**“*Every Day Do Something That Won’t Compute*”**

Wendell Berry

April 7, 2024

Rev. Christine E. Burns

Friends, we have entered into the season of Easter. Typically this weekend is called “Low Sunday” because the attendance dips down lower than average as the average or above average church goer, may say, “hey, I did my time in the pews last week. This week I want to go golfing or to see the new musical over at Sandwich High School. I hear ‘Rent’ is spectacular.”

And, I would not blame you for taking a skip day. In fact, Pastor Reed is taking a skip day and will be back in the pulpit tomorrow morning. For those of you who are here or watching this later, I have a good message you.

First of all, hear the Good News—Easter is a season, not a single day! Resurrection and the celebration of the victory of life over death goes on for fifty days until we have the Feast of Pentecost. That is the day we celebrate the birth of the church. So, you can wear your Easter bonnet, eat chocolate, feast a little longer and not punish yourself because we have left the season of Lent. Now we are in the season of Easter where we celebrate life.

And look around you, spring, new life, buds on the trees, daffodils and hyacinths, yellow fuzz on weeping willows and the fuzzy buds of magnolia blossoms getting ready to bloom in a few weeks remind us that the days are getting longer and longer and the nights are shrinking. The moon is waxing and waning and we, we are going to experience the magic of a total solar eclipse this Monday. While those of us living on Cape Cod aren’t directly in the path, we will see the truth slant. Because of this eclipse, Reed bought us these NASA certified Total Eclipse glasses. Where did he find them? Titcombs bookshop. They just got in a new shipment so hurry down and buy some glasses if you don’t have them yet because we cannot stare directly into the eclipse without damaging our eyes. These NASA eclipse paper glasses are made with  “such filters are at least 1,000 times darker than the darkest ordinary sunglasses. They not only dim the sun’s visible light by a factor of 100,000 to several million, but also block potentially harmful ultraviolet and infrared radiation.” Remember to wear your glasses when checking out this rare opportunity.

A dear friend, Dan Fornari, sent me this commentary on the struggle between sun and moon in Judaism. Rabbi Ari Lev Fornari, senior Rabbi to a congregation in Philadelphia writes this, “Apparently solar eclipses are as old as time and are referenced throughout the Tanakh. Earlier this week, Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg noted that, ‘there was an eclipse known as Bur-Sagale eclipse (well-documented in Assyrian records) that likely took place soon June 15th, 763 BCE- a partial eclipse occurred over the relevant patch of land 60 years later, on March 5th, in 702 BCE. The first one is most likely responsible for Amos’ writing. Either or both could be the cause of the reference in the book of Joshua.

Eclipses are actually a naturally phenomenon that illustrate a deeper spiritual power struggle. One midrash that imagines back to the fourth day of creation when the Holy One created these two great luminarias.

They were equal as regards their height, qualities, and illuminating powers, as it said, ‘And God made the two great lights.’ (Genesis 1:16) Rivalry ensued between them, one said to the other, I am bigger than you. The other rejoined, I am bigger than you are.

Avinu Malkeinu, our ancient parent, steps in to resolves this celestial sibling rivalry, explaining that one will govern the day and the other the night. Except for occasions when one eclipses the other.

Today, on this Sabbath, Jews call this the MOON SHABBAT!!! How cool is that? The Moon has its own Shabbat. And Judaism is a religion of the moon and the sun, where the calendar follows both moon and sun. Today’s Shabbat is a celebration of spring and renewal, possibility and liberation. This is the first new year, a time of new beginnings. It all coincides with a total eclipse of the sun.

Our Muslim family is also celebrating the eclipse and Ramadan. Fasting and breaking fast at the setting of the sun and the rising of the moon.

All three religions, all Abrahamic faiths, we all live on this one blue planet, pulled by the tides and the waxing and waning moon. Pulled by the lengthening days and the shortening of night.

Pulled by the gradual warming of the earth for those of us who live in the Northern hemisphere.

Pulled by the earth crying out, spring is here.

The birds cannot stay silent.

The bullfrogs make their noises known in the vernal pools and cranberry bogs.

The peepers are so loud at night.

The buds are breaking forth.

*And I, I feel this pull* to wake earlier and earlier with the sound of birds and the brightening sky. I am waking from winter’s hibernation. And I hear each morning as I walk the pitch pine forest and the salt marsh, the call of the osprey crying out to their mate, *here, here is food.* I see fish below. Let’s dive and feast and build our nest. It’s time to mate and lay our eggs in our home we have returned to after being away all winter. It is time for birth and rebirth.

This is part of the story of Easter. Birth, rebirth, resurrection, life.

And it is part of the poem I love so much called “*Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front”* by a charming old farmer named Wendell Berry. Wendell has seen a lot winters and a lot of springs. He is a farmer, so now is the time of plowing, preparing the fields and getting ready to plant.

And Berry he tells us to go against the dominant cries to **buy, buy, buy.** The lies that say “You are not enough. You are too skinny or too fat. Too poor, too ugly, too wrinkly, too old, too young, you simply are never enough in the dominant culture of greed and excess.”

But Berry says, **“So, friends, every day, do something**

**that will not compute. Love the Lord**

**Love the world. Work for nothing.**

**Take all you have and give to the poor. Love someone that does not deserve it.**

**Denounce the government and embrace the flag. Hope to live in that free**

**Republic for which it stands.**

**Ask the questions that have no answers.**

**Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.**

**Say that your main crop is the forest**

**That you did not plant,**

**That you will not harvest.**

**And concludes,**

**As soon as the generals and the politicos**

**Can predict the motions of your mind,**

**Lose it. Leave it as a sign,**

**To mark the false trail, the way**

**You didn’t go. Be like the fox**

**Who makes more tracks than necessary,**

**Some in the wrong direction.**

**Practice resurrection.[[1]](#footnote-1)**

I have loved this poem for 26 years. I go into the woods every day and pay attention to the tracks. I live next door to a fox den. When I return to my home in Colorado and stay at the cabin next door to the old cabin is a fox den where foxes have lived for generations. Foxy Loxy and her family continues on and loves that den. We, we are interlopers. For we, we do not own the land. The fox and the pine marten who dwell below the cabin and the moose, elk, deer, squirrels, chipmunks, snow shoe hares, insects and all the birds, they own the land or at least dwell upon day after day, night after night, for all their generations.

And I, I too, behave like the fox. Making more tracks than necessary, some in the wrong direction.

I cannot tell you how to walk. Or live. Or plant. Or be. ***But maybe*** there are some gems in here that can encourage you to be who you need to: a living story of life, *of life abundant*, of hope, of rebirth and renewal. A seed in the earth germinating in the warming soil, ready to burst forth with **first one green sprout** before becoming your fully human self.

**Practice resurrection.** You are the living body of Christ. Go forth, make a few false tracks, so that no one knows exactly what you are up to.

And on Monday, may you experience a total eclipse of the heart, bright eyes.

Turn around… Bright eyes….you know the song.

It’s your turn to sing it!

Amen.

1. “*Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front”* by Wendell Berry from The Country of Marriage, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1973. Also published by Counterpoint Press in The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry, 1999: The Mad Farmer Poems, 2008; New Collected Poems, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)