

When Will It Get Here?

We know with the bone deep knowledge of Wisconsinites that winter will not last forever and spring eventually arrives. We've seen it happen every year. There is no reason this one should be any different. But all the same, there comes a time every year – about March 1 - when we ask, “Is winter ever going to end?”

We know with the practiced knowledge of Christians that Lent will not last forever and Easter eventually arrives. We've seen this happen every year, too. Yes, the calendar is a little confusing, and we're not exactly sure on which Sunday to expect it each year. Still, we know it will get here, the celebration of resurrection. All the same, there comes a time every year – about halfway through Lent – when I, at least, ask, “Is Easter really coming?”

I find myself thinking about this combination of knowing and not knowing, of confidence and doubt, this year. The words in one of our choir anthems for Lent talk about Jesus knowing from his first conscious thought that he would have to “Face the Cross.” But other anthems we are singing remember Jesus' words in the garden of Gethsemane, the day before he did face that cross, where he prayed, “If you are willing, remove this cup from me.” It makes me wonder. Did Jesus always know what was to come? Did he know that there would be a cross, and after it, a resurrection?

In one way, he must have. As the embodiment of God, he had to carry the knowledge that life requires sacrifice, that remaining true to his mission of love could in all likelihood bring him to a crisis that included his death. That's not quite the same thing as knowing on exactly which day, and by exactly which means, this would come. Likewise, knowing the God whom he called Father, Jesus had to have known that death would not be the last word. God had never let it be the last word for his people before. Jesus had to know that God's word of life would triumph for him as well. And yet, he asked for the cup to be removed. A sign of doubt? Of fear? Of the least little chink in his armor of divinity?

I choose to see this as evidence that he was fully human and has come alongside me in my very human life, where people live with confidence and doubt in equal measure. Where people pray for things to change and trust God in the same prayer. Where people battle against death and have confidence in heaven at the same time. Where people rage against winter and plant bulbs, year by year.

“In the bulb, there is a flower, in the seed, an apple tree...
...in our death a resurrection, at the last a victory,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.”

Hymn of Promise