

Finally this week, nature has caught up to the church's festival celebration of resurrection and new life. Though the cherry blossoms are long since past, the last few days of beautiful temperature, blossoming tulips and flowering trees are signs of God's design and glorious creation. But these signs, too, will pass away. They will be replaced with later beauties – I'm especially looking forward to the lilac blooms. Yet, these, too, will fade as the temperatures rise and move us into the heat of the season of summer. All part of the cycle of nature that God created. An eternal pattern is played out before our eyes. A pattern created by God.

Created by God, but nature and its pattern is certainly affected by how we live, how we use these natural resources. It's a delicate system that can be disturbed and thrown off-balance as demonstrated by global warming, extinct and endangered species. Nature, in its beauty and its pattern reminds us that life comes and goes.

But it's not only nature that reminds us of how precious life is. We humans do a pretty good job of this, too. The tragic shootings and deaths this week at Virginia Tech have done that for many. So even though we are in the season of Easter, living into the fullness of resurrection and new life, we have entered the darkness of GF again this week.

In the midst of the new life of the resurrection, we experience death and loss and all that comes with it. That's how it is for us on this side of the resurrection. Resurrection doesn't wipe death out of our lives here on earth – we still feel the pain, the fear and the grief of death. But as followers of Christ we tell and live a story of life coming out of death. This is possible because Jesus defies in the cycle of nature in the resurrection but not its truth.¹ There is life and there is death. But our Lord's resurrection bears witness that there is more to come; that death is not the end. All

¹ Tabor Bote, April/May 2007; Pastor Andreas Wagner

of creation, everything that God made is gathered into Jesus on the cross, and is in the process of being made new.

John's gospel proclaims this truth for us today. Jesus has appeared three times since his resurrection in John – once to Mary Magdalene in the garden and twice to the disciples behind closed doors. Some of the disciples' grief must have been washed away by these appearances, yet, they still don't have him in their midst. Knowing he is alive is not the same as being able to walk together on the road to the next town listening to his teachings; they must be replaying what he has said to them before; trying to make sense of it all. And, they seem confused about how to go on, confused about what they should be doing.

There by the Sea of Tiberius Simon Peter says: "I am going fishing". The others say, "We will go with you". Simple and beautiful accompaniment of one another in their grief. And, practical, too – for they knew how to fish; it would get them something to eat; it could provide for them a living again.

But, "They went out and caught nothing." And they experience the harsh and discouraging reality of the hard, sometimes unfruitful nights of fishing. But, Jesus does not leave them alone in their grief, or in their fishing endeavors. Instead, he demonstrates the interconnectedness of humans, water and the sea. He appears on the beach and reminiscent of another time when the disciples caught no fish, he tells them to put the nets out again. Their nets fill to overflowing. Jesus not only provides fish of the sea for their nets, but he has brought his own all ready on the charcoal fire, along with some bread.

Jesus invites them to breakfast. Afterward, he addresses Peter – the one who swore to stay with him to the end, the one who said he would lay down his life for their leader. But Jesus speaks to all the disciples, for they all succumbed to their fear of pain, suffering and death. And, he speaks to us. He looks into the heart of Peter and asks Peter three times – "Do you love me?"

By the last time, Peter is hurt – and he says, “Lord you know everything” – Yes, the Lord knows everything – he knows that Peter’s heart – as full of love for him that is Peter’s heart, it is also a heart that is both saint and sinner – a heart a lot like ours. To Peter and to us, Jesus says, “Follow me – feed and tend my sheep.”

-Tell my Good News. Bring my people from darkness into light – to eternal life. Live with all creatures. Care for the earth, the seas and the skies so it is a beautiful home. Nourish the soil to bear fruit and flower. Delight in the morning songs of the birds, the evening sounds and all the songs of creation.

Follow me. Tend my sheep.

Peter would go on to follow Jesus – even to death by crucifixion. He cared for believers; he fed them physically and spiritually. Through Peter, the other disciples, early believers and leaders of the church, people down through the ages have learned to live resurrected lives every day.

In the resurrection we are invited into the new world God is bringing into being. A new world that begins with each of us. A new world where the interconnection between human beings, creatures and our natural environment is respected and cherished. A world where not one part of nature is broken or cast aside. A world where not one person or creature is absent or left behind.

May one day our voices raise together with all the voices of creation – on earth and in heaven – myriads of myriads, thousands of thousands to sing in glorious harmony to the God of all creation: “Thine is the glory. Thine is the glory.”

Amen.