

## **“Resurrection, Today”**

**This sermon was Preached Easter Sunday, 4/20/2014**

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Sisters and brothers, grace to you and peace from God our Creator and Jesus Christ, the risen one. Amen.

He was just sitting there so matter of fact. As if it was the most normal thing in the world. As if the world hadn't just stopped and restarted. As if *they* were the odd ones, the women, coming there to do what people do when a person is dead, take care of the body, and grieve.

He reminds me of my older brother—that angel—not because my brother was an angel, mind you, but for the fact that after he'd made short business of any physical contest between us, as an exclamation point my big brother would, in fact, sometimes sit on me and hold me down for a few extra seconds. All in good sibling fun of course. He was bigger, that was that, so there he would sit; he sat.

Was it because God in Christ was bigger on that first Easter morning, that the angel sat there that way? Bigger not only than the religious walls they had tried to build around him, or the political systems so threatened by his ways, but bigger even than death itself. There in the early dawn, with dew on the grass, and tears still wet on the disciple's cheeks, something big had taken place. From the angel's perspective and posture it was a matter of fact. For the women, it was a bit more shocking and frightening, and yet their feet began to run at the excitement and joy of the reality as it set in. They're set to go and tell the disciples what they had seen and heard.

The question for us is, do we believe it? How do we encounter this same event? Does it make a difference today? Resurrection.

I've found myself wondering if someone had been there to snap a picture of Jesus, when he who had been quite dead until just then, strolled up to those women and said, “Hi”. If we had a photograph of that, would it make a difference? Or, would it nevertheless, for many, become no more than an interesting historical fact, like in 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue?<sup>1</sup> Would many still say, ‘resurrection? So what.’? What difference does resurrection make today? To our lives and this world?

I don't want to preach heresy this Easter day, but what if as Frederick Buechner suggested once, ‘what's important is not so much what happened in the half-light of daybreak on that day in 30 A.D., but what happens now.’<sup>2</sup> What if what matters is not what happened on Easter Sunday, but what takes place in our lives, today. Is there any sense that, for you and for me, Jesus exists, or the power that was in Jesus is reality, now, bringing hope to the present?

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Religion & Ethics News Weekly, “Frederick Buechner Extended Interview” (18 April 2003), (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2003/04/18/april-18-2003-frederick-buechner-extended-interview/8658/>) accessed 14 April.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Paraphrased.

I've been on a search for resurrection power at work these last weeks. What I've been looking for is not necessarily new life, the perfect promise of a newborn baby, but rather renewed life, life forged from death; hope where it seemed like there was nothing; joy erupting where there had only been fear.<sup>3</sup> What might the power of resurrection at work look, and feel, and sound like today?

Does resurrection power look like a teenager staring at their reflection in the mirror and deciding to love themselves that day, despite every pressure to do otherwise. Is it what's at work, this power, when a group joins hands at an AA meeting, and support one another against all odds towards sobriety. Is resurrection spirit what's happening in Boston, one year later. Is the power of the resurrection what lives in Harry Hudson, a 20 year old battling cancer, who is also a musician, who is using his art to proclaim a message about love and raise money for the American Cancer Society. Is resurrection power the force behind the decision some make to buy real 'peeps' for another on Easter, creating a livelihood and a way where there was no way for someone living in the third world.

I don't know, but as I reflect on these few images, I'd like to think so. I'd also like to think that you could add your own examples, from your life and world.

If the resurrection is not true, then Jesus was just a nice teacher with an interesting way of life but his potential died with him on Good Friday, and the last word from his movement is death.

For the sake of all those who have hung on crosses of injustice, for the sake of those who know the broken places or live there still, for the need in my own soul on my darkest day to have hope: let us like that angel sit on resurrection as a matter of fact for this hour, this day. Let us allow ourselves to have an audacious conviction that resurrection *is* at work among us.

Perhaps one of the most convincing arguments for resurrection power alive today is gathered right here. Though the founders were a dozen of the most stumbling, bumbling deserting, denying band of misfits perhaps ever assembled, here we are not just in church but *as* the church: a movement of people now two millennia old, doing their best to follow and pray to and even bet their lives on this Jesus.

Yes, the church has messed up in real ways. We are still and ever will be bumbling and stumbling, but with resurrection power, there is something more than the potential we already have. Something at work, even better than what we can do on our best days. Something that began on that first Easter that doesn't come from us, it can only come *to* us—it is pure gift.

When we don't have anything else we can say, God says something, and that's resurrection.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Paraphrased from short film, "We Get to" *The Work of the People*. (<http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/we-get-to-loop>), accessed 4/14/14.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

So we get to be like vessels of resurrection power, God's power and potential to flow through us. We get to learn and relearn how to love our neighbor; to breath new life into our families and our neighborhoods; to live lives of justice and simplicity for the sake of others. We get to create space in our souls for the Kingdom of God to blossom, bringing resurrection power into reality this day through our words and actions. Even in our failures we do not lose hope. The resurrected Christ still bore his scars. It is he who is at work in you. Like the angel, sit on that this Easter Sunday. Then like the women, go and tell the good news, be the good news of resurrection power today. Amen.