

AN ENCOURAGING WORD FOR TROUBLING TIMES #108 (by Rev. Dr. Alice Wolfe, 8/10/20)

“The Hope of Resurrection”

Last December, my family was blessed to move into my grandparents' house. When spring came, I was excited to see what flowers came up. Decades ago, my grandmother had a huge flower garden, and I was anxious to see what was left. Unfortunately, most of the flowers are gone; only a few perennials remain. My girls and I watched with anticipation as one perennial grew by the back step. We kept watching for the flowers, but they never came. With disappointment, I removed the leaves that eventually wilted and died. But then, a week or so ago, new life sprang up from where the dead leaves had been, and these beautiful flowers (see attached picture) are now blooming! These flowers are called resurrection lilies because they appear to die and then come back to life.

These resurrection lilies not only remind me of Jesus' resurrection and the hope of eternal life we have in him, but also the hope we have in him now. This pandemic world in which we live is very much like a death—the death of thousands of people, the death of hopes and dreams, the death of plans and celebrations, the death of life as we knew it before this pandemic. However, we still have hope! Hope that this world is not all there is—this pandemic will not last forever! Hope that we are not alone—God is with us! Hope that God can bring good out of these trying and challenging times—all is not lost! Hope that no matter how bad things are in this world, Jesus is alive, he has conquered sin and death, and he offers new and everlasting life to all who believe in and follow him! And so, my friends, in this crazy, messed up world, we need to remind ourselves not focus on the leaves that died, but to focus on the beautiful blooms that are—at this very minute—blossoming... with hope of resurrection!

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith— of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire— may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:3-9, NIV)

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, we thank and praise you that you have overcome sin and death and evil! We thank you that you are with us and will never leave us or forsake us! We thank you that you can bring good out of all circumstances... even the messiness of our lives and world today. Forgive me and help me turn from my sins..., that I may be raised to new life in you! Help me to truly know you and the joy and hope of your resurrection! Help us to grieve our losses through death, disease, and disruption to our lives and world..., and to pray for healing for all... Help us to keep our focus on you—and the resurrection you offer. Help me, like the resurrection lily, be a sign and symbol of hope and you to everyone around me! Amen.

LIVE IT!

The next time you begin to focus on the troubles of life and this world, choose and ask Jesus to help you

focus on him... and all his promises. As you let Christ resurrect you from the worries of this world, be a resurrection lily to those around you.