

Resurrection Life

Isaiah 65:17-25

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Psalms 118:1-2, 14-24

Luke 24:1-12

Alleluia, The Lord is risen!.....

Now quiet down for a moment and listen. Close your eyes if you need to. Can you hear them? Eve...Able...Abraham and Sarah, Rebekah, Isaac, Leah, Jacob, Miriam, Ruth, David, Isaiah? Can you hear them? Can you hear the voices of the saints and martyrs, and our great grandparents, victoriously shouting against the veil? Do you feel the vibration in your feet from the shattered tombs, the resonance of it in your bones...the stardust in your veins verifying what all of creation from all eternity has waited to see... The power of death has been undone. The chorus of the communion of saints is joining ours, shouting "Alleluia," Jesus' resurrection has overcome the power of the grave! Our catechism says that when Jesus overcame death, he opened for us the way of ETERNAL LIFE.

Flourishing LIFE has always been God's plan for us. When God first created humans, the design was to have humans collaborate with God in the work towards the world's flourishing. -Here's a perfectly fruitful garden, tend and develop it, and you also be fruitful so the whole created world can be full and thrive.- You know the story. Adam disobeyed God. Rather than collaborating with God's plans, Adam sought to gratify himself. The ultimate consequence for that sin ushered in the destruction of the world and the death of all people thereafter. Grim.

Have you ever wondered why that single act led to so much devastation? One definition for sin is human independence from God. We were never designed to exist or operate apart from God. We were always meant to be in collaboration with the Creator in service to the created world. If we had done this the way God designed, serving the earth and others, rather than our own interests, there would never have been harm or any unmet

need. Can you imagine that? No hungry children, no unshod feet, no loneliness, violence, fear, or hatred, no superstorms, wildfires, or communities destroyed. No grief, no loss, and no tears. But that one choice, that move away from God to serve oneself, what we call sin, distorted the human relationship with God, with others, and with all creation. Sin introduced entropy, and our precious world has been suffering ever since.

The amazing thing about this story is that, regardless of the fractiousness of humankind, God's purposes never changed. God made the world and God loves it, always has and always will. God loves humans, always has and always will. God is not confined within the damage of the created world, so when God sees it, when God sees us, God still sees the potential, the DNA inherent in the design. God could have turned away from us, a broken experiment gone wrong, and let us consume ourselves and one another, distant from any relationship with us. But God loves the creation; God loves us.

Rather than hate us for destroying the beloved creation, God came to us in Jesus. He showed us what it looks like to live according to the original design, to remain connected to God through prayer and purpose, to love the world and serve others. Jesus knew that being a human on this broken earth meant suffering the fate of all human creatures, death. But Jesus' love is boundless, and knowing his fate didn't keep him from coming to our rescue.

The power of God at work through the person of Jesus was so profound, that even death was not powerful enough to hold him. He burst from the grave on Easter morning, pushing past the constraints of death, filled with the presence and power of God to rescue what we broke through our willful independence. Today's collect says that "by his glorious resurrection he delivered us from the power of our enemy". Death no longer holds us. Paul says, "ALL will be made ALIVE in Christ". We are no longer slaves to our sin, no longer enslaved by entropy and death. Because Christ was raised from the dead, we now have the freedom to live according to our original design. For us, eternal life, here and now, is

available and possible; we live into it every time we collaborate with God for the restoration of this world and the people in it.

Isaiah wrote today's beautiful oracle during the Babylonian exile. His people had been carted away by an invading army. His land had been colonized by foreign powers. He was left in Judah with a remnant who had seen their land and people ravaged by foreigners. And yet Isaiah imagined the hope of the restored world to come. This was a hope he knew prophetically, in faith, just like we know it today. In the restored world, God's dream for God's people involves the removal of tears and distress, no premature death, land and homes built, occupied, and enjoyed in partnership with a fruitful and peaceful earth. To us, reading this thousands of years later, this lovely image continues to sound like a distant dream. It sounds like heaven, not any earth we've ever known.

When we hear the term "eternal life" our modern conception launches most of us into fantasies of an opaque heavenly dreamscape far in the future. That is not the eternal life Jesus taught. Eternal life, for Jesus begins by recognizing our purpose to LIVE now and provide LIFE for those around us... LIFE, not mere existence; Healthy, full, vibrant, overflowing LIFE. For Christians, baptized into Christ's death, our resurrected life, just like Jesus', begins with death.

Our collect beckons us to pray that we may "die daily to sin, that we may evermore LIVE with him in the joy of his resurrection". Our death now, is the death of our independence from God. Living into the joy of the resurrection means moving into life with God. Those who live sacrificially, in the footsteps of Jesus, know that is where LIFE is most genuinely encountered. It is where we connect most deeply with God's original design for us. Are you familiar with the Frederick Buechner quote, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." In God's economy, our greatest flourishing will always be found in God and will also provide the greatest flourishing for

others. True LIFE keeps us reaching towards God with one hand while reaching towards humanity with the other.

Every week we recite together our faith as recorded in the Nicene Creed. The end of that Creed states that we are looking for the resurrection of the dead. As Christians we do anticipate the resurrection of human bodies in the life of the world to come. But the resurrection of the dead that we look for week after week is our resurrected life here, our own and our communities' choice to live in collaboration with God's purposes, to entrust ourselves to God as we seek to serve the flourishing of others, to live into Isaiah's prophetic dream for the world resurrected and recreated into God original design.

As Christians we no longer fear death. Jesus ripped through the power of death, making a way for all of us. We no longer cling to this life. We spend our lives in service to others knowing that at life's conclusion, we will return to the dust from whence we came. All of us will die. But death's power is not final.

Outside the tomb on Easter morning, the women were asked "why do you look for the living among the dead"? The women had forgotten what Jesus had told them. They were just discovering a world where resurrection LIFE is more powerful than death. All these years later, we too risk forgetting. Like the women at the tomb, we can become mired in our own fears and griefs so deeply that we allow our greatest enemy, death, to steal our greatest gift, LIFE. Friends, let us not hand over the power of LIFE in exchange for the lies of death.- For Christians, resurrection LIFE will always start with death. When we die to our independent will, we rise with Christ. Death's power has been overcome by our resurrected Lord. Can you hear the saints echoing the refrain? Alleluia, the Lord is Risen!

On Easter morning, let us remember the words of Saint Augustine: "You are the Body of Christ. In you and through you the work of the incarnation must go forward. You are to be taken. You are to be blessed, broken and distributed, that you may be the means of grace and vehicles of eternal love."

May we be a people who remember the power of the resurrection will always lead us into death so that we can experience the POWER of resurrected LIFE collaborating with God.