

**SUMMARY: JUST DYING TO LIVE***Exodus 12:1-14*

The ancient Jewish festival of Passover stretches all the way back to narratives that describe the birth of Israel as a nation. It speaks of the necessity of death in order for there to be life. It's no co-incidence that some 1300 years later the whole event of Jesus' dying and rising happened as the people of Israel were celebrating the Jewish Passover: *I wonder to what extent we are meant to see the death of those Passover lambs somehow foreshadowing of the death of Jesus Christ – he who John-the-Baptist was to call the ultimate 'Lamb of God'.* It presents death not just as the end but as the precursor to new life. It's a constant life-rhythm that moves us from loss to gain, from death to new life, and it's VITAL that we catch that rhythm if we are to grow and be able to appreciate all of what is growing around us!

We know that the death of a sacrificial animal was of profound symbolic significance to those early cultures, representing the death of something not just 'out there' but also 'right here' within themselves. As those Israelites were told to remember the death of the Passover lambs, they were being told to remember how God releases them from their pasts in order to embrace all of what was intended for them in the next season of their lives. *That's perhaps a reason why we - as Christ-followers - have always revered the cross, recalling Christ's death as involving the death of whatever is false & must be allowed to die in us, with him, so we may embrace the resurrection of whatever truth God intends to emerge.*

Joyce Landorf wrote<sup>i</sup> some 40 years ago of what she called the 'CHANGE POINTS' we must recognise in our lives if we are to grow. **...this dynamic creation principle of death, and life...** *We don't find leaves stubbornly holding on because they choose not to drop as we approach the end of summer, nor a seed holding on to its shell after falling to the ground<sup>ii</sup> as it stubbornly refuses to break open to allow new growth. It's the wave that will always build as the sea bed rises beneath it, and always break apart as it strikes the rocks.* Simone Weil<sup>iii</sup> suggests that's part of why we find nature so moving - it's as if we can sense that here is something sacred in how nothing interrupts its perfect obedience to the Creator's rhythm...

But we, as the human race, seem to believe that we do get to choose. We convince ourselves that there does not have to be a letting go and a taking up - a dying and a rising. We like to think it's enough for us just to stick with whatever we've always had regardless of whatever else may be happening! We've turned dying, & letting go, into the enemy, instead creating self-preservation as our default setting!

**But we change! And so does our perception of all the world around us!** *Fossil fuels were once the greatest asset of a rapidly industrializing 20<sup>th</sup> C world: we would never have been able to make the strides that we did without them. But what now that we are beginning to understand how their emissions are ruining our planet? Do we still want just to pretend that we don't know about the devastating effects of carbon emissions and climate change? Of course the mighty fossil-fuel lobby with all its billions believe it's to their advantage that we don't move on, ...but what about the new thing that's coming: the greener, more sustainable thing? Clearly, if we are to survive on planet earth something **MUST** be allowed to die, that something better may come.*

**Death, followed by life, is God's way! It's Jesus' way! And it's the way of the Passover!**

As we grapple with what we are going to be in this next season after Covid-19 we know that it will be necessary for us to adjust to a whole new reality!

God has got this – but for us to catch up with what God has got, we do need first to be aligned with what God has revealed to us as being essential to God’s rhythm of life! ***There has first to be Passover/Easter death before Resurrection can manifest as the Exodus of God’s new sacred life!***

**What in my life – your life – our lives - is actually slipping away even now? What is it that we as individuals/ or as a community/ a faith community just HAVE to allow to die because there is something just SO much more full of life just straining to be born?**

The bottom line of any religion worth its salt (kata Rohr) is its ability ‘re-ligario’ to ‘re-tie’ tie us back to an awareness of our original blessing as having been created in God’s image. But our ego selves are always so very hard at work distorting our awareness of our God-given identity, deceiving us into believing we are simply the sum-total of whatever layers of self-image we have been able to accumulate over the years: ***THAT IS WHAT HAS TO GO!*** Allowing the many deaths of our ego-layers is what we are called to be doing as we embrace Christ and His teaching for us ***every day, to take up our crosses<sup>iv</sup> if we are ever truly to follow Him and His way.***

Paraphrasing Richard Rohr<sup>v</sup> quoting Thomas Merton ...*the false self is but an illusion. It is who I want myself to be but who cannot exist, because God does not know anything about THAT person. It is not what God has created – made – me to be! It’s what I’ve been able to muddle together! It’s a shadow! A life devoted to the cult of this shadow is what is called a life of sin.* He goes on: *The false self, sensing its fundamental unreality, begins to clothe itself in myths and symbols of power as it begins to convince itself that it **is** what it **does**. The more it does, achieves and experiences, the more real it believes it is.* And so... ***I wind experiences around myself and cover myself with pleasures and glory like bandages in order to make myself perceptible to myself and to the world, as if I were an invisible body that could only become visible when something visible covered its surface.***

The false images of ourselves that MUST be allowed to recede & die if we are ever properly to come alive! **WE ARE – YOU ARE – GOOD! HOLY! AND OF GOD!** And so, **WHO OR WHAT IS IT THAT STOPS YOU FROM KNOWING THAT?** Folks, there is NOTHING other than God and what God has created in God’s image! **THAT IS REALITY!** Everything else is what we create to distract us from that one holy reality! Faith in Jesus’ death and Christ’s resurrection life is both *how we embrace* that reality and the template for how we *live* that reality!

And don’t worry about any of those mini-deaths ever killing who you really are - your soul - because as Christ followers we know we have the life-stuff of His perfectly protecting Self smeared over our soul’s lintels and doorposts to keep us safe! It is as we are in him and him in us that we come most to be alive...

Rev Robin Jacobson

<sup>i</sup> *Change Points*, Published August 28th 1981 by Fleming H Revell Co

<sup>ii</sup> John 12:24

<sup>iii</sup> In *Waiting for God*, Putnam, 1951, she writes: "*Matter is entirely passive and in consequence entirely obedient to God's will, it is a perfect model for us. ...On account of its perfect obedience, matter deserves to be loved by those who love its Master...*"

<sup>iv</sup> Matthew 16:24-26

<sup>v</sup> Quoted and paraphrased from a blog [The Illusion of the Separate Self](#), Posted Tuesday September 1, 2020, C:\Users\Robin\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\T9HP82KT\email.mht