

Longing and Running

Easter Sunday, 2022

Rev. Sarah Campbell

The disciples were traumatized by the events of that time. It felt like everything was falling apart. The person who had given them so much hope for their lives, for the world around them, was crucified by empire. He was the one who opened their eyes to the truth of what was meant to be, the truth of what his mama sang when he was in her womb about the great societal reversal, the truth of what the prophet spoke of--the New Jerusalem, when the people shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity. They even started living this new way, everyone welcome to the table as equals and enough for all. Oh, how he **stirred up their longing** for the kingdom of God on earth!

They were traumatized by the violent death of the one they loved, but also by anxiety for their own safety. They dispersed after Jesus was arrested. And they couldn't come together and support one another in their grief. He died. Their community died. Their dreams died. They experienced layers of grief. It was a hell of a time.

They felt utterly unmoored. Their longing petered out. They shifted to survival mode, got a dog, watched a lot of Netflix. Some became cynical. Some doubted the reality of God, ultimate goodness. Some lashed out in hatred and anger and violence. They say that people who have lost faith in the future are doomed. Were they doomed?

Can you picture them that early morning, in the darkness, some of them walking to the tomb, carrying the sacred objects to properly tend to the beloved body, look how slowly they walk, the life energy seeping out of them with every sluggish step.

What a time in life!

This complicated grief

This unmooring

This isolation

This feeling like everything is falling apart

This settling for less

This depletion of life energy

This loss of longing....

Sound familiar? Has this story ever felt quite this true? What a time for God's children, whether 3 days or 3 years, their time, our time.... What a time!

And I wonder if it isn't **the loss of longing** that is the most troubling aspect of all?!

Consider the young, those who have their life ahead of them... One author describes a 16-year-old character this way. "Her yearnings (her longings) were so many; as to be overwhelming at times. Her yearning was like a force within her. The opposite of gravity."

This is one of the most damnable effects of the Covid pandemic these last two years plus... how it is has suppressed life energy; it has subverted human longing. The young have lost loved ones and lost the chance to say goodbye. "They have also lost rituals of graduation and saying goodbye to classmates. They were schooled at home, many alone in their room for hours in front of a computer. They lost the freedom and independence to move about as they pleased. And as the uncertainty grew, many suffered the ultimate loss: the loss of trust in the world as a safe and predictable place." (Boss)

This is but one slice of humanity, one demographic- the young. Every generation, every group is experiencing the losses of this historic time in profound ways.

On this Easter morning, I want so much for you, all of you, especially the young, to hear the Easter message. To really hear it and feel it in your whole body! Hear the message. Don't get hung up on scientific skepticism. Some of us believe in a physical resurrection. Many of us don't and never have. But don't be distracted by literalism, because then you'll miss the astonishing truth of the story.... The truth that somehow life energy came back into the disciples! The truth that death does not have the last word!

It was ambiguous loss, stories of empty tombs and mysterious appearances, absence and presence, nothing that could be captured on a video. There was no closure. They still carried the grief and trauma of that time in their bodies, maybe always will. But their life energy started to return; their longing somehow stirred up once again... as powerfully as before when he was among them in flesh, if not even more... They regathered and the Jesus movement began and continues to this day. The empire could not kill it.

Every year when we read these Easter stories, new things appear to us. This year I was struck by something I don't remember really seeing before. And it's not only in John's telling of the story. It's in other gospels also.

A dramatic change in the energy.... Remember the slow, depressed steps to the tomb with the sacred objects of burial preparation. Something changes in the story, and they start running!

It says: "So she ran."

It says: "The two were running together, but the other disciples outran peter..."

Read between the lines: somehow a powerful and vibrant energy flows back into their being from the infinite. No longer plodding steps in the darkness, they run!! The sun has risen. The birds are singing wildly. The sap is rising in the maple trees. The green blade mightily pushes through the hardened soil. The eros energy of the earth is awakening. And they are running, the longing rising up in them once again. It's not over! Something new is beginning!

It's time for new images to overtake our pandemic images. Those images of humanity in lock down, a musician playing the violin alone from their balcony, people looking at screens in their "home office", empty highways and streets, shuttered businesses, everything closed down. Humanity staying put, then venturing out, slowly, cautiously, 6 feet apart, suppressing our longing, just trying to survive.

It's time, it's past time for new images. I have been watching a lot more Netflix in the last two years. Recently a fabulous image has gotten stuck in my consciousness from a new movie, a moving image.... I don't remember the storyline, but I remember this. A young person, maybe 16, running, running breathlessly through a vast and varied city scape.... Marvelously and expansively filmed it is, no short cuts, he is running, running, running with a longing that seems to intensify as he runs towards his future....

Our life energy can not be suppressed forever. The sap has to flow. The birds have to sing. The plants have to rise. And we'll not move back to so called "normal" ... but rather forward to something better....

It even happens in history. This new life energy bursting forth after death.

The bubonic plague of the mid 13 hundreds, which killed half of the European population, was followed by the renaissance.

WW I and the flu epidemic of 1918 killing at least 50 million human beings was followed by the Roaring 20s and rapid advances in technology, phones, and automobiles, not to mention the women's suffragist movement.

WW II and the polio epidemic of the 1950s was followed by the civil rights movement and all other manner of liberation movements of the 1960s.

Yes, the sap has to flow. The life energy can't be suppressed forever.

Unfortunately, the energy can go bad, very bad indeed, towards totalitarianism... think January 6 and Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

But it can also go in good directions and surprisingly fast.... Think warp speed development of vaccines. Think massive uprising all over the world, greater than ever before, after the crucifixion of George Floyd, uprisings to put an end, finally, to racism, colonialism... an awakening and reckoning with tremendous momentum.

What about you, is your longing stirring? Is your life energy returning?

Whether you are 16 or 96, dare to name your deepest longing. Dare to have it stirred up by the holy spirit, and run with it!! If your limbs or your lungs don't allow that fast forward movement, your life energy can still move you forward in other ways. Give yourself to your hopes for the world until your very last breath.

What is it you long for at the depth of your being? Run for it!!

Is a livable planet what you long for?

Run to it.

Get out of your room. You've been there too long. And run.

Leave your computer behind, leave that doom scrolling behind, but do bring your phone so you can meet up with others who are running towards it.

Don't suppress your life energy anymore.

Don't let it go negative or hateful. Only run towards goodness.

Don't let illness, mistakes, failures, keep you back, those are just part of life

Keep running.

Run past the doomers.

Run past the fakers, businesses who advertise their greenness but it is, in fact, a small fraction of the mission.

Be kind but run past.

Run with other runners, there are more and more of them.

You know the hard news, you've been hearing it for years, the dire news, so you need the good news, and there is a lot.... Feed off it to keep you nourished and running...

The good news that renewable transition is accelerating, some say at a staggering rate... solar in 2022 has already far exceeded 2021.... Sufficient to put us on track, to net zero emissions by 2050, when wind joins the race too. (Finkling)

Those who say slow down, we say "no, we have to speed up!" ...

Run to the solutions, yes, the climate has been altered, but the next steps have never been more clear or affordable, steps to save the planet.

Oh yes, let the life energy rise up, you've been down too long. You've been moving too slowly.

Discover your deepest longing. Don't let anything suppress it anymore. Let your life energy move you. Run to your life.

In the words of the poet plus a few. "I who have died, am alive again today... and I'm running!"

Benediction

To all the death dealing powers of the world like Covid, White supremacy, coal and oil, totalitarianism, we proclaim! Life has the last word. Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!!

Sources

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