

A Sermon for 15th Sunday after Pentecost

September 1, 2024



Rev. Barbara Bond

New Life Episcopal Church, Uniontown, OH

Click Here for today's Readings:
[Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost – The Episcopal Church](#)

Song of Solomon 2:8-13, prose and poetry of John Donne

Death and Resurrection

We are a small congregation. We have lost four parishioners to death this year: Denise Prowell, Bob Atkinson, Denny Chapman, and Dave Giffin. This truly diminishes us, in size and in spirit.

I am reminded of the writings of the 17th century poet John Donne. Donne was dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and he was known for his metaphysical poetry as well as for his excellent preaching. One of his sermon meditations contains the following famous words:

**No man is an island, entire of itself;
every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main;
if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less....
any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind;
and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
it tolls for thee. (17th Meditation)**

Allow me to update this beautiful language a bit to increase our access to the thoughts:

**No person is an island; we are all part of a big continent,
and if we lose any part of it, perhaps just a clump of soil, we are all
diminished.
In our community, each of us experiences joy if another member
does;
and each of us experiences grief if another does.
We are all part of humankind, and any loss of another human being
impacts us.
If the death knell tolls, don't ask who has died.
We have all died.**

A wise meditation, acknowledging loss as diminishing all of us. Sometimes it feels like we have lost a limb, an integral part of ourselves, we wonder how we will function when we lose a member of our parish. We lose a piece of ourselves, and our community contracts.

Of course it can happen any time, but each time, whatever the season, we seem to enter into winter, the winter of our souls. It shocks and rivets us, again and again.

The chill of death and loss comes in all seasons. We step into winter again, with each loss.

Where is our comfort? We know that after winter, spring will come again. It is a promise and a certainty. We are an Easter people. We know that Easter comes again and changes our winters into rejoicing.

Our Old Testament reading today is from the Song of Solomon, also known as the Song of Songs, probably not written by King Solomon, but we credit him for convenience. It is love poetry, speaking of the enchanting breeze of spring as a wake-up call to new life. This passage is often read during Easter season, a love song from God to the sleeping earth. We are God's beloved, and God summons us with these beautiful words:

**Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away;
for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.**

Easter is the great solace of the broken-hearted. Christ is risen! Notice that this proclamation is always in the present tense. Christ IS risen. We live in this new life, given to us by God in the resurrection of Christ, now and always.