

# Easter: New possibilities come to birth



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All across the world people of a wondering, questioning, spiritually curious and religiously rich mind and heart gather this Easter morning to think about the possibility and the potential that can emerge from this day.

I could have shared the bible story about the third day after the death of Jesus and I will be recounting bits and pieces of it, but instead I want to share an old Russian folk tale as a way to think about new possibilities come to birth.

In a time long ago in Russia or so the story tells us, a woman named Babushka, made her living by carefully painting beautiful, intricate designs on eggshells. She had been taught this art by her mother, and her mother before her, and before that her all the generations of women in the family. All through the year, she would paint her eggs, with lovely, intricate, colorful, beautiful designs getting them ready for the annual Easter/ Spring festival. She lived alone in a cottage at the edge of the village. Well, all alone except for her goose named Rechenka. One day, Rechenka's flappy wings knocked over the basket of eggs, breaking them all, a risk highly likely to happen, it seems, when one keeps a goose with flappy wings indoors. Babushka was crushed. When her beautiful eggs lay smashed on the floor, all seemed quite lost; her creativity, her hard work, and her chance to win at the festival. She knew that the eggs could never be put back the way they were. But the next morning, her own

expectations were shattered when she found that Rechenka had laid a beautiful egg for her; an egg which was not plain, but already covered with the intricate, beautiful designs which provided her livelihood and resembled the eggs that had been broken. Babushka found grace within her wilderness and sense of loss; and she experienced the willingness to accept the possibility of hope that had come to her in a very unexpected way. She didn't need to enter her eggs in the contest and she attended the Spring/Easter ceremony feeling joy and awe and full of wonder.

So why do I think this story has anything to do with Easter? Well let me tell you.

Babushka's story tells me we have to take chances. We can say that she should never had the flappy wing goose Rechenka living in her cottage and that she certainly should have protected her precious eggs more. However, when we learn things from the previous generations we need to continue to do them even if not perfectly and with risk involved. And we can learn that sometimes the gifts we have been given break. Jesus and his followers were on a path that was sure to lead to his destruction and we can today look back and say if his life had ended in any other way, his influence would not remain with us as it has for the last 2000 years. For his gifts to have been placed only in a basket in the wilderness, on the edge of town and left there, the people of the world would not now know of his message of compassion for all people, of his belief in a loving and tender God that was and is and can be made manifest in how we treat our neighbor and our world.

The story this morning also lets us know that sometimes we have to know brokenness before we can know fullness and beauty and healing. On the Friday that Jesus was crucified, his closest followers fled and ran to safety, they withdrew and were frightened. The world as they knew it had ended. Little attention is paid to the day between Friday and Easter morning, but many and most of us can relate to that day between. The day I call Holy Saturday, the day when nothing makes sense, the day of intense loss, grief, aloneness, destitution

and devastation. The day when we wonder how we are even going to take another breath and then grace or goodness or the desire for life takes over and some albeit minute shift and possibility appears. The spirit our spirit lives and a spark of grace appears. Life as we knew it is not the same but/and our breath and life will continue on.

Most often this shift occurs when we realize we don't do things alone. We realize we are not alone and often those we least expect to help us are sometimes our best helpers/ best allies. Also, we might not get what we want. Babushka did not get to enter her eggs into the contest but she still attended the celebration with a full heart and soaring spirit.

On Easter morning it is the women who dared leave the safety of the home to come and find Jesus' body to prepare it for burial. In the book of Luke, we hear this story. "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb taking spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body." The women ran back to the other disciples and told them what they had encountered and the message that had been given them. The message- go to Galilee and continue to preach the message I have given you. I am not dead, he said, I want you to go out into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone." What is the gospel? It is the good news, and what is the good news from Jesus? The good news is that life is full of possibility and hope. And, good works of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, bringing justice and mercy and compassion to all who suffer is not over just because I am not here. Jesus left the earth, but his ministry of loving all humanity as you would love yourself, his ministry that healing can occur, his ministry and message that even out of the unknown and the darkness of a tomb hope survives and thrives - well all this remains. Jesus taught and trusted that though he was not there his message could and would be carried forth by others.

This is our task and that intricate and beautiful message comes to us in unexpected ways. Beneath the fragile shell of things, new possibilities are always waiting to come to birth. May it be so.