

Saturday, April 12: From This Valley

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<https://open.spotify.com/track/4eiPJLdgxvgO6aMJ4ofJF6?si=c757611a251f4261>

A common refrain in my Eastertide preaching is that in some ways it's a shame that we know what's going to happen on Easter morning. We miss out on the holy shock and surprise of the resurrection after the heaviness and grief of Holy Week. This year I am feeling more and more grateful that we know the promise of resurrection is coming.

Lent, in my experience, is a season of longing. Deeper than mere wants or needs the Lenten season taps into a spiritual longing. Like the longing for the warmth of a sunny Spring day in the midst of the doldrums of winter. My soul longs for the joy of Easter, new life, and resurrection.

This year I find that when I open a social media app or turn on the news the weight of that longing becomes harder and harder to bear. I long for a government that values truth and honors the dignity of all people. I long for communities that connect and celebrate the beauty of diversity. I long for churches that seek to build relationships with their neighbors instead of acting as social service organizations. I long for schools where children can learn and play in safety and without fear. I name a hundred other things for which my heart is longing these days.

I find comfort in the reminder that there is a place for longing in Scripture and in our observance of the Christian year. There are a number of psalms that give voice to our shared longing as a broken people in a broken world in need of healing and wholeness.

*I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.*

*I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning... (Psalm 130:5-6a)*

In the Lenten season our whole beings wait for the Lord. Filled with the spiritual longing so beautifully named in the Civil Wars' *From This Valley*:

*Oh the desert dreams of a river
That will run down to the sea
Like my heart longs for an ocean
To wash down over me
Oh the outcast dreams of acceptance
Just to find pure love's embrace
Like an orphan longs for its mother
May you hold me in your grace
Oh the caged bird dreams of a strong wind*

*That will flow beneath her wings
Like a voice longs for a melody
Oh Jesus, carry me
Oh won't you take me from this valley
To that mountain high above
Oh I will pray, pray, pray till I see your smiling face
I will pray, pray, pray to the one that I love*

What is your soul longing for today? What might healing and wholeness look like for you in this season?

I, for one, am grateful that in the midst of my longing I have the promise of the joy of new life and resurrection to come. As I wait for the Lord I rest in these promises, relieved that Easter isn't a complete surprise. No matter the weight of watching and waiting, the tomb will be empty and joy will come in the morning. Amen.