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When Resurrection Means Disruption

Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

God is doing a new thing.

The God who is forever enfleshed in Jesus is the God of the future. God never ceases to be the one who was crucified and three days later burst forth. What have these last 50 days of Easter taught us but that we serve a living God?

St. Paul says as much in his sermon we heard a couple weeks ago: God is not found in temples made by human hands. This Jesus that was crucified-- God raised up.

This unbound Christ does his best work with people behind locked doors, scared to death, trapped by fear.

Here is the flashing red (for Pentecost) warning though: In a world where people tend to prefer things staying the same, sometimes despise change, get used to tight quarters; resurrection, and the risen Christ's gift to us of the Holy Spirit can be risky business. Resurrection means disruption. Death comes first.

As much as I enjoyed the radio show that my friends and I had on our campus station, so many interviews we conducted revealed to me that I was in a house of sorts that I tried hard to keep closed. Dialogue with difference threatened me.

I couldn't imagine life beyond its boundaries. It wasn't built with bricks. But with a kind of iron clad certainty. I knew who I was, who God was, who was right, who was wrong, who was holy and who was not. I knew how God worked. Everything seemed so logical and endlessly explainable. My I's were dotted and t's crossed. I remember telling someone "I would never change." I was confident. Closeted. Terrified. A future beyond that present moment was a dream at best. I would have to let go of things. Allow some things real and hoped for to die. Embrace vulnerability. In order for something new to be born.

Like those first disciples we know what it is like to be huddled in a suffocating room unable to fathom life beyond its bolted doors. Our existence inside of them is so all encompassing and exhausting. Yet it is what we know.

Fear- is what kept them there. Us too. If you were to begin to put words around that fear that keeps you stuck, what would you say? Fear of losing something or someone? Fear of taking too many risks, venturing into unknown places. Fear of questions you do not want to know the answers to? Fear of the past being forgotten. Fear of a future where we don't have as much control or power. Fear of rejection. Fear of not being good enough, strong enough, smart enough. Fear of death that haunts us a thousand different ways. Throughout my life I would have answered yes to all of it.

One theologian said, "fear is what had them disguised as corpses on that first Easter evening." They were afraid of resurrection. The prospect of life after death can be scary.

It was one of our first radio interviews.

She was not just a pastor- but a good one. She's from northern florida, so she spoke with a slight twang but she may as well have been speaking a foreign language. That is how it sounded to me at first. I had a hard time receiving her message. I had never met a woman who was a pastor. One of those things I thought I was right about was that the Bible was clear on that issue. Yet, here she was.

Like the risen Christ- she came into my life. Through her words and witness I began to glimpse a future beyond where I was stuck. Unlike any I could create for myself. The deadbolt began to turn. How about for you?

From the other side- he came to those friends in their tomb-like place. Brought them gifts and sent them out.

As Dr. Jim Neiman, president of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago said recently at the closing of their building at 55th and University in Hyde Park "within walls, behind doors, and afraid- is no place for the faithful to stay."

The risen Christ- set loose in the world comes to you this day. Do you recognize him? What language does Christ speak? He comes to drive out fear and set you free. What does that feel like? To speak peace as we will to one another, to bring forgiveness, give you the Holy Spirit, and send you out.

He comes to give you a vision of what tomorrow could look like. For those of us joined to the living God in baptism- there will always be a future. Even our final death will be the gate into eternal life. What might resurrection life look like for your weary body, our fragile planet, or this

community? What might be possible if even death itself has been defeated? What is the dialect of hope this side of Easter?

Our God is not bound to the past or the present and neither are we. They need not define you either. No wonder forgiveness is so central to the risen Christ and our mission. Forgiveness given and received is a miracle that creates a spacious place that has never existed before.

That flashing red Pentecost light is a warning, but it is also a gift beyond measure.

The Holy Spirit has been poured out on you. You are never alone. For the triune God resides in you today. You are the house of God- and so are they. Bow to one another. Then let that Spirit--breathed upon you drive you out. Listen to foreign accents from those you once considered lost and let them be your tour guide in God's new creation, and find in them the words that will make you free over and over again. Like that pastor did for me. Then- speak. For today is about hearing and testifying. In that spirited dialogue may your actions bear witness to all of God's mighty acts.

Some 2000 years since that first Pentecost God is still doing new things. After all- we serve a living God.

Come Holy Spirit? Come Holy Spirit.