

SESSION TWO // Resurrection as Inhabiting Truth

Fr. Greg Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries, a non-profit organization that helps to bring young people out of gangs, talks about “the risen Christ reality.” Up to the time of this video, Fr. Boyle has buried 193 young people because of gang violence. How can someone who constantly sees death and violence still have hope? It is not enough to know truth, but one must be able to live out the truth that they know.

Watch the Film *The Risen Christ Reality with Fr. Greg Boyle*

<http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/the-risen-christ-reality>

Going Deeper

1. The video begins with the question: “What breaks your heart apart, and what breaks it open?” Boyle responds with a quote: “Allow your heart to be broken by the very things that breaks the heart of God.”⁶

What might this quote mean?

2. Fr. Boyle tells the story of a young man, José Saliva, who Boyle knew for fifteen years. “He was able to see, I think, and know that he was exactly what God had in mind when God made him. Because I think, on some level, he inhabited that truth; he lived that truth, and no bullet can pierce it.”

What does it mean to inhabit the truth of your own existence?

3. Fr. Boyle is asked, “How do you still praise God with all those deaths?” Boyle says, “Part of the risen Christ reality is to know that death has no power.” Fr. Boyle says that the Dalai Lama sees on his own death as “A change of clothing,” i.e., an insignificant transition. “That’s how you become free, and you put first things, recognizably, first. And you live as though the truth were true.”

How is this attitude about death freeing? How can we live “as though the truth were true”?

⁶ Robert Pierce, founder of World Vision and Samaritan’s purse, wrote in his Bible, “Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God.”

4. What might it mean to say “Death is a comma, not a period”?
5. Boyle comments, “If you think death is the worst thing that can happen to you, then brace yourself. You’re going to be toppled.”

What might be a worst fate than death? What is the consequence to living life as if death is the worst thing that can happen?

6. Fr. Boyle says, “This kid, José, did not live forever; He lived in the forever.”

How might we begin to live in the forever?

Reflection

Everyday, we are reminded of sin and we experience the little death that comes from sin. It might not be our own sin, but the sin of others, or even the systematic sin that takes place in our world, injustice, violence, cruelty to each other and to God’s creation. We are reminded of the sting of death, the bites that seem to continuously gnaw at us. However, there is also the hope of something that overcomes even the finality of death. The resurrection is the reminder that life is enduring, it determines to break free from the grave and enter again into our lives.

Our mistakes and failures, our problems and pains, whatever graveside experiences we may have, do not define us, make us who we are. But too often we live as though they had the last word. When we do this, we are embracing death and not life. People who live as though death was the final end to life, continually live in fear. They find ways to elude the inevitable, in pleasure or power, in addictions and poor relationships. This continues the cycle of death.

The word resurrection is a Latin translation of the Greek word that means “to stand again.” It means that the fallen will rise to their feet. It means that failures will be given another chance at life. It means that death will never be final. But to live as though death were final is to not stand again, but rather to attempt to get by in life. It is life that is actually dead, without purpose, meaning or end. Many in our culture are fascinated with the zombie genre of horror movies. I’ve even attended an American Academy of Religion meeting that had a workshop about the undead in film. The allure is that these things seem like the living, but they are dead. However, many people exist in this state, as “the walking dead.” The paradox is that when we live in avoidance of death we have already lost our lives, but when we embrace the reality of our mortality, this is when we begin to truly live.

In the West, many young people view their lives as eternal. Death is a far away possibility. Our culture reinforces this view by valuing youth over the elderly, innovation over tradition, new over the tried and true. But when we can embrace death as part of life, we can begin to see what can grow out of death. Jesus's walk to the cross was not a wanton disregard for his life. As depicted in the Garden of Gethsemane, he did not want this suffering on himself, but preferred to avoid the cross altogether. However, Jesus did not avoid the suffering and death on the cross, no matter how terrible it would be. He lived knowing that something greater might come out of the tragedy of the cross, even in the midst of great loss and forsakenness.

When we have acknowledged the reality of the limits of our lives, we can begin to embrace the unlimited love of God who traverses great distances to reach us. Take some time this week to reflect on the resurrection experiences in your life—how life came from even the darkest of places, how you thought there might be no coming back from death. May we be reminded that death is not the end to life, but only the beginning.

Further Reading

Greg Boyle, S.J., *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* (Free Press, 2011) only both physical and spiritual, but an integration of both physical and spiritual. The two were not easily separated.

This much Paul knew, but the disciples who witnessed Jesus after the events of the cross found this to be a reality. Jesus was not a ghost, but an embodied person, albeit having a different kind of body. Thomas was able to touch Jesus's scars in his hands and side.⁷ This body retained a semblance of the past, but was made anew and alive. With new life there was not a disposal of the past. All that we have experienced we in some way still retain. The past makes us who we are in the present. Every scar on my body is a link to a memory. A cut from carving a wooden figure, a burn from making flan for my sweetheart, scrapes from the seemingly endless maintenance on my car and house, these remind me of who I am and what I have done in this world. This might be difficult to for those of us whose trauma is sometimes too difficult to bear, but the good news is that the future is not about open wounds, but ones that are healed, ones made new.

After Jesus's resurrection, he broke bread with other disciples.⁸ He shared a meal with them just as he shared meals with them before the cross. It was in the experience of this shared life that they recognized who he was. In the same way, it is in our shared experiences that we recognize the Christ—that God is before us and not left for dead in a

⁷ John 20:24-27

⁸ Luke 24:13-35

tomb. In the meal, the event of eating together, of tasting and savoring all the richness of life, we come to realize the fullness of the resurrection.

Just as the past was real, the future resurrection will also hold this kind of reality. It is not a wishful thought about the future, but a future that can be touched, just as Thomas touched the Master's hands. There are many theories as to what life would be like in this resurrected state. But to ponder these theories would be meaningless speculation. To live a resurrected life means to live with the hope of something to come while at the same time living out this life as we are all called to do—with love. How can you live this embodied life? How can you enter a kind of life that acknowledges both the past and the restoration and healing that is happening in the present?

Christians have the hope of the newly embodied life, a life lived in shared community, a life where we retain the semblance of who we are, and one that is lived as renewed persons. What the particulars are, I don't care about or dare to speculate on too much. What we will find will perhaps surprise us all.