

“Practice Resurrection”

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Three Readings, Three Stories

Today, for the first time in 30 years, the holy days of three Abrahamic traditions fall at the same time: Passover, Easter, and Ramadan. Three ancient stories of resurrection and new life, all with meaning for today.

Although ancient, the most recent is the Islamic practice of Ramadan, a month of practicing self-discipline, sacrifice, and empathy for those who are less fortunate, encouraging acts of generosity. It is the practice of resurrecting a connection with God, the Divine, the Holy.

Easter is the Christian celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. Whether you believe Jesus was literally brought back to life or that his message lives on in other ways, the story of hope remains.

The most ancient is the story of Passover, the Jewish celebration of freedom from slavery in ancient Egypt; quite literally new life, celebrated in hope for liberation for all people.

Three stories of life arisen from disconnection, slavery, and death. And all in the Spring new life and the return of the light. The wonder and hope of resurrection is a universal one.

Today we offer three readings from a variety of sources with different perspectives on resurrection. We invite you to take the words into your mind and heart, opening to what they offer you today. What do these ancient stories have to say about our lives here and now?

Today's first reading is from the Christian bible at 1 Corinthians 15:51-55, The Message version.

But let me tell you something wonderful, a mystery I'll probably never fully understand. We're not all going to die—but we are all going to be changed.

You hear a blast to end all blasts from a trumpet, and in the time that you to look up and blink your eyes—it's over.

On signal from that trumpet from heaven, the dead will be up and out of their graves, beyond the reach of death, never to die again. At the same moment and in the same way, we'll all be changed.

In the resurrection scheme of things, this has to happen: everything perishable taken off the shelves and replaced by the imperishable, this mortal replaced by the immortal.

Then the saying will come true:
Death swallowed by triumphant Life!
Who got the last word, oh, Death?
Oh, Death, who's afraid of you now?

Our second reading invokes the Jewish celebration of Passover, titled, "It Is That Time and That Place" By Qiyamah Rahman.

Now is the time to call on the memories of the ancestors who thought they could not walk another step toward freedom—and yet they did.

It is that time and place to call on the memories of the ancestors who, when the darkness of their lives threatened to take away the hope and light, reached a little deeper and prayed yet another prayer.

It is that time and place to remember those who came through the long night to witness another sunrise.

It is that time and place to remember the oceans of tears shed to deliver us to this time, to remember the bent knees and bowed backs, to remember the fervent voices asking, begging and beseeching for loved ones sold off.

Time to remember their laughter and joy, though they had far less, and little reason for optimism, yet they stayed on the path toward a better day.

Time to hold to the steadfast hands and hearts and prayers of the ancestors that have brought us this far.

Time to make them proud and show them, and ourselves, what we are made of.
Time to show them that their prayers and sacrifices and lives were not in vain and did not go unnoticed, nor have they been forgotten.

Did you not know that this day would come?
Did you not know that we would have to change places?

Did you not know that just as our ancestors were delivered that you would also be delivered?

Have you not seen the greatness and power of the Creative Energy in the Universe called God that moves and has its being through human agency?

Have you not seen God in your neighbors' faces? In the homeless?

In the battered woman? The trafficked child? The undocumented worker? The dispossessed? It is that time and that place to know that it is our turn, that we must leave a legacy for our children.

And all the children.

It is that time and that place.

We are the ones we've been waiting for!

For that, let us be eternally grateful.

Amen and Blessed Be.

Our final reading is excerpts from Wendell Berry's poem "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front" written in 1973.

So, friends, every day do something
that won't compute. Love the Lord.

Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it.
Denounce the government and embrace
the flag. Hope to live in that free
republic for which it stands.

Ask the questions that have no answers.
Invest in the millenium.

Plant sequoias.
Say that your main crop is the forest
that you did not plant,
that you will not live to harvest.

Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts.

Go with your love to the fields.

Lie down in the shade. Rest your head
in her lap. Swear allegiance

to what is nighest your thoughts.
As soon as the generals and the politicos
can predict the motions of your mind,
lose it.

Leave it as a sign to mark the false trail,

the way you didn't go.
Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.

Practice resurrection.