

Resurrection *experiences*

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“It is finished,” Jesus said. His killers also thought, it was “finished.” But it seems God was not “finished.” The story made an astonishing turn – death turned to life, Good Friday to Easter, crucifixion to resurrection. The women who had gone to anoint the body in the tomb could not find it. Instead, they were confronted with a confounding possibility – resurrection!

Resurrection was not an unusual idea at the time. Pharisees believed in it. Sadducees did not. Most Jews believed there will be resurrection at the messianic age. Christianity later emphasized resurrection in the afterlife. Rising from the dead, sounded like an idle tale, a fabricated story. Even after 2000 years speculations about historical proof of Jesus’ resurrection abound.

The resurrection of Jesus, like many others in the Scripture, is a faith story. The Bible is not a scientific or historical narrative but a spiritual one. Most biblical stories can be verified historically or scientifically only partially, for the truths they tell are faith truths, spiritual truths, truths that give our lives meaning and shed light on the realities of life with which we struggle. Hence, the biblical faith story can only be experienced and lived. Faith truths cannot be verified they can only be experienced.

Consider many of the gifts of the Spirit – Love, hope, joy, peace, etc. Love cannot be qualified, measured or proven scientifically. It cannot be verified in a laboratory, it can only be experienced and lived. We know love when we experience it.

Resurrection also cannot be verified, measured or proven but it can be experienced and lived. And once one lives through an experience, the need for verification no longer exists. What we experience is what we know. And, yes, there are different ways of knowing - with mind and head, with heart and spirit. And when they all connect, we experience peace.

My grandmother who lived through the Armenian Genocide, which should have rendered us “finished,” would say, *I know death in my body. I also know life in my body.* It took me years to understand what she meant. She had died and come back to life. She identified with the crucifixion and death of Jesus, for she had experienced it herself. Then she identified with the resurrection because she was given another chance to begin and live again. This was her lived experience. She needed no verification or proof about Jesus’ resurrection. She knew.

I have experienced many new beginnings in my life. Moments of Easter dawned when I thought it was all finished and done. This past year of COVID we, communally, lived through a year of Lent not only with COVID but also through its implications as well as truths that surfaced – a plethora of injustices, racial, economic and more; a lifestyle that has not been healthy for us; the environmental crisis on the earth, our home; the continued blending of the local and global; and more... Only gradually we are beginning to experience a sense of Easter and awakening, Resurrection and new beginning. And, that is powerful.

The power of the resurrection is not in its scientific or historical verification but in its singular power within and beyond us that can transform even our most excruciating moments into life-giving ones. The power of resurrection is in the extraordinary courage of the human spirit that can rise above the worst tragedies, and about the power of the Divine yearning to heal and to make whole. Resurrection is that moment when we discover and experience that the end was not really the end. There’s more to come. It is not finished.

May you experience a joyous and meaningful Easter Resurrection.