

Chocolate Hares & Colored Eggs - A Season of Hope Sermon April 9, 2023

Story

- **Setting - spring is late, winter is still raging**
- **Nanna - girl looking for firewood finds a small bird with frozen wings**
 - **Calls upon Eostre**
 - **Eostre agrees to save the bird**
 - **Eostre took pity upon the suffering bird, petting it gently and blowing upon its frozen feathers.**
 - **Since it can no longer fly, she turns it into a white hare**
 - **Her breath transformed the bird into a magical hare**
 - **A bird that cannot fly will not survive as a bird. If it can hop, let it be a hare.**
 - **And as it now wears a cover of snow, let its pelt be white.**
 - **As the bird flew out before the spring, so will the hare come to these woods each year just before my return. It will bring my promise that spring shall soon arrive.**
 - **Says the hare will come before the spring to let people know it's coming**
 - **summon belated spring and guide her safely, even among the icebergs of the frozen north.**
 - **Girl goes home and spring arrives**
- **Next winter, girl is walking in the forest**
 - **Sees a white hare scampering away**
 - **Finds a feather**
 - **Sees nest on ground, hold a single rainbow egg**
 - **Every year thereafter, she finds more eggs**
- **Eventually, Eostre decided to hold a celebration in honor of the season of renewal and rebirth.**

- asked the hare to help her by carrying baskets filled with brightly colored eggs to the people of the village.
 - hare agreed, and with its incredible speed, it quickly covered vast distances, delivering the eggs to every corner of the land.
 - People overjoyed by gifts, and associate hare with Eostre's springtime festival.
- **Story lessons**
 - importance of compassion, kindness, and caring for the vulnerable
 - Changing the hare = reinvention
 - The hare is a symbol of fertility, rebirth, growth, and renewal
 - hares undergo change of behavior in Spring
 - obvious candidate as mascot for Spring
 - celebrates triumph of life over death
- **Interfaith Connections:**
 - Ostara
 - celebration of the entire season
 - from spring equinox to Beltane
 - return of longer days and warmer weather
 - Easter
 - gets its name from Eostre
 - themes of rebirth and regeneration.
 - victory of the light over darkness
 - increasing presence of the sun in the sky
 - Passover
 - celebration of freedom, exodus from Egypt
 - Holi (how-lee) - Hindu - celebrates end of winter and triumph of good over evil
 - Bright colors
 - Nowruz (no-rooz) - Persian New Year - means "new day"
 - Clean the house and celebrate with a feast

- Songkran - Thai new year
- Ramadan - month of fasting ends in Eid: festival of sweets
- **Winter's end**
 - **Winter teaches us about resistance and resilience**
 - **Natural world appears hostile and unforgiving**
 - **Ancestors' world also hostile, unforgiving.**
 - **challenges of survival, especially in winter**
 - **reliance on strength, cunning, and faith to persevere**
 - **importance of resilience**
 - **picking themselves up after a defeat**
 - **continuing to fight for beliefs**
 - **Modern world: we still face many challenges.**
 - **confronted with injustice, inequality, and oppression**
 - **easily overwhelmed by magnitude of problems**
- **Values**
 - **Wisdom, honor, and integrity**
 - **strength to resist the forces that seek to limit us**
 - **Community**
 - **Resistance can be both individual and collective**
 - **Can work together to create change**
 - **Supports us during difficult times**
 - **Cultivates resilience in our own lives and in society as a whole**
 - **Celebrates diversity of human experience**
 - **We learn from other's stories of resilience**
 - **inspire and uplift people from all walks of life**
 - **regardless of religious or cultural background**
- **Goals: work toward a more just, equitable world**
 - **speak truth to power**
 - **stand up against injustice**
 - **challenge different forms of oppression**

- stand up against systems that harm the natural world
- **Spring**
 - **Cycles of nature reflect our lives and spiritual journeys**
 - **Rebirth and renewal of the natural world after the cold, dark winter months**
 - **Renewal and rebirth of the human spirit**
 - **Resurrection and regeneration**
 - **Resurrection = rebirth**
 - **Fresh start after struggle or difficulty**
 - **Like a frozen baby bird becoming a hare**
 - **Interconnectedness**
 - **arrival of spring => our connection to the natural world**
 - **inspires us to work towards a more sustainable and harmonious future**
 - **The season of hope.**
 - **Spring brings promise of new beginnings and renewed growth**
 - **longer days, warmer weather, and blooming flowers inspire feelings of hope, optimism, and positivity**
 - **many cultures celebrate renewal, rebirth & new beginnings**
 - **arrival of spring is a metaphor for finding new life and opportunities.**
 - **associated with potential for positive change**
 - **holding onto hope in difficult times**
 - **hope and resilience sustain us during times of struggle**
 - **Finding hope and meaning in the midst of adversity**
- **Joy today can provide greater hope for tomorrow.**
 - **positive impact on mental and emotional well-being**

- feel more optimistic and hopeful about the future
- helps build resilience - important when facing challenges
- In community
 - joy experienced with others through shared celebrations or experiences
 - strengthens social connections and relationships
 - provides additional support and hope for the future
- Easter basket:
 - Chocolate bunnies
 - Fertility, abundance, and cyclical nature of life
 - symbol of new life
 - Resurrection/transformation - rabbit lays eggs
 - Eggs
 - fertility, new beginnings, and the cycle of life
 - bright colors represent the awakening of earth and renewal of life after the darkness of winter
 - Jellybeans look like eggs
 - Colors of spring flowers
 - potential for growth and transformation
 - Candy and sweets
 - Once given as offerings to the gods
 - symbols of sweetness of life
 - Colors represent the spring flowers.
 - giving or sharing candy expresses generosity, kindness, and love
 - Flowers
 - daffodils and tulips
 - new beginnings, growth, beauty of natural world
 - Easter basket filled with reminders of Spring
 - the joy we feel on a warm spring day
 - the hope that inspires us for tomorrow

- **the knowledge that, like the winter just past, we can overcome**

Final Thoughts

Otto Bollnow - philosopher

- **final years of the Second World War and during Germany's rebuilding**
- **Hope as the touchstone of human emotion and existence:**
 - **'Hope thus points to the deeper ground in which the feelings of patience and security are rooted, and without which [we] would never be able to relax [our] attention or go to sleep tranquilly.'**
 - **Hope 'comes to us without any effort on [our] part, as a sort of gift or grace,' It is a frame of mind that connects us to the future, not as the inevitability of our own death, but as 'an infinite source of new possibilities'.**