

## SESSION SEVEN // Resurrection as Energy

The resurrection shakes the foundation of the earth. Episcopal priest, Paul Fromberg, sees the resurrection as an energy that reaches across the cosmos. In this film, Fromberg talks about signs of the resurrection that he sees in his work and in the world.

**Watch the Film** *Resurrection Energy with Paul Fromberg*

<http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/resurrection-energy>

### Going Deeper

1. Fromberg is asked, “Where are you seeing signs of resurrection?” He responds, “I see signs of resurrection in the natural world when things grow and flourish. I see signs of resurrection when children learn things they did not know before and become competent. I see resurrection when relationships that have been destroyed by disinterest or mistrust are re-established. I think I see resurrection most profoundly as people recognize the presence of God in the person next to them.”

What are signs of resurrection that you see in your community and your life?

2. Fromberg describes, “Like gasoline burning across an open field, that energy is spreading everywhere. So, the energy of the resurrection is uncontainable.”

How is the energy of the resurrection “uncontainable”? What are some of the places that the resurrection needs to reach? How can you allow this to happen?

3. Fromberg reflects that the energy of the resurrection, “Which in fact gives me confidence to pursue whatever I think I’m doing as priest or whatever I think I’m doing as a person who has a concern for the aesthetic, for art.”

How can the resurrection give you confidence in the things you are pursuing in your life?

## Reflection

The earth quaked. Tombs opened up. The bodies of the saints were raised. These are all events that the Gospel of Matthew recounts.<sup>21</sup> Even though this might be unbelievable, what the evangelist wished to show was that the resurrection would forever change the world. The resurrection of the Christ was not a private event, reserved for the first disciples nor was it something that was made up by the Church to glorify their murdered messiah. It was an event that shook the foundations of the world and left everything changed forever. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, he could continue his mission to establish the Kingdom of God. But did the world really change? Was the only purpose of resurrection to only create another religion? What did the resurrection do?

We can also ask the question: “What if the resurrection did not happen?” Even though I cannot speak surely about a world without the resurrection, I can speculate. The world would be a darker, dimmer place lacking hope, wonder, and mystery. Empires would not fall and wars could continue to rage. Christianity would be the cult of a crucified tragic hero. The world would be separated by race, culture, clan and tribe and something like the civil rights movement would not have happened. Only the resurrection could have made these things possible. Human ingenuity could only do so much, but the resurrection brought life into the world because the resurrection was the triumph of life, life that was real and incarnate.

Until that time, it was unimaginable for someone to rise from or be raised from the dead. The best myths were of gods and magical creatures, such as the Pheonix. But historically, no human had been raised from the dead. The resurrection was an event and experience that had never taken place. There had been a number of instances in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament of people coming back to life, but these were *resuscitations* and not resurrections. These people would eventually die again, but a resurrected body is one that is made anew and would not perish. Resurrection is the hope of lasting life, not impermanent life. Jesus’s resurrection was described as “the first fruits” of the resurrection.<sup>22</sup> This means that what happened in Jesus’s life showed the possibility of what would happen for all of humanity. His resurrection was the doorway to another reality.

This new reality germinates the entire cosmos. It ripples through the universe with life changing magnitude. However, because our world is a world “in between” we often do not see the world in this way. Instead, many people look into their lives and see great emptiness and defeat, and they live as though the resurrection had never happened. Many of people, even Christians, live not as though life was made abundant by the power of the

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<sup>21</sup> 27:32–35

<sup>22</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20–23

resurrection, but as though life was scarce and insecurity abound. This is why many of us mistrust each other, instead of seeing each other as siblings. This is why we would harm and take advantage of our neighbor, instead of pouring our lives out for our neighbor. This is why people seek a gospel of health and wealth, because they do not trust that God's love and presence are enough to sustain them.

Yet, the life of the resurrection reaches into all the parts of our lives and seeks to make them new. However, for many, resurrection looks like death. This is because in order for new life to rise, we must let go (emphasis) of the old. When I was a chaplain at a drug treatment facility, I would ask the clients to put their hand out and make a fist. "Hold on to your guilt, your resentment, your regret, your anger, your sense of self, or whatever you are holding onto." Then I would take an object and say, "This is what you want from your new life. How are you going to take it?" Some could not because it meant letting go of what they thought they could not let go. Letting go meant a kind of death. They were unwilling to die. And others, with tears, let go in order to symbolically take hold of their new life.

Resurrection happens this way. It seeks us out to give us the life that we need. However, to allow it to take root means that the soil of our hearts must be tilled. This is sometimes painful business, the business of life. As Tim Robbins's character, Andy Dufresne, says, "I guess it comes down to a simple choice. Get busy living or get busy dying." However, we might need to die a little first, in order to find the life that we need. How can you let the life of resurrection enter into your life? What do you need to give up, let go, forgive? How can you move on? Life awaits and it is outside of the tomb.

### *Further Reading*

Ann Weems, *From Advent's Alleluia to Easter's Morning Light: Poetry for Worship, Study, and Devotion* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2010)