full flowering has yet to occur, but because of God’s love, implanted within every life, and all creation, we have this hope, for a new day, a time of wholeness and well being, a time when God’s justice is made to known to all.

 In the meantime, in our time, we plant daffodils, not in isolation, separated from one another, but in community, nurtured and supported by the presence of God’s love, breaking bread, sharing the abundance of God’s banquet, surrounded by the presence of saints, who have gone before, yet with us still. We plant daffodils when we hold one another up in prayer. We plant daffodils when we offer a listening ear or bring a warm meal. We plant daffodils providing support to a grieving mother whose daughter has just taken her own life. We plant daffodils with toiletries and warm meals shared with care and respect. We plant daffodils when we laugh together and cry together. We plant daffodils when we show up in protest of a racist name at a Vikings football game or with small groups in prayer and protest at the Ramsey County jail. In the winter of our lives we know that nothing can kill the love that never dies. We plant daffodils trusting in the promise of resurrection and new life.

**Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37**

***Although the Psalmist never hesitates to speak honestly with God about loss, struggles, and disappointments, the Psalmist nonetheless, steadfastly holds onto the promise that God’s love is everlasting. For the Psalmist God’s love knows no boundaries, from the East to the West, North and South. What’s more, God’s love is never limited to or defined by how we feel. God’s love is manifest in the power of God to renew and transform our lives and world.***

O give thanks to God, for God is good; for God's steadfast love endures forever. Let the redeemed of God say so, those whom God redeemed from troubleand gathered in from the lands, from the east and the west, from the north and  the south. Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to God in their trouble, and God delivered them from their distress; God led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town, God turns rivers into a desert, and springs of water into thirsty ground, God turns a fruitful land into a salty waste,
because of the wickedness of its inhabitants. God turns a desert into pools of water,a parched land into springs of water. And there God lets the hungry live, and they establish a town to live in; they sow fields, and plant vineyards, and they get a fruitful yield of the house a wooded height.

**1 John 3:1-3**

*In our second lesson the writer of 1st John reminds us that each of us is beloved by God. To turn away from that love is to forget who we are and who we might yet become. God’s renewing love remains the source of our hope.*

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.