
Now the Green Blade Riseth

**A sermon by the Very Rev. Sam Candler
Easter Sunday – Year A**

I grew up, years ago, in a house on the top of a windy hill, with a large yard. When I was a little boy there, my sister and I used to lie, face down, in the grass, and look closely at the blades of grass, and see if we could watch the grass grow. We figured that if we got close enough to the grass, we could see it grow.

Well, of course, we never got that close. But it was still growing, micron by micron. Grass takes a while to grow.

People take a while to grow, too. Life takes a while to grow, too. Even when it looks slow and quiet. Even when it looks like nothing is happening, something is growing. Indeed, few of the constructive things in life happen suddenly.

Destructive things, on the other hand, destructive things, happen suddenly all the time. Constructive things don't. Life-giving, truly helpful things in life take time.

The Resurrection is one of those constructive things. Good resurrection takes time.

I have sadly noticed a particular discouragement in recent years, during this time that we might call the "technological age." I hear people saying, "Be a disrupter!" "Disrupters," the movements call themselves. They claim they are here to disrupt things.

Well, I realize that some things in life, some of the pernicious sins of our culture, need to be disrupted. The system of segregation, for instance, surely needed to be disrupted.

But, somehow or another, some seemingly creative people now take it as their call to claim disruption as their sole purpose in life. Be a disrupter, they say.

Well, that is not always a good thing. Again, I acknowledge that some bad things in life need to be disrupted. But not everything in our world needs to be disrupted.

Any two-year old can disrupt something. Any two-year old can tear something down. Any two-year old can destruct something. Just ask their older siblings who just finished a glorious tower of blocks.

Yes, any two-year-old can destruct something. It takes an older person, a twenty-two year old, a forty-two year old, a sixty-two year old, to construct something.

And the good things in life take time to build. A strong body takes time to build. Yes, even the resurrection, even the resurrection body, takes time. The dry bones coming together, that Ezekiel talks about. Remember them? The knee bone connected to the thigh bone, the thigh bone connected to the hip bone, sinews and flesh and skin growing on them -- all that takes time. They didn't just jump up like dancing skeleton toys. Their coming together took time.

Today, the resurrection is not about disrupting things. Well, except death! The resurrection does disrupt death! But, the resurrection is really about growing things.

I believe in the resurrection today because I believe things grow. Even things that look dead, that look like nothing is going on, they too can be part of resurrection. The resurrections in life that are glorious, are also

gradual!

Sometimes we think that when you turn a certain age, your former age is gone. When you turn 21 years old, we think, the old age -20- is dead and gone. The 10-year-old, we say, is no longer a 5-year-old.

I disagree. Inside the 20-year-old there is also the 10-year-old. When I turned 64 years old, they sang me a song in the same yard I grew up on. *"When I get older, losing my hair"* they sang. *"Will you still love me, will you still feed me, when I'm sixty-four?"*

I realized that day that, yes, I might be losing my hair. But I was not losing my ages. Being 64 years old meant that I was also 63 years old. Being 64 contains being 63. And I contained 60, too. I could be 50, too, or 40, or 20. I can't run like I ran at 20; but I know what it is to be 20. Am I 66 years old? Yes! And I am also 56 years old, and 26 years old, and 6 years old.

Life is cumulative. Life is cumulative, static. We are not one age at a time. As we grow, we are many ages, all at the same time. And the older we are, the more ages we contain.

Somewhere in our brains, somewhere in those tiny microns of nerves, our brains remember those ages. Pay attention to those memories. Pay attention to them even if they show up only in your night dreams, or your day dreams. Pay attention to your dreams, and you will remember childhood again. Love is back there, in those dreams, when we thought love might be sleeping, even when we thought love might be dead.

Sometimes there will be pain in those dreams, and even trauma. Let them go. Let go of whatever prohibits growth. There is release, too, a letting-go, in those dreams.

Over the long-term growth of our lives, we have to let go of lots of things. Over the long-term growth of our lives, we die many times. Life is about turning from those deaths to life.

Yes, resurrection is about turning from death to life! Turning from destruction to construction. So it was that Jesus talked about death several times before he died. "Very truly," he said, "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" (John 12:24).

When I was a teenager, one of my favorite rock musicians was Steve Winwood, part of that cool group named Traffic. He had exploded into rock music fame at the tender age of only 16 years old, a guitarist for the Spencer Davis Group.

I don't know him at all, but I imagine he has continued to grow. He contains older years now. And, lately, he has become fascinated with hymns. You know, religious hymns. During Covid, from a green pasture on his farm, he recorded a version of one of my favorite hymns. In fact, it is in our Episcopal hymnal, written only a hundred or so years ago, by John Macleod Campbell Crum:

*Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain,
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.*

Yes! It is the constructive power of love that causes us to grow! It is love that prompted my young sister and me to pause and notice the grass growing. It is love that lifted us up from the grass on the yard and inspired us to do something constructive. It is love that makes all of us older without losing our youth. It is love that resurrects us.

Easter is a day to remember that the resurrection is not magic. The resurrection is not like a rabbit jumping suddenly out of a hat! The resurrection takes time to grow, and it can take some time to notice.

For us today, Easter is not just the day that Jesus rises from the grave. Easter is the day that we pause, we pause to realize, that someone is rising from the grave all the time. Someone can rise from the dead every day; we just don't usually pause to recognize it every day. Just as wonderfully and gloriously and carefully as the grass is growing every day, resurrection is happening again every day. And resurrection happens in us every day, every time we let love construct something in us. Love is rising every day, carefully and gloriously constructed in the amazing grace of God.

*Love lives again, that with the dead has been!
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green!*

We are in love again! Alleluia! Christ is risen!

AMEN.

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