

Being Re-membered in the Resurrection Garden
Luke 24:36–48

Peace be with you....

Imagine yourself being in that room.... Imagine being one of the disciples...and the chaos of the events of the last few days. The last time things were somewhat “normal” was the Passover meal, though that too was a bit strange. Jesus saying his body was bread and his blood, the wine.... And then everything falling apart. Between them, they had denied and completely abandoned Jesus. And Judas, their dear friend had given Jesus away and was now also dead. Then Jesus was crucified. And his body closed up in a tomb. They had three years with this amazing teacher...and for what? For it to end like this?

If all that wasn’t unbelievable enough, now some women said the tomb was empty?! And several other people have just reported encountering Jesus when they were breaking bread. That Jesus had walked with them but they hadn’t recognized him. That he had opened Scripture and explained so many things to them.... Imagine the turmoil and chaos. The utter grief and despair. The unbelievable news that Jesus isn’t dead. The *un*believable news.... Or is it? Is it believable?

It is into *this* chaos and turmoil, into *this* utter confusion and grief, into *this* fear and terror that they suddenly see Jesus...standing right there in the middle of the room. And he says, “Peace be with you.”

Into the middle of grief and confusion and fear, into circumstances that were completely out of control, when these very human beings had no idea what was happening or what they were to do or not to do, Jesus says, “Peace to you.”

With those words I can see them taking deep breaths...filling their lungs with air...breathing deeply...breath filling their bellies. Exhaling completely. Jesus, the Christ, is here, in their midst...in our midst...in this moment...we can breathe...and be at peace.

This is the Resurrection Garden. When all around us there is anything but peace, we remember that Jesus, the Living Christ is here...within us...among us. And we can breathe again because here and now...we're in the Resurrection Garden.

“Peace to you.”

And then...the resurrected Jesus shows his friends...shows us...his wounds. These are the wounds, the scars, the very marks of his execution and death. Jesus isn't hiding his wounds. He isn't protecting his wounds. He doesn't pretend his wounds don't matter. Instead, he says, “Touch me. Touch my wounds.”

What an amazing gesture! What a profound gift. What an incredible revelation! In the Resurrection Garden, the wounds that take us into tombs become the very wombs for new life to grow and rise up. We can only know and experience the joy of resurrection and new life when we've known the depths of pain and dying. With his presence, in their seeing and touching, they too were resurrected...resurrected from the shattered ruins of their hopes and resurrected from the depths of their guilt and grief.

When the Resurrected Christ shows his wounds to his friends, inviting them to reach in and touch, he's offering them forgiveness. In opening himself (*open arms and hands*) Jesus offers release...release from guilt...release from fear...release from confusion...release from despair. “Look...touch me and see.” Jesus' words and actions defy logic. They are completely contrary to our instincts and impulses. In this radical gesture, the Crucified and Resurrected One shows us the power of vulnerability...powerful vulnerability as a way of being human that impulsively and gratuitously loves, forgives, and extends peace. The world the disciples were in was still broken...just as we and our world are broken. They all still had their wounds...just as we have our wounds. But the room they were in was transformed and they found themselves in the Resurrection Garden.

In her collection of essays titled, “Christ our Black Mother Speaks,” activist and public theologian Christena Cleveland writes:

With [Christ’s] resourceful spacious wokeness at hand, I can squarely face my individual pain and the pain of this world and not be consumed by fatigue and resentment. [Christ] offers [H]er magical forgiveness to me, even as my unhealed wounds trigger oppressive actions in me, as I struggle to be free from resentment, self-righteousness, and strident individualism, as I messily respond to the mess of this world. Her forgiveness is so vast and bountiful that I don’t have to criticize myself for clinging to resentment toward [the one who wronged me], nor do I have to superhumanly conjure up my own forgiveness to piously dole out to [them]. I simply get to swing wide the door of my heart to receive all of the forgiveness that She is always offering.

“I simply get to swing wide the door of my heart to receive all of the forgiveness that She is always offering.” This...this is what’s possible in the Resurrection Garden.

In this Easter season, may we find ourselves in the Resurrection Garden! In our baptism and membership vows we promised to “love and be loved...to forgive and be forgiven.” May we “swing wide the doors of our hearts,” letting love and forgiveness grow with abandon in the Resurrection Garden.

Finding ourselves in the Resurrection Garden seems especially necessary as we anticipate our sabbatical. It’s easy for us to get caught up in all the brokenness, in all the oppression and injustice, in all that’s unfinished. But Cleveland reminds us that we can let go. In another essay in the same collection, she translates Jesus words from the cross, “Today you’ll be with me in paradise.” In those words she hears the Living Christ saying, “You’re with me now. And I’m handling it.”

The season of Easter teaches us to remember that we are resurrection people. This season teaches us to listen for the Living Christ to whisper, “You’re with me now. And I’m handling it.”

Let us be a people who dwell in the Resurrection Garden. As we anticipate creating a garden for the neighborhood, let us do so from time spent in the Resurrection Garden. So that our garden will be a place where Peace...and Grace...and Love...and Forgiveness grow profusely, ready to be shared with all who pass by.

May it be so.