

Kelly Osborne: 3/24/20
Endless Blooms

I have always loved spring. As a small child, I remember laying belly-down in the grass looking closely at the dandelions that blanketed my backyard in Nebraska. I was barefoot in April which was against one of my Mother's rules - "If the name of the month has the letter "r" in it, you need to be wearing shoes when you go outside. If there is no "r" in the name of the month, you are free to go barefoot." I remember plucking handfuls of lilacs from the neighbor's huge lilac bush that grew on the property line our family shared with the elderly woman who lived next door. I sat in the grass looking close at the blooms. They were so intricate, each bloom made up of tiny little flowers. I would pull the blooms apart looking at each little amazing detail. That beautiful lilac bush was like a generous friend offering its gifts to the children of the neighborhood. We used the blooms to play "wedding" and the weighty flowers were our bouquets. We filled our play dishes with lilac petals to make "lilac soup" which we would pretend to eat. The soft purple petals seemed to be an endless source of fun for our imaginations.

Fast forward to my first job after university - teaching in Japan. It was a time of so many new and wonderful experiences, but also had moments of culture shock and homesickness as well. I was riding my bike home from school one afternoon. I caught a whiff of a lilac bush. Home! I could smell home. I tried hard to catch a glimpse of the bush but it was behind a tall cinder block fence. I couldn't see the bush but I could smell it and the familiar scent filled me with warm memories of home.

Much later, after we returned to the States and resettled into life in Oklahoma, my mother gave me a lilac bush on my birthday. We planted it together as my young children played in the backyard around us. I remember wondering what it would eventually look like - it was so small.

Today, I walked out to that lilac bush to smell the first bloom of the season. It is now large and generous filled with blooms just like my neighbor's lilac bush from my childhood. The aroma of its blooms fill the air each spring and I force everyone who is with me to bury their nose in the blooms.

I believe that like the lilac in spring and the turning of the seasons, there are steady rhythms of grace that surround us. Like a bloom in a child's hand, the goodness of God can take our curious stare and prodding to reveal new depths of His love. Like a familiar whiff of a lilac on a sunny afternoon, He finds us even when we are far from home. And like the now mature lilac bush in my backyard, the once small planting of faith will grow steadily year by year through the transformative work of the Holy Spirit into a display of God's beauty with seemingly endless blooms. So, is the work of God in our lives and it is very good.

He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? 19 It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

Luke 13:18-19 (NRSV)