

The Resurrection of Our Lord

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*Isaiah 25:6–9; Psalm 118:14–24; Colossians 3:1–4; Mark 16:1–8*

“...trembling and astonishment seized them.”

The women disciples go to the tomb of Jesus to anoint his body only to discover that He isn't there. He had risen. And trembling and astonishment seized them. The resurrection of Jesus Christ breaks the bounds of all that they know. The resurrection of Jesus Christ breaks the bounds of all that we know. We cannot contain the breadth of this mystery. We can talk about it. Preach about it. And even celebrate but it is always bigger and more awesome than we can grasp. There is no category for the resurrection. In spite of a few ancient reanimation myths, NT Wright suggests that resurrection is a singular even in the history of the world. We have no category, no pattern, no framework for understanding it. We can only stand in the light of it.

The great Scottish Theologian TF Torrance was once asked, “Do you believe in the resurrection?” He answered, “I believe in the Resurrected One.” Torrance was reminding his interlocutor that if we truly believe in the resurrection, we cannot speak of a past event but a present reality. The presence of Jesus Christ, the Resurrected One, in our midst should change everything. Do we believe in the Resurrected One who dwells us among even now?

I'm rereading Dostoevsky's “The Brother's Karamazov” with a group of students. In explaining his rejection of the the Lord, Ivan Karamazov tells his brother Alyosha the story of the Grand Inquisitor. In his story, the Grand Inquisitor is an aging Cardinal who oversees the Spanish Inquisition. Jesus returns to the world and walks the streets of Spain, healing the sick and comforting the weary. The Grand Inquisitor captures Jesus and eventually meets with him. He explains to Jesus that the church has no need of Him. Jesus is a distraction from ruling the people. The church has learned from the Tempter in the wilderness how to wield power over the people through miracle mystery, and authority. Jesus is no longer welcome and is told to leave. Is the Resurrected One welcome in our midst?

I fear the church in America enjoys the comforts of our culture so greatly that we may find it difficult to actually live in the light of His Presence. If we actually encountered Him, we may be like the women at the tomb: trembling and astonishment might seize us.

In the Gospel stories of resurrection, we behold the disciples of Christ facing confusion, misunderstanding, awe, and eventually worship. He walks among them, he opens their eyes to His presence, He gives them His Spirit who will lead them into all truth.

The Spirit of the Living God comes upon and within His people to bear witness to the Resurrected One, to catechize them, and to send them out in the power of God.

The Spirit of God still blows among us and He continues to teach His people, to Catechize them, to open eyes and ears and hearts to the reality of the Jesus Christ, the Risen One who present to His people even now.

When we use the word catechism or catechesis, we usually refer to the teaching of the faith handed down through a pattern of questions and answers. The word catechesis contains the word “echo.” Echo is an ancient word that speaks of the waves in the ocean. The waves pound against the shore again and again and change it over time. It is a sounding. Catechism is a sound down. Catechism in the church is not simply about knowledge but about being reshaped by the Word. The Spirit is the true catechizer of the people of God. He comes to open our eyes to Jesus who dwells among us even now. As we behold the Resurrected One, we are changed.

Today we celebrate our Savior and His breaking the bonds of sin and death. Let us reflect briefly on how the Spirit leads us to live in light of the Resurrected One, of Jesus our Lord.

He opens our eyes by teaching us to look back, to look out, and to look in.

Let us begin by looking back. Think of the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Jesus walks along with them, but they fail to recognize Him. Jesus walks among us as well and often we fail to recognize Him. As He walks among them, he tells them the story of their people. He teaches them to look back of their Holy texts, our Old Testament. As they remember the story, He opens their eyes to the witness of Scripture: how it points to fulfillment in the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

Just as Jesus walks with these disciples, He walks with us by His Spirit. The Spirit teaches to remember in light of Jesus Christ. The words of Scripture bears witness to Jesus, to His life, to His presence, to His truth. As we read alone or aloud together, we listen to behold the Word who stands over us even now. Sometimes we may sense His strong presence and other times a gentle whisper stirs us to pause and pray and wait and watch.

As we look back over the messiness of human history, He still speaks. His Spirit can stir and teach us and guide us. The disciples are learning the reality of the Risen One and His Presence among them by remembering.

Lord teach us to remember rightly. Come Holy Spirit and opens our eyes to our Savior as we remember your Word and your grace over time.

The Spirit is also calling the disciples to look out. After Jesus walks with His disciples toward Emmaus, he breaks bread with them. In the fellowship of one another, their eyes are opened. Each week, we come to the communion table to behold our Lord afresh. His Spirit opens our eyes, ears, heart, lives to the Risen One who gives us life even now.

This same pouring out of life happens as the people of God pour out our lives into one another. The Spirit can help me to behold the Resurrected One in our midst as I turn and face the other: as I enter into relationship, into communion with the family of God. In their sacred letters, the Apostles write extensively about preserving the bond of love within the family of God and within the individual households. Christ leads us the way of exchanged love. In the pattern of pouring out our lives one for another. In 1 Peter 4:7-11 we are told,

<sup>8</sup> Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: <sup>11</sup> whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in

everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The Spirit of God also opens our eyes and ears to the world around us. All creation is bearing witness though we often pass by blindly. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 1:20,

<sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.

Come Holy Spirit. Have mercy and open our eyes to Living Presence of Jesus as we look out beyond ourselves to your people around and to your glorious creation. May we love and serve you even as we learn how to properly love and serve one another in this world.

Finally, the Spirit is bearing witness to the Risen Lord even as we look inward at our own lives and our own story. In Philippians 3, the Apostle Paul looks back over his own life and understands it in light of the Risen Lord. He writes,

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (Php 3:8)

His losses and his gains are all over up in worship to Christ. Paul helps us to see the suffering and problems and challenges do not separate us from the love of Christ but may we places where we encounter afresh the reality of His resurrection life. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul encourages them that both his personal suffering and their suffering do not separate them from Christ but may open their lives to Christ in new ways. He writes,

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. <sup>5</sup> For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. (2 Co 1:3-5)

The Spirit can open our eyes to the reality of our Risen Savior who dwells in our midst in times of joy and in times of sorrow.

We have been baptized into Christ. May we live in the light of His life. During this extended season of Easter feasting, may we practice intentionally habits of looking back, looking out, and looking in, always trusting the Spirit of God to open our eyes and hearts to Jesus who walks among us even now.