

Resurrection or Resuscitation

April 7, 2024

Let us pray...Jesus says...I am the resurrection and I am life.

Spirit meet us here, as we live into the the hope of this Easter season and we shrink before the mystery of death and resurrection. Meet us here oh God.

It's the second Sunday of Easter, in the church calendar Easter is a Season not just a day and we celebrate 7 weeks or 50 days until pentecost. Just a few short days ago it was Easter morning, many were up before the sun, making it a practice to be awake to witness the sunrise. Proclaiming that "Christ is risen". Celebrating resurrection.

I don't know about you but usually when it's Easter or I'm thinking of Easter and the resurrection I think of celebration, and new life, and sunrises and beautiful flowers, and joy, I think of dressing up, and feasting with loved ones.

And even though just a few days prior we had maundy thursday and good friday services, and even though we often drape the alter in black and we preach and teach and remember the pain of Good Friday and Holy Saturday just days before. Come Easter morning its all celebration. Some times its very easy to celebrate easter detached from the journey to the cross we just walked.

Except today it is different. in this Easter season...when we talk of resurrection, and of the hope of Easter, both of our feet, and our hearts are reeling with pain and grief of losing Susie. It's the season of Easter AND the tears are flowing. There is celebration of Susie's life and gift to the world, AND there is such grief trying to navigate a world without her.

Well the truth is, the tears and the grief that are present here today are much more in-line with how Mary Magdalene and the disciples were experiencing the Easter we read about in the Gospels.

In John 20 we read of Mary Magedeline standing outside the tomb weeping. Then we read of the disciples - they've withdrawn from the

world, afraid of the unknown future, trying to figure out “what now”... and we read of doubting Thomas who says that he doesn't want to trust in the resurrection until he touches the scars on Jesus body.

It's in these moments that the risen Christ appears to Mary first and then the disciples.

It doesn't mean things go back to the way they were, Just like for Mary and the disciples it doesn't mean the grief and tears gone, But it does mean that Christ is risen, that death has been transformed. It does mean that now our grieving can also include celebrating. And our sorrow is most assuredly surrounded with hope. It does mean that the light of new life will continue to show up all around us.

As Diana Butler Bass puts it... Resurrection can't happen without endings. New life is impossible without the finality of no-going-back grief-at-the-tomb death.

It's human instinct to avoid pain, to block suffering and loss. To run from grief. We struggle with how to hurt, we assume pain and loss must mean the absence of God, and we want the quickest way to stop the pain.

Perhaps this is why we sometimes conflate resurrection with resuscitation. Wishing and striving to make things go back to how they were.

But Resurrection is not resuscitation.

Richard Rohr talks about how Death and life are two sides of the same coin; we cannot have one without the other. It seems we only know what life is when we know what death is.

If you've spent much time around a hospital, or I'm sure many of you have a living will you are familiar with the acronym DNR. Or Do Not Resuscitate. If you have a DNR order what that means is that if you stop breathing or your heart stops beating doctors will not intervene to try to resuscitate you. People have DNRs for a variety of reasons, but especially as people tend to get older, there is a desire to live into the

universal truth and reality that we all die. And we begin to see this line between life and death and life after death to blur.

Resuscitation is about bring back to life what was, to restore it to THIS life. And that too can be a miracle. And important. But resuscitation doesn't remove the reality of death. We can put all of our efforts into resuscitating a life, a relationship, a church, ourselves, but that isn't resurrection. And that doesn't remove the reality of death in the future. Sometimes we cling so tightly to resuscitation that we can't open ourselves up for resurrection.

Resurrection is not about God bringing back to life what once was...that is resuscitation. Resurrection is when death is transformed. It doesn't erase death. It doesn't prevent it. When we surrender and trust the reality of death, it is there we experience resurrection.

And What the resurrection reveals more than anything else is that *love is stronger than death.*" - Richard Rohr

Jesus says I'm the resurrection and I am life. And then in John 20:31 It says that he writes these things down so that we may believe and have life! I want you to notice this verse because it clues us in to what John, the gospel writers, what his objective was for telling this story.

Here is the thing. Now stay with me for just a second because this minor detail gives us a lot of information, there is something we don't really notice when we read this passage in English but is apparent in Greek. The word "life" we read in verse 31 and also in John 11. is an interesting word. In John, and throughout the New Testament, the English word "life" translates three different Greek words: *psychē*, *bios*, and *zoē*. When John (and the rest of the New Testament) speaks, on the one hand, of *psychē* or *bios*, these words refer to what one possesses simply by virtue of being a living creature. This is the life possessed from birth to death by animals and by humans, whether they be good or bad, righteous or wicked, etc

On the other hand, "life" as used at the end of this passage, is spoken of with the word *zoē*. life that, transforms us from merely existing to living in

the abundance and eternity of God. Life that is real and genuine, a life active and vigorous, devoted to God

John tells us this story so that we will have life. So that we will have life that is real and genuine and a life devoted to God. We have all seen people who are living and breathing, and then we have seen people who are alive...right?

I didn't know Susie that long or as well as all of you, but oh how clear how truly she lived, from the time her and I had conversations about restorative justice to listening and witnessing the radiance of her life in all of you. You know I've been on the edges of church for the last 3 to 4 years. Standing at the doors. Not sure I wanted to go back in. A couple months back I got a message from Susie that said, I am the deacon for your family, and I can't wait to get to know you more. And with that exchange the joy and longing to be apart of a faith community came flooding back.

She knew something about this Zo E life that we read in John. A life that transforms us from merely existing to living in the abundance and eternity of God.

As we continue in this Easter season...as we live into/trust/and practice resurrection life....

I want to remind you about the The joy of the Resurrection...if you don't hear anything else hear this. Trusting in the resurrection means knowing that

The worst thing is never the last thing....

Each of one us, even in all our brokenness, none of us are beyond repair. God has not given up on us.

To live with the joy of the resurrection is to Know with confidence that in darkness there will be light. In despair there is hope.

To live with the joy of the resurrection is to live a life that is real and genuine

Its ok to doubt, its ok to want to see and feel God, to touch the scars like Thomas wanted to. It's ok to lean on and borrow someone else's trust in the resurrection before you can for yourself again.

Look around, and watch all of creation displays the truth that from death, new life comes. In the sunsetting and sunrising, and in the spring flowers.

And What the resurrection reveals more than anything else is that *love is stronger than death.*” - Richard Rohr

Love will carry you through Grace, will sustain you. Usually when there is talk about resurrection there is talk about believing in resurrection, but in our day and time when we say belief we think rational, intellectual assent to certain ideas. But belief is actually more about trust. It's about trusting in the resurrection, trusting that love is stronger than death, and living into this. That is how we can have hope in our grief, that is how we can find life even in death, because we trust that love is stronger than death.

We've seen it too many times for it not to be true. And it is true now and it will be true tomorrow. And that is how we hold both the tears and the celebration together and truly live into the resurrected life here and now.

In the name of the one who was, who is and who is to come!

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