

LENT DEVOTIONAL APRIL 11, 2017

The Rev. Jim Walker '03, Pastor, First United Methodist Church of Pittsburgh

SCRIPTURE

JOHN 12:20-16

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor."

DEVOTIONAL

"... unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed"

I've come to understand resurrection as more than just a theological concept or doctrine. Resurrection, for me, has become a daily reality, like breathing or eating or sleeping. We have these basic human needs: oxygen and water and food and sleep. Love and belonging and meaning and knowing. These are the things that we need to survive. Without them—we're dead. We don't exist. But I've learned to include another real gift in this list of basic human necessities: resurrection. It is a sometimes overlooked or misunderstood deep need we all long for. We all live within the rhythm of birthing and dying, dying and birthing. Our minds, bodies, and souls yearn for resurrection, like we crave water, food, and air.

The conflict, of course, is that death is not very appealing. We make every effort to avoid it. But the Spirit will not allow us to live in a made-up, artificial, death-free utopia. God knows what our real needs are and breathes into each of us the saving gift of death and life. God shakes the seeds from the tight grip of our fists. With gritted teeth and watery eyes, we sometimes reluctantly acquiesce—a great set-up for the punch line that is to come: Death is not the end. Death is the exhale that makes way for the inhale. The seed falls to the ground and becomes life, even more rich and abundant. Thus Jesus in John 12, who has just entered the city and is headed to his own death, charges us to see reality through the eyes of God, from the perspective of eternity, and surrender its natural rhythm.

My guess is that many of us are holding tight to some seeds today. Consider this word an invitation to let the seeds go, let them die, and join in the rhythm of eternity. Be nourished by the basic human necessity of resurrection.

In the name of The Resurrection, amen.

PRAYER

Come, Resurrection, and take my seeds. Awaken me to your work around me even at this very moment. As deep calls to deep, may my spirit be immersed in the love that is and causes me to become—the love that takes my death and turns me into life. Amen.

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