

Soul Matters Theme: Joy

Pagan Holiday: Eostre→Beltane

April 13, 2025

Rising with Joy: Spring's Call to Resilience

Opening Reflection: Lines Written in Early Spring by William Wordsworth

I heard a thousand blended notes,  
While in a grove I sate reclined,  
In that sweet mood when pleasant  
thoughts  
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

The birds around me hopped and  
played,  
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—  
But the least motion which they made  
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

To her fair works did Nature link  
The human soul that through me ran;  
And much it grieved my heart to think  
What man has made of man.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,  
To catch the breezy air;  
And I must think, do all I can,  
That there was pleasure there.

Through primrose tufts, in that green  
bower,  
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;  
And 'tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes.

If this belief from heaven be sent,  
If such be Nature's holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of man?

- The Season:
  - Anglo-Saxon Eostremonat - began on the March 29 new moon, peaks on the full moon (right now)
  - Celtic Beltane falls on May 1
  - Both holidays are filled with Springtime energy. Flowers, Colors. Dawning of a new day. Expressions of joy.
- Current Situation
  - Joy seems in short supply
  - Bad news fills each day
  - Everything seems an uphill battle
- Joy as Defiance/The Subversive Nature of Joy
  - In March, talked about Trust as act of Defiance

- trusting new life to emerge
- Joy is also Defiance
  - flowers breaking through cracks in frost-scorched earth soil
- In oppressive times, joy can be a radical act
- Joy defies systems that seek to instill fear, conformity, or despair
- In times of oppression, joy becomes an act of rebellion
  - a refusal to let darkness define the spirit
- marginalized communities thriving despite adversity
- Historical figures who found or spread joy amid oppression
  - Polish resistance during WWII
    - secret concerts, theater performances, and poetry readings sustained morale even in occupied cities
    - Warsaw uprising was fought as much by artists and creatives as it was by soldiers
  - Viktor Frankl found meaning — and even moments of joy — while enduring life in a concentration camp by focusing on small acts of kindness and connection
  - joyful protests
    - Hands Off protests
    - Pride parades
    - vibrant declaration of existence and defiance against oppression
  - joy of the mythical phoenix
    - hope, optimism, and excitement
    - sense of renewal
- Joy is not passive
  - assertion of dignity
  - affirmation of life's worth
- Reclaiming joy in oppressive contexts is a form of spiritual resistance
  - refusing to let fear, anger, or despair dictate one's inner world
- Spring's Lesson of Renewal
  - Nature teaches that life persists and returns stronger
    - even after the harshest winter
  - Community resilience
    - nurturing joy is essential for sustaining hope and activism

- Joy as an act of empowerment
  - cultivating joy is not about ignoring pain but about nurturing the light that keeps us moving forward
- Finding joy in troubled times
  - In seasons of uncertainty, joy can feel elusive
    - yet this is when it becomes most vital!
    - joy doesn't require perfect conditions; it often flourishes in unexpected places
  - Joy is not the absence of pain but the presence of something deeper — connection, gratitude, or purpose
    - the defiant bloom of a crocus through frozen soil
    - It's a cup of tea shared with a friend
    - the warmth of sunlight on your face
- Personal work:
  - Self-care is critical!
  - Connections to therapy
  - Connections to early Pagan training - how much have I *stopped* doing?
  - write down what brings joy and what renews their spirit
  - identify practices that foster their own joy
    - music, art, storytelling
  - Practices for Cultivating Joy in Difficult Seasons
    - Gratitude as a Compass
      - practice noticing small blessings as a way to reorient the heart
        - finding joy in small moments
          - moment of stillness
          - shared smile
          - laughter shared with friends
          - beauty of nature
      - become lifelines in dark times, fueling resilience and inspiring collective courage
      - Write down three things for which you are grateful every day.
        - Don't worry if they seem simple or mundane—just get something down
        - Writing gratitudes helps identify positive aspects of even the worst days

- Positive journaling
  - take time to write about positive events in your life
  - fun day spent with friends, a good movie, or an activity you enjoyed.
  - Positive journaling develops the habit of focusing on the positive.
- Creative Expression
  - Writing, music, and art can transform negative into something beautiful, offering a way to process while celebrating life
- Exercise
  - reduce insomnia, stimulate brain growth, act as anti-depressant
- Meditation
  - reduce anxiety, more positive emotions
  - Restructure brain to create sustained happiness
- Acts of kindness
  - Make a conscious effort to do something nice for no reason other than to help. Simple act of kindness can turn around the day for both you and the recipient.
- Fostering relationships
  - Strong social connections influence our mood. Those who are dedicated to spending time with friends and family show the highest levels of happiness.
- Collective Joy as a Force for Change
  - Community and Ritual
    - Gathering with others, even for simple shared meals or storytelling circles, strengthens bonds and renews hope
  - Communities that celebrate together build strength and solidarity
    - Joyful gatherings, rituals, and celebrations are essential tools for resistance and renewal
  - Integrating joy into activism
    - Encourage practices that bring joy into resistance work
      - Singing together at protests
      - Creating art that speaks truth to power
      - Finding moments of beauty and humor even in challenging times

- Wunjo
  - June 2023 sermon on "delight" introduced Wunjo, the "joy rune"
  - Shape & Meaning:
    - resembles a flag on a pole, a banner of victory or celebration.
    - success after struggle, achievement born of perseverance
  - Wunjo's message is this: Joy is not just a feeling; it is a state of being that arises when we are connected — to ourselves, our community, and our purpose.
    - not only personal happiness but also collective harmony and well-being
    - not fleeting pleasure but a deep sense of alignment with our purpose, community, and inner truth
  - Wunjo's joy is not naïve or passive
    - it is the kind of joy that emerges through perseverance
    - Like spring flowers pushing through cold soil, Wunjo's joy asserts itself even in hardship
    - linked to the joy of community, friendship, and shared victories
      - joy flourishes most fully in connection with others
      - joy is strongest when shared
  - Wunjo as Joy in Defiance
    - no promise of an easy path; points to joy that flourishes because it has endured hardship
    - torch in the dark — its flame flickers, but it never goes out.
      - joy is an act of defiance: a refusal to surrender to fear or despair.
    - By claiming joy — even in difficult times — we reclaim our agency and refuse to let oppressive forces dictate our inner world.
  - Wunjo is the:
    - First Bloom After Winter
    - Wind That Awakens Life
    - Joy of Growth
    - Song of Returning Birds
    - Hearth of Homecoming
  - meditate on where you find joy
    - in relationships, nature, or personal passions

- Closing
  - May the rising sun remind you of your own strength
  - May the flowers bloom as your joy unfolds
  - May you walk forward with courage, knowing that love and laughter are seeds of justice and hope
  - Joy is not a fleeting feeling, but a practice
    - an active choice to claim beauty, humor, and connection in defiance of despair
    - As spring reminds us, life has a way of returning — vibrant, stubborn, and joyful — even after the longest winter
  - May your joy rise not in spite of hardship, but because you choose to bloom anyway
  - Like the Wunjo rune, may your spirit glow with a quiet, unwavering light - a reminder that joy is your birthright, your strength, and your gift to the world.
  - Spring does not ask if the winter was hard — it rises regardless. Like Wunjo, may your joy bloom boldly this season — a reminder that life, love, and light will always return.

Closing Words: JOY by Rabindranath Tagore (ruh·**bin**·druh·nath tuh·**gor**)

And Joy is Everywhere;  
 It is in the Earth's green covering of grass;  
 In the blue serenity of the Sky;  
 In the reckless exuberance of Spring;  
 In the severe abstinence of gray Winter;  
 In the Living flesh that animates our bodily frame;  
 In the perfect poise of the Human figure, noble and upright;  
 In Living;  
 In the exercise of all our powers;  
 In the acquisition of Knowledge;  
 In fighting evils...  
 Joy is there, Everywhere.

