

## After Resurrection: What's Next?

---

**GENESIS 1:28-31 (NRSV)** *God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”<sup>29</sup> God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.<sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.<sup>31</sup> God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

\* \* \* \* \*

**REVELATION 21:1-5 (NRSV)** *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven*

*and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.<sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,*

*“See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them;<sup>4</sup> he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”*

*<sup>5</sup>And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.”*

In that last phrase, the verb is in the imperfect tense, and means “I keep on making all things new,” or “I am always making all things new.” The action is not completed.

So last Sunday was full of new Easter frocks, Easter baskets and colored eggs and fluffy bunnies. And then here in this room our time was enhanced by light, Easter lilies, a brightly flowered cross, and alleluias- sung-and-rung!

So how is today? Do you still feel resurrected? As you went back to work or got your kids ready for school, or went to the doctor, or to the store, could you still hear echoes of “Alleluia”? If you're walking through the valley of shadows, full of questions and uncertainty, can you still trust the promise of new life?

Easter Sunday is glorious. Easter Monday... meh; especially in a culture that increasingly expects stress and anxiety as the normal day-to-day way things are. We expect it.

The second Epistle of Peter addresses a stressed-out, discouraged people who are losing their sense of resurrection hope, and its counsel is to not listen to those scoffers who say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!” (II Peter 3:4 NRSV)

“The Preacher” of Ecclesiastes writes:

*Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher,  
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*

*<sup>3</sup> What do people gain from all the toil*

*at which they toil under the sun?*  
<sup>4</sup> *A generation goes, and a generation comes,  
but the earth remains forever.*  
<sup>9</sup> *...<sup>9</sup>...And there is nothing new under the sun.*  
ECCLESIASTES 1:1-4, 9 (NRSV)

The slave culture in early America gave up on any resurrection hope for this life. Their music helped them endure, and pointed them beyond this “veil of tears”:

“Soon I will be done with the troubles of the world...  
Goin’ home to be with God!”

If we’re aware of resurrection and celebrate it only on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring equinox—if resurrection points only to an existence beyond this present consciousness, and has no impact on this present consciousness, we do not grasp it fully for what it is.

We are a culture of anxiety and stress, we also are a culture of impatience. I don’t know if there’s a cause-and-effect relationship there; whether the stress causes the impatience or the impatience causes the stress; still, the two attitudes do seem to go together.

I remember my pastor when I was in high school: I don’t know how many times I heard him talk about people being in too big a hurry. “We’re in such a hurry we get upset if we miss a section of a revolving door!” I don’t know how many times I heard him say that in one of his sermons!

We used to be a “bush-button” culture. Now we’re an “Alexa” culture; and if we can’t travel by air, we travel by Interstate. And too few of us know how to enjoy the journey; we just want to get there. We’re a destination culture.

A child’s impatient, “Are we there, yet?” gets magnified in adulthood, and some of us most of the time, and most of us some of the time, live somewhere between “Are we there, yet” and road rage. These hallmarks of Western culture: anxiety, impatience, and stress, sometimes are unavoidable; but in some cases are self-inflicted. There are choices that can help avoid stress; and when stress can’t be avoided, there are proven ways of reducing it and moving through it.

Sometimes stress and anxiety almost are celebrated! Go on Facebook and check out how many people are playing “I’m more stressed than you!” Remember that TV series, “Hee-Haw?” “If it weren’t for bad luck I’d have no luck at all!” For many today, it’s like “If it weren’t for stress, I’d have no sensation at all.” We hate stress; yet we’re unable—or unwilling—to give up the things that cause it. So stress is the default mode; and it is among the greatest barriers to experiencing the grace and peace of God. Ironically, the process of accessing the grace and peace of God is one of the most effective ways of avoiding stress and of dealing with it when it is unavoidable. And that’s where resurrection can touch us here and now.

It's one thing to believe in resurrection; it's another thing altogether to live as if we truly believe what we say we believe. First, it's crucial to understand that resurrection, like creation, is not just a "one-and-done" event. It's more than a one-time miracle that happened to Jesus 2,000 years ago. Resurrection and creation are part of the same reality. Both are on-going. Neither is finished yet. Both are journeys; not destinations. God's life and presence expresses itself in creation and in human history.

Life is lived in the presence of the living God who "always makes all things new." And when we sense that presence, we sense resurrection. Resurrection is deeply rooted in the very nature and identity of the God who always is making all things new. That imperfect tense is so important. In the Jewish understanding of creation, that same imperfect tense—that same sense of ongoing work in progress is there, like in the children's song: "He's Still Working on Me!"

Resurrection, like creation, is a journey. There is a destination; but we're not there yet! Moreover, the hope awakened by the promise of Easter is more than something that hasn't yet happened. The journey has begun. We are on the road. The process is underway.

We live in the presence of resurrection; we participate in its fulfillment...

...when observe beauty and become aware of the source of all beauty.

...when we hold a baby and become aware of life as eternal—like time: it has no beginning or ending apart from God.

...when we participate at some level in the recovery of an alcoholic or addict and recognize the redemptive power of God's grace.

...when we move beyond feeding the hungry and housing the homeless to begin addressing the root causes—the systems that benefit by keeping the poor and the powerless in their place. And in that act we understand what justice really means. And we experience resurrection.

...when we consciously and intentionally open ourselves to God's presence and seek to discern and understand the divine plan for our own lives—and the spiritual gifts by which we are empowered to accomplish that plan, we share in resurrection.

And we participate in resurrection when our own being resonates with and reflects that divine identity that always is making all things new.

At the end of the day we probably will be exhausted; but the stress and anxiety and impatience will have been replaced by a sense of empowerment and fulfillment and peace. When that happens, we have experienced resurrection.