

## **Homily – To Rise from the Dead**

**Rob Keim**

**April, 19, 2021 – St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church**

Today is our third Sunday in the season of Easter, so Happy Easter to you all. In our tradition, Easter is more than one day, it is fifty days. And, on this third Sunday in the season of Easter we have another post resurrection Gospel reading. This time from the Gospel according to Luke.

As we heard Susan read, in body, Jesus appears to his followers and friends, and because they are afraid he tries to comfort them. He shows them the wounds on his hands and on his feet to prove that he is the same person who has loved them for the last many years. He eats some fish to show that he is not just a ghost. He is there physically, in body. And, finally in today's reading Jesus teaches the disciples. Before his Crucifixion, Jesus spent a lot of time teaching, so there was probably something familiar and comforting in sitting with their teacher. He shows them that the cycle of death and resurrection will lead to the healing of the world. The followers of Jesus are not just passive by-standers. They are witnesses to what Jesus has done, and they are witnesses to all the nations about the resurrection that is available to all. Over the last few weeks, I have been preaching about this cycle that is shown to us by Jesus.

It is the cycle from order, to disorder, to reorder. In classical mythology this would be the cycle from journey, to fall, and finally the return to a new home. In philosophy this would be thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. In twelve-step programs this would be innocence, addiction, and recovery. In Christian theology we often talk about the pattern of birth, sin, and rebirth, but there is an even more central Christian theme for the cycle of order, disorder, and reorder. And, that is life, death, and resurrection, or in the instance of our God who became man we have life, crucifixion, and resurrection. This last part, resurrection, is what we celebrate with Easter. And, we don't only celebrate Jesus' resurrection. Yes, thousand years ago, Jesus was raised from the dead, he moved from disorder to reorder. But, we also celebrate our own resurrection. Yes, we have life after death, but during this lifetime on earth we also have renewal, and for many this renewal happens more than once. Think about the falls that you have had in your own life. Here are some examples from my life.

In high school I had several friendships end such that I felt abandoned and alone. I graduated from college without a job and felt like a failure after four years of studying.

My marriage to Katie's mom ended painfully.

My first long-term relationship with a man ended painfully.

I got laid off from Hewlett-Packard.

And, after seminary when I went back to corporate world, I grew to despise it. While I had become a priest and tried to live into those values, everything in corporate world was about climbing the corporate ladder. It was about progress and not wisdom.

Perhaps you can think of your own falls in life. These would be the times when disorder reigned and your life was thrown for a loop. If I think back to my own life, some of my falls were followed by going back to an old way of doing things. I didn't learn anything from the fall, and my ego was fragile enough that all I could do repair my false-self in a way that just made the false-self stronger. For example, after my divorce I just tried to fill my life with other relationships that would fill the void in my life. This was a step backward. And, after finishing seminary I went back into corporate life. This was a step backwards.

However, at other times the fall was followed by a fresh start with new life. After my first long-term relationship with a man ended, I started counseling and the coming out process. While I wanted this healing in my life to take six months it took five years. I had to learn how to love myself and the way God had made me. Accepting the love of God is not a switch that can just be turned on. It is also not a project with a clear plan. We can't use willpower to brute force our way out of disorder. That will just move us backwards into the old order. Instead, we must listen and act, rest and respond, and wait, until we are informed by deeper wisdom.

As you look back at your own life do you see times when your life went backwards after a fall? Do you see times when it moved forward? Maybe you are watching this cycle in a loved one. It can be really be hard to watch someone cycle backwards. But as wise ones you know that you cannot control your own move into reorder and you can't do it for someone else. One must actually give up control.

And here are some markers, that I shared on Easter Sunday, that tell you if your life is moving forward into reorder or slipping back into the old order:

resilience in place of growth,  
collaboration in place of consumption,  
wisdom in place of progress,  
balance in place of addiction,  
moderation in place of excess,  
vision in place of convenience,  
accountability in place of disregard,  
self-giving love in place of self-centered fear.

Again, resilience, collaboration, wisdom, balance, moderation, vision, accountability, and self-giving love.

And, doing a deep dive into the first of these characteristics of resurrection, resilience is about how you keep going after another fall. Sometimes when we are wounded we want to curl up and keep ourselves from being hurt again. However, the resilience we find in resurrection tells us that the only way we can love is to be vulnerable again. The resurrected self includes the pain and knows that it will happen again. But, we have a willingness to love again, a willingness to be hurt again, and a willingness to grieve again. Resilience is a characteristic of a resurrected person who has found their true-self.

Now, I said earlier that we can't control our journey from disorder to reorder, from death to resurrection. There are really only three things that I have found that aid the journey to resurrection. First, give up control. Second, be patient. And, third find a guide. A wisdom guide is a person who has the characteristics of resurrection. Again, these are resilience, collaboration, wisdom, balance, moderation, vision, accountability, and self-giving love. A person who has been through the refiner's fire and come out the other end can help guide others through the same journey. This is one of the reasons that we turn to Jesus. He has followed this path of order, disorder, and reorder. He has been through life, death, and resurrection. Jesus is our guide.

As we heard in our Gospel reading, in body, Jesus appears to his followers and friends. Because their lives have taken a fall Jesus tries to comfort and guide them. He shows them the wounds on his hands and on his feet. The wounds haven't disappeared but through resilience Jesus brings his wounds with him into new life. He eats some fish to show the he is not just a ghost. And, finally in today's reading Jesus teaches the disciples. He shows them that the cycle of death and resurrection will lead to their own healing and the healing of the world. The followers of Jesus are not just passive by-standers. They are witnesses to what Jesus has done, and they are witnesses to all the nations about the resurrection and new life that is available to all.

As followers of Jesus we are called to follow this same cycle and then go into the nations and help others follow the lifegiving cycle that God has built into the flow of the universe itself. Through resurrection we embrace our God given beauty. And, that is a very happy Easter indeed.