

Easter Sunday

Ashamed No More: Surprised by Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:19-26; John 20:1-18

Today is a day in which we imagine something we can never imagine

I have this image of Easter in my head –

As we make our way in the darkness of Easter morning, we find ourselves in front of the tomb, but the stone has been rolled away.

And, then, standing there in the doorway of the tomb, the lights go on, and there is God standing behind a couch, with his finger still on the light switch, shouting “Surprise.”

It’s an awkward moment

– we are standing there with our mouths open, not knowing what to say, what to do.

We are surprised by God.

We are caught off guard by the resurrection.

We are surprised by the resurrection.

The disciples on Easter morning had the same reaction

– in fact, they along with us are standing with their mouths agape

– wondering “what is going on here?”

We have just been introduced to *new creation* – and we have no idea how to respond.

We struggle to find a category in our worldviews into which we can place *resurrection*

- just like John tried to find categories and words what he expresses in Revelation

There is no category

– **it is a completely new thing!**

What do we do with this new thing?

Abraham Heschel, one of the leading Jewish theologians of the 20th century expressed: “*Worship is a way of seeing the world in the light of God.*”

This also describes faith for me: “*Faith is living in the world in the light of God.*” *It is living in a way that recognizes God to be integral to all of life. God is not out there who occasionally breaks in, God is here – day in and day out in the “every-momentness” of our lives.*

Seeing the world in the light of God; living in the light of God . . .

And yet, we struggle with something so simple.

We struggle because we have a difficult time seeing, not only the world

– but also our lives

– **in the light of God.**

And then, we hear God shouting *surprise* as we are confronted by resurrection
– we catch a glimpse of new creation.

We are uncomfortable by the resurrection of Jesus
– it turns our whole world upside down – we don't want our world turned upside down
– we work hard at making our world just the way we want it!
– (education, jobs, family, security, wealth, etc)

And so we try to make resurrection and new creation fit into our present worldviews
– our present ways of living
– our present view of reality and success
– **and it just does not work all that well.**

Resurrection and new creation scares us
– it messes with us
– just as it messed with the first disciples.

Life is much more comfortable in the old creation
– just like slavery in Egypt was more comfortable for the people of Israel when they encountered the unknown in the wilderness with God.

And as we have been focusing throughout Lent, life is more comfortable not dealing with the things we ought to deal with
– like our shame

We would rather keep our shame hidden in our lives
– something we did or did not do, the stuff of which is more than embarrassing, it is that of which we are ashamed.

And so we live our lives hiding our shame, *trying to make a life in the light of shame.*

The surprise of Resurrection is the invitation to reframe our lives.

To make our lives in light of God's new creation!

Rather than making resurrection and new creation fit the ways things are;

God's surprise calls out to us to surrender our lives to resurrection so that we begin to live our lives in new creation
– in radically new ways.

Listen to the words of the prophet in Isaiah 65: 17-25 (the third section of Isaiah – returning from exile)
– which focuses on the promises of God for the world
– not just a wishful hope, but a declaration of the door that the surprise of Resurrection has opened
– the inauguration of new creation:

‘See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. ¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.

²⁰ ‘Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. ²¹ They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. ²³ They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. ²⁴ Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,’ says the LORD. (NIV-UK)

“The city at peace is a place where violence ceases and the cry of distress is not heard.

It is a place of long and productive life. It ensures adequate resources so that no infant need die prematurely, and no adult need live neglected.

It is a vibrant community of economic health and stability, a place where land, work, and family will anchor a community of health and wholeness.

But the poet cannot stop with the peace of the city. He sees beyond to the healing of all of creation. Old animosities, violence, and vulnerabilities will no longer have currency in that new age.

So . . . “sing a new song to the One who has said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’” (*The Leader*)

**Easter,
Resurrection,
New Creation**

– is all about being embraced by something radically new.

Something that cannot fit into old wineskins

– whether those skins be church, culture, worldviews, philosophies, even theologies.

Rather new wineskins,

new life,

new ways of living,

new ways of being

– are created as we are embraced by God who surprises us with resurrection.

And how are we to respond to God’s surprise?

We are called to live life in the light of God

– in the light of the resurrection of Jesus

– in the light of new creation.

We are called to live our every days

– not as an extension of our past

– but in light of the future God is now bringing about

– God is creating now

– in our present.

In our being surprised by resurrection and new creation;

We are invited to **not** keep standing there with our mouths open in wonder, but we are invited to be embraced by resurrection and new creation

– and in being so embraced, *we becomes surprises in this world of ours!*

In Christ, we becomes the surprises of God to whomever we encounter.

We are the surprises of God in this world – bringing the presence of God into every situation, every encounter.

That is why we worship,

That is why we express faith,

That is why we engage in being peacemakers and the doing of justice

– we are the surprises of God in a broken world

– we are participants with God in God’s activity in surprising the world with resurrection and new creation.

There is nothing religious about this

– this is all about discovering, like Galileo who realized that the earth revolves around the sun

– that life revolves around God who resurrects

– that life is centered in the God who creates everything new;

So, then, how might our lives be different, radically different, if all of our living, our doing, revolves around the God of resurrection and new creation?

In reflecting on our Lenten theme of honor and shame:

“In light of the surprise of the resurrection, the surprise of new creation

– why do we keep hanging onto our shame?

Why do we hang onto being afraid of what others think of us, of what we think of ourselves?

In being people of the new creation we are enabled to say to each other

– “yes, there is shame in my life, but I now live in a new creation. Shame no longer has power in my life.”

Do we have the courage to leave our shame into the grave?

Easter is about being resurrected into the new creation

– embraced by resurrection

– embraced by shalom, grace, and mercy

– embraced by the resurrected Jesus Christ.

Do we embrace Christ as well?

To hang onto our shame (along with ways of sin and death) is to hang onto the old creation

– which keeps the new from re-creating our lives!

To be surprised by resurrection is to embrace a whole new way of being human in the world

– living our lives in the light of God!

So may we be surprised by Easter. May we be surprised by Easter ever day of the year

Easter is the day for us to be surprised

- Surprised by the stone being rolled away
- surprised by not finding Jesus in the grave
- surprised by finding Jesus alive
- surprised by being transformed
 - as we are created anew,
 - as we are flooded with the Spirit of God,
 - as we are invited, as the church, to participate with God in God’s mission of recreating all creation, all humanity, all relationships.

A Celtic prayer can guide us in living in the surprise of Resurrection every day:

GOD'S AID

“God to enfold me,
God to surround me,
God in my speaking,
God in my thinking.

God in my sleeping,
God in my waking,
God in my watching,
God in my hoping.

God in my life,
God in my lips,
God in my soul,
God in my heart.

God in my sufficing,
God in my slumber,
God in mine ever-living soul,
God in mine eternity.

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