

A Devotional for HOLY SATURDAY

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”

Romans 6:5

Do you remember the wildflowers that displayed themselves last spring? I sure do, it seemed like they were everywhere! Flowers of all kinds rose up from out of nowhere surprising us with their glory. Who knew so much lay beneath the ground and for how long? Seeds long dormant resting in darkness, unseen for years, possibly decades! When did the long dry season seal their tomb? And how long was it before the skies poured forth storms to awaken them? It reminds me of the phrase I've heard, “Let us not assume the trees lose their ecstasy during winter, for beneath the ground the roots are riotous!” A hopeful phrase, isn't it? When winter casts its shadow, all is not finished because there is riotous work being done!

I have experienced dry seasons in my soul at times. It's usually alongside the ordinary bits of life's routine, but something goes missing. I feel spiritually dry and a little “life-less”. Reading the Bible falls flat, and my prayers hit the ceiling. I long for God's voice to show up, but my longings are met with silence. It makes me feel angry, sad, anxious, cynical, and sometimes fearful. Last spring while the wildflowers bloomed, I was in one of these seasons. A wilderness kind of dry season showed up and riddled me with anxiety. “God, why is my heart so anxious? And why are you so silent?” I kept asking.

It was during this time that I attended a renewal retreat. Truthfully, I was doubtful God would meet me there, but I was willing to try anything. The first night's opening passage was Hosea 2:14. “Therefore, I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her.” There are few times I have ever felt so seen and heard by God. It was like the first rain falling on the dormant soils of last spring. Something in me awakened with hope that my wilderness had a purpose.

I've learned that these are “waiting seasons” and beneath their ground, riotous things are happening! God does some of his best work in the wilderness. He finds his way to the broken shadowy, dry places of our heart longing for his redeeming work. They are places of pain, pride, fear, regret and shame. Last spring my groans were heard, and the disruption felt like spring storm clouds brewing to bring the rain. And like the wildflowers, my role was to wait – to be still, for the Lord himself was fighting for me (Ex 4:14)

As I consider this weekend of Easter, I wonder how the disciples felt when Hope's wilderness casts its shadow on the day we now call Good Friday. Only a few days prior palm branches waved in celebration and hope lingered in the air. Their long-awaited Messiah was finally there to make things right again! No one expected Friday's sun set and Jesus's lifeless body sealed in a tomb. No one expected God to go silent, but he did. The thing about Good Friday is that it isn't followed by Sunday, but Saturday – a day when nothing happens. I imagine on that Saturday instead of hope, loss lingered in broken sunlight, echoing, “All is not right...All is not good.” And yet, beneath the ground where Hope was resting, God was riotous! The Lord himself was fighting for the redemption of all creation journeying them to Sunday's dawn! It does the same for us. As we “become united with him in death”, God descends to the hellish, stormy shadows withing us longing for deliverance and finds his home.

We must remain in this holy day, every hour of it, before Sunday dawns. That's the hard part. Escape is tempting and that's what makes Lenten practices so important! When we surrender our method of escape we become united with Him in death and united with Him in Resurrection. There are no short-cuts, just ordinary-remarkable happenings with a God who shows up along the way.

Sunday. Is. Coming.

But it is during Saturday, that God comes nearer, holding us as we work, wander and writhe; Weeping with us, and loving us, as only the One acquainted with sorrows can. When the grit of my struggle finds the embrace of God's love, I wouldn't wish this day away for a moment. Other times, my soul sits in begging screams – pleading to be taken off this bridge, this highway, that's commanding my surrender. Yet, as I remain, God does the impossible. And slowly, ever. so. slowly, the storm gives way and a glorious sliver of light peeks over the horizon of Sunday's dawn. It heals and awakens my stone-shut soul. Beauty emerges from the ground while the same God who called forth Christ from the tomb, calls forth new life in me. In all of us.

What are your Saturday moments?

Could it be God is journeying you to Sunday's dawn through them?

How can you encounter Him and cooperate with Him along the way?