

**In the Name of Love—Rising Up Like Spring
April 4, 2010 Easter Service**

So today is Easter. Today we celebrate rebirth, with the blossoming of the wisteria, the Indian paintbrush, the bluebonnets, all the wildflowers. As a people who honor all loving religious traditions, on this day we also stand in remembrance of Jesus of Nazareth, whom Christians and other religious people alike honor as a great leader, a great teacher, a great messenger of justice and peace, whose life was cut short, but whose message would not, could not, be killed. Both in the world of nature and in the world of humankind, we are called on this day to see beyond death to newly sprung hope and conviction that something of life remains, something of life returns, and inspires in us to carry forward a message of hope, peace, justice, and love.

Now, being that this particular Easter falls on this particular day, April 4, I can't help but lean into the serendipitous significance. April 4. I was only three years old when, on April 4, 1968, the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., one of this country's greatest leaders, teachers, and messengers, was cut short by an assassin's bullet, as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, in Memphis, Tennessee. Being so young, and being so far away, in the distant corner of the Pacific Northwest, I had no immediate knowledge of King's death, nor any understanding of who he had been and what he had done in his lifetime. I was most likely focused that day on my toys, or my family, or the thick green grass beneath my bare feet, or the roses blooming in the lushness of an Oregonian spring. Only years after King's death would I come to understand the importance of this man, the tragic ending to

his great and all too brief life, and his message of the power of love.

Today, as I look around this space, at all of our beautiful children, I wonder what great man or woman, what great collection of people, do our three-year old Wildflowers today not know of? And I wonder how our young ones, when older, will learn about the people of their early childhood who helped bring that much more justice, that much more love, that much more peace to the world so that our children could live the lives they lead?

Are we willing to teach them who those people are and the complexities of their lives? As I prepared my Time for All Ages, I questioned the wisdom, as well as the heaviness, of presenting to our children people whose lives were taken from them while working for peace and justice. Can't we just stick with the pretty flowers? Can't we just stick with the bunnies

and the eggs? Can't we just focus on, as Dr. King mentioned, all the colorful spring hats and dresses? Absolutely we are called to celebrate the beauty and the glory of spring.

Absolutely we would be remiss to ignore the rebirth of color in our days, the gentle warmth of the sun, the fragrances of the flowers.

But also we would do a tragic injustice to forget the sacrifice that such great leaders as Jesus of Nazareth, Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as Mohandas Gandhi, Harvey Milk, Meena Keshwar Kamal, and countless others all made in order for someone else to live the peace and justice they sought. We would indeed fail them to let slip away their legacy on a day such as this for the sake of decoration. This is a day in which we are called to say, as my t-shirt I bought at the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis says, "You can kill the dreamer, but not the dream."

As the blossoms of one spring are the children of the blossoms before, let us be the children of those who came before us. Let us not treat Easter as a time for prettiness and play alone, but as a day in which we commit to rising up like spring and saying to those who came before us, “you will not be forgotten. Your work will not be forgotten. We will roll away the stone and set you and your message free once more.”

So let us teach our children. So let us remember our ancestors. So may we, together, on this Easter day, rise like Spring into the renewal of hope, peace, justice, and love.

Amen.

#1002 Lo, the Day of Days Has Come