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Here's Hope
by Rev. Jerry Rea

Life and Death

There is a natural rhythm of life and death written into the fabric of our natural world. Everything has its "life-cycle." Animals live and die. People live and die. We cycle through winter (death) and spring (life). We must rest at night while our bodies restore themselves so we can fully live the next day. Bears hibernate. Butterflies make a cocoon in which to retreat before their "real" life takes over. Flowers bloom for a while, then move into a seed, before springing back to life from that seed. Birds burst forth from their eggs, only to mature and burst forth from their nests. Seeds fall to the ground and... die. Life and death are everywhere.

It is so fitting at this time that we talk about another life. We die in this one but are raised in the next one. Jesus said in John 11 (verses 23-26), "If a man live and believe in Me, he will never die." Now there's an idea for you. Our world is waking up! This system and this idea belongs to our Creator. God came up with this idea. He not only gives, He gives life. He is in the habit of taking death and making it into life. He fashioned Adam, then He breathed into him, and... life! He strengthened and comforted Jesus until His awful death, and... then life! We should not have been surprised. After all, Jesus promised/ predicted four times He would rise. For the record, the places I refer to are all in the book of Mark. If Jesus had *not* risen, then His word could not be trusted on other things. Because He *did* rise, His word can be trusted on other topics. I think that God knew from day one He'd do this "resurrection" thing. We face Easter with the whole of the natural world shouting "life goes on," even after death. I've never understood how people can believe in hibernation and not believe (at least in theory) of another life.

God created a wonderful and beautiful world for Adam and Eve. On the sixth day, almost as a climax to creating, He plants man in the garden. All that we needed was provided by God for that life. Fast forward to the New Testament. There God has a different type of "chaos" to deal with. We've made a mess of things. So God sends Jesus to create again. He deals with death through the cross and the resurrection, and promises a new life on the other side of death. "I am the resurrection" said Jesus to Martha. Then Jesus asked the question: "Do you believe this?"

Well, do you? Do you believe that the same God who created this world can (and has) created another one? I love the way the psalmist put it. "Surely goodness and mercy shall dwell with me." He speaks there of this life. "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." That, of course, would be the next life. On both fronts God is all about life. He takes our death, and by His grace, makes it into life.

Happy Easter, everyone!
Jerry Rea