

## Daily Devotional, March 5, 2021 First Hints of Spring

***As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt. Genesis 37:25 (NIV)***

“There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole; there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin sick soul.” These words from the beautiful and well-known African American Spiritual paint a lovely image of forgiveness. The word balm refers to an ointment or salve to smooth dry skin or to heal a wound. In the dead of winter, many of us rely on various balms to heal our dry skin. Fortunately, we’re close to leaving winter behind us.

In the dead of winter, plant life and vegetation take on a dry, even dead appearance, if we can even see it amidst all the snow. Life itself even seems to slow down and drag as we become more isolated indoors. Similarly, hurting others or being hurt by others leaves us spiritually withered and dry. When we sin against God and our neighbors, we reveal our own spiritual dead-of-winter season, so to speak.

Symbolically, the dead of winter in our church year represents the dark and ominous days leading up to the death of Christ. As we advance beyond Lent, the Resurrection of Christ symbolically and majestically transforms our dead-like spirit into a life of newness and renewal.

And then finally comes the promise of spring. I love the season of spring! In spring, renewal happens all over the place, everywhere that you look. Flowers bloom, trees bud, the grass greens and thickens up again, birds become abundant and fill the air with their singing. Our attitudes change, in fact, whole demeanor is uplifted by all the new creation. Spring happens with us personally when we choose to forgive or receive forgiveness.

I have been trying out a new “balm” lately. I have thought of people in my past who hurt me for whatever reason. I then give thanks to God for those individuals as well as the hurtful experience I had to endure, because through them I was able to draw closer in my relationship with Christ and experience a remarkable peace. It also strengthened my ability to forgive and seek forgiveness.

Spring is on the horizon, barely more than two weeks away. But don’t wait for spring to begin to live a life of renewal. Begin now, and the hope of Easter, new life, will follow, “bright shining as the sun.”

***Prayer: Gracious Lord, bless those around me and bless the beauty on our earth that the springtime brings our way. I ask that You continue to keep the weather steady, keep the trees growing strong, and bless all the beautiful gardens and the greenness of the grass so that Your fruits of the field may ripen, to nourish our bodies. Let us continually be thankful for the miracles of spring, for the beauty of nature, and the love You never fail to provide for us. In Your name, I pray. Amen.***