

Easter in Australia comes at a strange time in the seasonal calendar. While most of the symbols of Easter are replete with new life – eggs, rabbits and the like, the seasonal changes around us are of a different hue. Here in Australia, we are watching the creeping signs of death as summer gives way to Autumn – or in the Noongar seasons, Bunuru (the second summer and hottest part of the year) gives way to Djeran (the season where cooler weather begins and preparations for the deep wintry months commences).

Around us we see deciduous trees begin to shed their leaves, animal and bird activity slows as the days become shorter. Creation slowly seems to “die away” in front of us. The autumnal equinox marks the shift from days where light is the greater part of the day.

Of course we know that this season is transitory – a new growth and new life will eventually emerge, so long as we persevere through the darker stages of the year, knowing that new light – and warmth – will once again emerge.

However, the Easter story does not exhibit that same assurance. The death of Jesus devastated his followers. They all abandoned him – some even denied having known him. They endured days of despair – having lost all hope. Easter is no tale of persistence through tragedy. But for God raising Jesus from the dead, Jesus’ death would have been the end. Despair is the only response for those who loved him. The resurrection became the sole source of light in an otherwise dark tale, and yet an overwhelming source of hope. Christians believe that Jesus’ death flowed from his submission to God’s purposes. In an act of obedience and surrender, Jesus embodied his teaching that the way to life was to lose it, surrendering to the purposes of God. Not seeking to preserve his own life for his own sake, Jesus gave it up for a greater purpose.

Just as Spring is a promise which waits to be fulfilled on the other side of Winter (and the season of Djilba comes the other side of Makuru), there is a patience which is required. As winter dawns, and winter blues cast their shadow, we may despair of ever experiencing summer sun once more. Yet this is part of creation’s rhythm, clearing away the old in preparation for the new. Only as these sights and sounds die can they be born afresh.

The Easter story reminds us that hope is always born, though not always when (or how) we expect it. Resurrection comes the other side of death; new life is born after letting go of the old. The Easter story opens up a new chapter beyond the darkness of death, which comes through the struggles, not in spite of them.

These last weeks have been difficult for us all, negotiating our way through COVID restrictions and exposures, with all their implications whether at work or at home. Let us continue to encourage and support one another as we await the resurrection of a life where COVID no longer holds its sway. That day **will** come. It is one aspect of life of which Easter serves to reminds us.

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