

Awe of Resurrection
April 15, 2007

In the Bible we have five accounts of what happened after Jesus died. (the four gospels and our earliest account is in I Corinthians.) Here are some of the words and phrases used in these accounts—there was a great earthquake, an angel of the of the Lord appeared and his appearance was like lightning, tomb stones were rolled away, there was trembling, fear, joy amazement, weeping, running to tell the other disciples about what happened, two men in dazzling apparel, bowing faces to the ground, Something major happened and it was awesome!

There was some sort of transcending of death that changed the course of history. If it hadn't happened would Christianity be a major religion? Would we all be here in this room today celebrating and honor our different traditions? Let's let the Adult Group settle those questions today.

What about this Jesus? How did he change the lives of so many Jewish seekers in the 1st century. What did he do? What did he say?

Let's look at who Jesus was for a moment. One of my favorite descriptions of Jesus is told by theologian/pastor Marcus Borg. He was asked on Good Morning America TV to give a 75 second description of who Borg thought Jesus was. This is what he came up with:

“Jesus was a peasant, which tells us about his social class. Clearly he was brilliant. His use of language was remarkable and poetic, filled with images and stories. He had a metaphoric mind. He was not a monk, he was world affirming, with a zest for life. There was a sociopolitical passion to him like a Gandhi or MLK, he challenged the domination system of his day. He was a Jewish mystic for whom God was an experiential reality. As such, Jesus was also a healer. And there seems to have been a spiritual presence around him, like that reported of St. Francis or the present Dali Lama. And I suggest that as a figure of history, Jesus was an ambiguous figure—you could experience him and conclude that he was insane, as his family did, or that he was simply eccentric or that he was a dangerous threat—or

you could conclude that he will filled with the Spirit of Love (God).” (Jesus 2000” edited by Marcus Borg, 2000.)

After seminary I basically threw most my old theology out— along with Jesus. As I was preparing to write my ordination paper I went away to a catholic retreat center to get some guidance. And as my nun spiritual directors said, “Honey, it seems as if you threw the baby out with the bath water.” The baby she was talking about was Jesus. Frankly I haven’t wanted to do too much with Jesus and have had for years this funny feeling in my gut when people would mention his name or preach about him. I somehow lost who he was and what he did on earth as a result of my rigid belief system that only through Jesus could you find God. But the way Marcus Borg and other scholars have been embracing him in a new way as a human here on earth, I’m wanting to embrace him and his teachings in a new way.. I want to reclaim the power of his presence on earth. The church where I got ordained has a summary of belief statements on there website. This is what they say about Jesus:

“We also see God through the window of Jesus, a human being like us, who showed us how to put God's love to work in our world. When we affirm the worth of others, minister to their needs, and participate in their struggle for wholeness and justice, we believe that we are following him. ***Our purpose is to continue in our time what Jesus began in his - working for the healing of our world as an inclusive, compassionate, joyful community.***”

Jesus initiated a movement within Judaism—a movement that was inclusive and egalitarian. A movement which embodied Love. Love thy neighbor as yourself.

Love God with all your heart soul and mind. Love your enemy.

We don’t know what happened after he died except there were some appearances (to over 500 people) several meals shared and some instructions given about forgiveness.

Imagine being any one of Jesus' followers feeling such hope in the giving of and living in this radical vision of acceptance and inclusion and justice. And then he dies. What happens to the movement? I recall last year seeing the movie "Bobby" about Bobby Kennedy and how such hope, joy and vision was recovered around how America could be and then he was shot and killed and it was if all that was gone in the moment of his death. Yet all of the great leaders have always pointed to the message and not the messenger. Even Jesus told his disciples—you will do greater things than I ever did. You will go on to bring about this new way of living (to paraphrase him abit)

How do we do this folks? I don't think there is one person in this room who doesn't want justice, and equality and peace and deep regard for all humanity including oneself to be a reality? But the question is HOW?

Maybe the resurrection gives us an inkling of how. What does resurrection mean—a resurgence—a rising up into life again.

A resurrection story I heard recently told to me:

This morning I heard the story of a man named David who had heard that his cancer was likely going to kill him within the year. It was as if he suddenly woke up, and the world became alive for him in a whole new way. He felt the urge to live life to the fullest in the time he had left. He thought about the best day in his life years ago, when he was able to enjoy his two great passions—trains and baseball—wonderfully orchestrated in a single flow of events, meeting the engineer and conductor on a train to Boston to see the Red Sox play and even shaking the hand of Ted Williams. Even though his kids had grown up, he planned ways to give them something just as special, and thought of how he could give something back to the world before leaving it. Awhile later he discovered that drugs could manage his disease indefinitely, but that didn't change his outlook. At 60, he had found life and resolved not to let it go.

David experienced the resurrection of life as he faced his death. He had been asleep and now the life force began to fill him again with

newness and joy. My sense is that this is what happened to the disciples. They somehow woke up to the life force that Jesus had shared with them. They knew this force was never going to die.

Jeanne, Lauren and Hannah sang this beautiful song for us today called Ordinary miracle. Life is like a gift they say, wrapped up for you everyday. Open up and find a way to give some of your own. The miracle is all around us gifting us with beauty, so evident in spring, and we wake up every day wondering what we will eat, wear, what will people think of us, we ruminate over and over about money, problems. All those things Jesus actually asked us to let go of. We can't help ourselves. Maybe I want to offer we could begin to think in new ways—by waking up and saying as we put our first foot on the floor—shine my light, second foot—do what matters. Let's try it now—shine my light. Do what matters.