

Meditation for April 10, 2024

Recently, I read the novel, *West with Giraffes* by Lynda Rutledge. What a strange title! It is an endearing, and also heart-rending historical fiction. The story is set around a truly extraordinary real-life occurrence that took place in 1938. Two giraffes (later to be called Lofty and Patches) travelled to New York miraculously surviving a hurricane while crossing the Atlantic. Then they made another journey, a road trip of over 3,000 miles to San Diego Zoo (then under the first female zoo director Belle Benchley), which became their home for the next nearly 30 years.

We learn a lot as we go along—what people in the dust bowl had to face day after day, with little hope of escape or anything different; the discrimination and prejudices that were far stronger in the period—against women, and people of colour. And that Hitler is threatening Europe. Our protagonist, Woody, no stranger to tragedy—and stealth—demonstrates that redemption and second chances are possible in life.

What to take away from this read, without giving away too much? While the giraffes themselves represent peace, we're reminded that all life has value, human or animal, and needs to be respected for that reason. Even from dire circumstances, endurance, compassion, and love can change lives. We recognize this because we are celebrating the Easter season. We know about the power of love and its power of redemption.