

*"Very truly, I tell you, 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. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." - John 12:24-25*

Neighbors in Christ,

Happy Easter, my NIC family and friends! May the resurrected Christ bring you joy and peace during this time. We continue to celebrate the promises given to us by a loving and forgiving God in this wonderful season of new life and growth, beginning in an empty tomb. It is a bit funny though...as I write this, I have been looking out the window on this first day of Spring - and it has been snowing all day. But I am hopeful that the ground will retain the water from the precipitation and the temperatures will begin to rise soon. I am looking forward to daffodils and other flowers gently poking their heads up from the nourished soil and new life coming back into our fields and communities.

I chose this verse from the Gospel of John for a two-fold reason. First, this is Jesus' final public message to the crowds and faithful disciples that surround him as he once again explains the manner in which he is going to die. Out of death comes true life. This is found to be miraculously true as he was raised from the dead by God on the third day and then travelled the land healing and appearing to others as he walked the earth. Those who believe in the crucified and resurrected Lord also are given the promise of eternal life and will walk with their Lord Jesus after they have naturally died in this world. A place has been prepared for us and we await true peace and light. Some call this place heaven, while others refer to it as paradise. Regardless of what it is called, it is a promise of beauty and eternity because death has been defeated and something awaits us far greater than we can imagine. This is what Easter - not just the day, but the season - reminds us of. A season of renewal and of new life.

I also chose this passage because it parallels so many of our lives during the month of April. Planting season is again upon us and we strive for the best harvest yet. The seeds that are placed in the fields, gardens, and small cups by school children are indeed dead. But when sunshine and water, and lots of love are cast upon them, they too spring up and give new life. Whether it is corn, alfalfa, beans, or beets, the fruitful harvest is tended to by stewards of the earth - both you and me - in the hopes of the best yields yet. I love this parable because we too can resurrect life from death and distribute the fruit from it. This fruit feeds ourselves, our families, and the world, just like the message we are to share about a resurrected Christ.

We are the Body of Christ, joined together as a family through our one baptism. We are all in this together and it is up to us to spread the message of love and forgiveness that we have been given from our Triune God. We also need one another and to share in the gifts that we have been given. I encourage you this Easter season to do so, as Jesus has commanded us.

I look forward to seeing you this Easter season in worship!

Rev. Erik Karlson  
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