

Wholeness Rising

An Easter Homily by the Rev. Molly Housh Gordon

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He is not here, said the angel, for he is risen.

Can you imagine?! It is shocking! It is blasphemous! It is unbelievable!

It is resurrection. The radical claim that we believe, or doubt, or reject, but nonetheless ponder every year.

Resurrection -- the incredible declaration that life and love, hope and joy are stronger than fear and hatred, stronger than violent injustice, stronger, even, than death.

This morning, as I watched the sun rise, I imagined Jesus' women friends, in the depth of their sorrow, gathering oils and perfumes in order to tend to his body.

I imagined them walking slowly to his tomb, too weary and heartbroken to speak.

And in that moment between dark and light, as the sun rose and the sky changed, I could feel the depth of the miracle –

the way the world would turn on end, to encounter one so loved, thought dead, returned in the flesh.

I could imagine the hope and fear of seeing the stone rolled away.

The utter joy and terror of seeing his beloved face once more, of meeting his injured hands with their own.

The story of Jesus was always an embodied one. One of body and blood, hunger and thirst, a kiss of peace and a healing touch. It seems right that the story should end in a bodily victory.

But in the end, it is not the claim of bodily resurrection that moves me. The miracle of resurrection, for me, is its radical set of faith claims about human life and our ability to find wholeness with broken hearts in a broken world. These radical claims about the power of hope, love, and joy are written into the story – suffusing the resurrection event.

He is risen, says the angel.

The man who loved his neighbor, who fed the hungry and healed the sick, who ministered to the least of these, is not here in his tomb, says the angel. That kind of

love does not die so easily.

The man who brought hope to the oppressed, who drove the merchants from the temple, who proclaimed a radical, just Kingdom of God? That man is not here in his tomb, says the angel. That kind of hope does not die so easily.

And what about the man who placed his faith in a God of grace and love, who laughed and cried, who told stories and sang songs. The man who knew life to be a precious gift? That man is not here in his tomb, says the angel. That kind of joy does not die so easily.

These life-sustaining powers have risen, says the angel.

If the resurrection is unbelievable to us, it should not be because of literal interpretation, but because of the awesomeness of its symbolic claim.

Because the power of the love that binds us together IS beyond belief.

The power of hope that guides our steps toward justice IS beyond belief.

The buoyant joy we find in gratitude for the gifts of life even when broken IS beyond belief.

The word resurrection comes from the latin meaning to rise again. And the radical claim of the Easter story is that love will always rise again; hope will always rise again; joy will always rise again.

You may pronounce them dead, roll a stone across their tomb, but they will rise up, because they are irresistible and powerful in ways that can only be explained by unbelievable stories and incredible truths.

These are not just claims of long ago, but rather statements of faith about the human condition, our connection and agency, and our capacity for wholeness and joy.

The events of holy week mirror on a grand scale the patterns of our lives.

We each find reason for hope, like the shouting crowds of Palm Sunday.

We put our faith in people and things, and many times they fail us or are defeated. Good Friday comes, and we mourn our loss. For always there is loss.

We keep vigil by many tombs, heartbroken for our selves, for our loved ones, for our world. In the Holy Saturday spirit, we despair and grieve and weep.

And then something happens to bring the Eastertide of joy back to us: something

small, or large; something normal or totally unbelievable. Something happens to restore wholeness.

The Jesus story takes brokenness seriously. For forty days of Lent, Christians fast and contemplate mortality.

The week before Easter, we tell the story once more, start to finish.

We linger, Friday night, on the human body, broken in the horrible suffering of the crucifixion.

We linger in the dark, with broken hearts.

But then, Easter comes, and our hearts are made whole. Joy returns, love lives on, and hope rises up.

We see the possibility of wholeness with every turn of the wheel of seasons.

We see the return of joy every spring as the light gets longer and the flowers burst forth and the cold long winter ends.

We see it eventually every time we grieve. Sorrow stays; God knows that sorrow stays.

But then there is a moment, and who knows what it is, and a flash of joy breaks through. Something shifts, and there is room for joy too. There is room for the joy and the sorrow both, and with them both swirling inside, we are whole.

We see the power of hope and joy every Easter as we celebrate a man whose teachings of peace and love have lived on for thousands of years beyond that day he was hung upon the cross.

Every year, his message of love is resurrected, lifted up above every argument for fear and hate.

God knows, we need that Resurrection claim.

In a broken world with so much mixed up beauty and horror,
in a society that teaches us fear before love,
in a time that fills our hands with plastic possessions while trying to empty our hearts,
we need the resurrection claim.

We need to know that love is powerful beyond belief,
and that it is in us and among us, ready to rise again.
We need to know that wholeness is possible.

Let us roll aside every stone,
cast away every fear and doubt,
and make way for the power of love,
which heals our souls and makes us whole.

Hallelujah. Amen.