



HOUSTON VISITING CHRISTIAN SCIENCE NURSE SERVICE, INC.

Our mission is to heal through practical, operative Christian Science.

March 2024

No Death

At breakfast one cold March morning, my grandpa outlined the chores each of us would do that day. Going over the list had been a daily ritual of ours since I'd turned 10. Now I was 13, and Pop was referring to me more and more as his "right-hand man" and regarding me less like a kid. Though I liked being treated as a grown-up, I wasn't keen on being assigned the "manly" chore of cleaning out the sheep stall.

Sheep droppings are odorless pellets. Hiding under countless layers of fresh straw bedding and accumulating over many years, these tiny pellets had been pulverized by tiny hooves, creating a mound of manure that was as hard as sedimentary rock and as high as four feet above the stall floor.

Pop showed me how to dig my pitchfork deep into that mountainous mass until I hit paydirt—well, concrete. I was to remove every last sheep dropping and expose the entire floor—all 50' x 100' of it—to daylight. Then I was to haul the dung to the garden. It would fertilize corn and cabbage, sugar peas and potatoes and other succulent veggies that would sprout from seeds Pop planted in the early spring every year.



Pop's massive garden (it ran the length of a two-acre field and was maybe a third of the field's width) required equally massive mounds of manure—and I was *just* the lad appointed to provide it. From sunup to sundown, I pitched rock-solid manure into an industrial-size wheelbarrow, which I then wheeled, over and over and over again, up a ten-foot oak plank into the manure spreader.

Lest you feel sorry for me, let me assure you that being a farm boy wasn't

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all hard work. The reward for shoveling 4' x 50' x 100' of manure from the sheep stall was that I got to drive Pop's 1949 Ford tractor, which pulled the spreader.

It was a thrill every time I turned the key in the ignition, revved up the engine, and drove down the gradual slope to the garden. Once there, I properly positioned the tractor and manually pulled and ratcheted the antenna-like gear levers that engaged the spreader.

Then it was off to the races, so to speak. The spreader mechanically flung the manure over a portion of the garden during each pass. Watching it work its magic was another satisfying payoff. The spreading process lasted only five minutes at a time, which meant I had the joy of making dozens of trips, because there was so much garden to cover!

As I drove back up the hill to the barn for yet another round of wheelbarrow filling, I took stock of the gray, chilly, early spring air. I noticed there was nothing green in the entire field. All the weeds and grasses were brittle, dead. Our garden, so lush every late spring and summer, lay dormant, empty. Everything looked abandoned. Cold. Lifeless.

Of course, anyone accustomed to winter in a cold climate knows that nothing is ever devoid of life. Life is going on, even if unseen, until the warmth of sun-drenched summer days coaxes all things green to awake anew.

Mary Baker Eddy expresses the awakening of life this way: "Being possesses its qualities before they are perceived humanly. Beauty is a thing of life, which dwells forever in the eternal Mind and reflects the charms of His goodness in expression, form, outline, and color" (*Science and Health* 247:19–24 Being).



Photo by Theo Orlic on Unsplash

Her spiritually rich sentiment undergirds the lessons I learned from my farm days of yore. Spreading manure over a frozen, lifeless-looking tundra and watching the eventual greening of all that seemed dead in that tundra taught me that Life with a capital "L"—a name for God—is eternal.

The reason I've described this decades-old scene is to make a deeper point about Life—how it seems, to the five senses, to ultimate in death, but how, in Truth, the death of anything that lives is an impossibility. As our Leader succinctly puts this very point: "Nothing that lives ever dies, and vice versa" (SH 374:29–30).

I started to learn this divine fact of Life when, in my early 20s, I experienced the passing—within months of each other—of both my dad and Pop.

When a loved one leaves earth's scene, it sometimes seems unavoidable that we fall into a yawning hole of grief—and feel a chill of despondency and despair. Such human emotions, if not checked, tend to pull us into a downward spiral of loss and loneliness, guilt and gloom, helplessness and emptiness. Some people grapple for many years with the passing of a dear one. In my case, for several years I actively sought, with varying success, to befriend any fatherly/grandfatherly figure to fill the absence of the two males I missed in my family.

Eventually, I grew weary of searching for others to fill my imagined loss and was ready to accept the truth that there can be no death because Life, including man, is spiritual.

Understanding the truth that dad and Pop had never died felt like a warm beam of sunlight finally breaking through the long-time darkness. I gently laid aside my futile yearning for surrogate father figures, and the burden of my quest simply fell away.

Mrs. Eddy, who fully understood the pain of loss, speaks tenderly and pragmatically on the subject: "Sorrow is the harbinger of joy. Mortal throes of anguish forward the birth of immortal being; but divine Science wipes away all tears" (*Unity of Good* 57:25).

Acknowledging the omnipotence and omnipresence of God, Love, heals grief in the wake of a loved one's passing. Every Easter (the last day of March this year) reminds us of the resurrection of Christ Jesus. His crucifixion left the disciples feeling crushed and defeated. They huddled in fear of a similar fate, then returned to their old lives, following their former careers. We know from the disciple John that they encountered Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, where their lives were transformed. They, too, were raised from death—from dead thoughts. They gained a higher, holier understanding of Immanuel, or God with us.

How comforting to know that God, our Father-Mother, supports all struggling hearts. How reassuring to learn that Life *is* eternal.

Lovingly,
The HVCSNS Board of Directors and our
Journal-listed Christian Science nurse, Susie Petersen

PS: For those struggling with grief over the loss of a loved one, these two articles in the February 2024 issue of *The Christian Science Journal* are particularly helpful: The joy no one can take from you and Unending Life and 'walking in the pathway of Truth'.

Financial Assistance Available

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Christian Science Hymn 324