

There was an article from a couple of years ago in the New York Times about people who have taken up something again after a long hiatus. The author wrote about skiing for the first time in 20 years, and how much she enjoyed rediscovering her love for the sport. Others then wrote to her about hobbies or activities they had given up for a time and took on again, later in life.

These included stories of people who returned to horseback riding, skateboarding, fly fishing and tennis, another language or a musical instrument. I found myself inspired by these stories and intrigued by the ways these activities resurfaced, later in life, with renewed energy and also a different perspective. Here is one of my favorite accounts from the article:

“Kurt Neubert of San Mateo, Calif., is a Juilliard-trained former musician. He recently picked up the violin after a 28-year break. ‘Slowly, I started playing excerpts from pieces I used to enjoy, but quickly realized that while the neuromuscular memory was there, my left hand had lost most of the agility from its former life. I decided not to give up, but to embrace it as a beginner again!’ he wrote, adding, ‘This experience has been a metaphor for this chapter of my life — to let go, step aside and let it unfold organically.’”

I love this. Here is someone who excelled as a musician earlier in life, and, when he returned to the instrument, found his body could no longer do what it had done when he was younger. Rather than be discouraged, or walk away, he saw this as a chance to start again, a new beginning. He embraced his beginner status and let it unfold, organically.

We all know the time worn adage, “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” But apparently you can teach an old dog, an old trick that can feel like a new trick, a new beginning ...

Many of the gospel stories are all about new beginnings. And we have seen that over the past few weeks with the encounters between Jesus and other Biblical characters: Nicodemus, the Woman at the Well and today, the Man Born Blind.

In these exchanges, Jesus is offering to each person a new way of seeing and a new way of being. Jesus suggests to Nicodemus that to receive true spiritual insight, he must be born again, or born from above, or born anew. All of these variations are acceptable translations of the Greek modifier - *anōthen*. And they all point in the direction of the truth that Jesus is trying to teach Nicodemus.

With the Woman at the Well, Jesus is introducing her to living water that springs up from within. Like the woman, we come to understand that this living water is the source of wonder, creativity, energy and insight. It is a source of continual new beginnings.

And today we learn that the man who was born blind has received his sight. He has been transformed, from someone who was assumed to have been a sinner, to one whose eyes have been opened, and through whom the power of God is about to be revealed. It is a new beginning. So much so that some of the people who knew him well, have trouble recognizing him.

We have our own association with the phrase – Born Again. For many of us it is a term used by evangelical Christians as a kind of spiritual litmus test, to determine who was saved and who was not, who was in and who was out. That is why some of the more contemporary translations prefer the variation “born from above.”

But this morning I’d like to suggest that maybe the concept of born again still holds value for us, despite some of our negative associations. I like the line from an Episcopal priest who said that whenever he was asked if he had been born again, he would respond: “Yes, I’ve been born again ... and again ... and again.”

This gets more to the spirit and the heart of Jesus invitation this morning, not only to Nicodemus, the Woman at the Well and the Man Born Blind, but to us. And is very much in keeping with the accounts from the New York Times piece about people who have rediscovered dimensions from their past life, interests, passions, and gifts that have brought them new life, fresh energy, and rekindled the joy that these activities brought to them in the first place. It is like being born again. These rediscoveries are like mini-resurrections.

Now hold on, I can hear you say, you are getting ahead of yourself, Bishop. We are still in Lent. But that is exactly the point. I want to suggest that this season of repentance and self-examination is actually a process of mini-resurrections, again and again, that help prepare our hearts for the gift of Easter. These, too, are a way of beginning again. Your Senior Warden, in her note to me, pointed out that this is now the 4th Sunday in Lent. We are halfway through and it might be a good week to lighten things up a bit.

Lent, for all its emphasis on somber repentance and self-denial, is also about making a fresh start, amending our lives, changing our pattern. The word Lent is actually from the Middle English word for spring – the season not the mechanical object. Though that could work, too.

Not only is this a season that invites new beginnings and fresh starts, it is also a season where we are invited to take a leap of faith and spring into new opportunities to lead, to serve, to pray and to step outside our comfort zone and embrace a new opportunity.

What will that be for us this Lenten season, and especially for you who are being confirmed? For me, this season of Lent is pointing me in the direction of something I have tried before, but it is not something that I am particularly good at. Patience.

The truth is though I try to cultivate a patient and understanding approach to my work and in my relationships, inside I can be very impatient with myself and with other people. It can show up at odd moments, but mostly it is a kind of internal churning that rises and then falls like the tide, but it also takes up a lot of my energy.

Several years ago I tried to take on patience for Lent and things just seemed to get worse. When my Bishop, at the time, asked me how my Lent was going I said I had been praying for patience and I wasn't seeing much change. His response was, simply: "Keep praying." I didn't find it that helpful in the moment, but over time I realized he was actually teaching me more about patience than I ever could have imagined.

Here's the gift - even failure can be both a starting point and a motivation to try again. The season of Lent is the Season of trying again - and every do-over - is a mini-resurrection.

Today, Emma, you are taking a step of faith on your journey with Jesus. You are saying that you affirm for yourself the promises that were made on your behalf, at your baptism. But you are also on a journey toward Easter, toward the promise of God - that brings joy and peace and grace and gratitude.

Today we are moving with you toward the resurrection at Easter. And every Sunday in Lent is a reminder that this where we are headed. And it is a new way of seeing. Like the man blind from birth, our eyes are being opened to new possibilities and new beginnings. Being born again, or born anew, is one of the ways we talk about this promise and how it animates our lives, our journey, our direction reminding us - Resurrection is our destiny.

Let's trust in God's promise, and look for the signs along the way. Even in Lent, they're popping up all around: like crocuses and daffodils, like the living water that springs up from within, and the warm wind that comes out of nowhere, like the failures that inspire a fresh start, and the things that bring us joy.

Jesus is teaching us, Jesus is showing us - that God loved the world so much that he gave us the gift of resurrection, the gift new eyes, and the gift of a new beginning - again and again and again.
AMEN.

The Right Rev. Sam Rodman
3/15/2026