

"Living a Resurrected Life"

Sermon Preached at Foundry United Methodist Church

By Rev. Dean J. Snyder

Easter Sunday

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Acts 10:34

Mark 16: 1-8

His poem "Testament" is Wendell Berry's instructions to his loved ones about his funeral: "Don't muck up my face with wax, powder and rouge. Treat me, even dead, as a man who has a place to go and something to do."

Treat me, even dead, as a man who has a place to go and something to do.

On Easter Sunday morning, the women came to the tomb, and the tomb was empty, and an angel said to them, "Go tell the disciples and Peter that he is gone ahead of you to Gallilee and there you will see him."

The clear meaning of those instructions to Jesus's disciples was this. Jesus was saying, *I'm back at work. Come to Galilee where the ministry is and there you will see me. You'll see me healing the sick, casting out demons, and doing good of all kinds, announcing good news to the poor, liberation to the oppressed, confronting religious hypocrisy, and feeding the hungry.*

Come to Galilee and there you will see me. Come to where the ministry is, to where the work is, where there's work to be done. That's where you'll find me.

Treat me, even dead, as someone who has a place to go and something to do.

Here is an Easter question: What commitment within us is so strong, what ministry, what struggle are we so devoted to, that even death will not be able to stop us?

A few years ago my doctor ordered me to see a dietician because he was concerned about my diet. So I picked a dietician out of the yellow pages at random. Later I discovered that she is a diet doctor to the powerful and famous. Before I could see her I had to fill out a ten-page questionnaire. One of the questions on the questionnaire has bothered me ever since. The question was, list three things more important than your health.

I couldn't figure out what this doctor was trying to accomplish in her questionnaire. She usually deals with powerful and famous people who need to control their weight. Was she using reverse psychology? Was she trying to get us to say that nothing is more important than our health and therefore we are going to start taking better care of ourselves? Or was she trying to say that there are some things that are so important, that I will take care of myself in order to give myself to those commitments?

I've been pondering the question ever since: What is more important than my health?

It seems to me there need to be things more important than my health because if there aren't then when I lose my health, and I will, what reason do I have to continue? There are things more important than my life.

Treat me, even dead, as someone who has a place to go and something to do.

Jesus says to the disciples: *What's keeping you? I'm already back at work. Come follow me into the ministry where people need healing, where people need liberation from things that are oppressing them, come back with me into the struggle and there you will see me.*

I believe in traditional understandings of life after death, but I believe that they are all articulated inadequately.

So my suspicion is that heaven really isn't about geography somewhere else. Heaven, I suspect, is really somewhere here in the midst of the struggle, in the midst of the ministry, where people are being healed, demons are being cast out, the oppressed are hearing liberating news, and the hungry are being fed. I think heaven is some where in the midst of the struggle.

The Galilee where we see Jesus is where we see all of those who have gone before us in the struggle. I want to spend eternity in the struggle, in the ministry, in the mission, in the engagement, in the doing, in the work.

I want to spend eternity in Foundry staff meetings. (Some of the staff will say they think they already do.) I want to spend eternity in the staff meetings where we're wrestling with the question of what is so important in this world that we will give ourselves to it.

I want to spend eternity in Foundry Finance meetings. I want to spend eternity in Foundry Council meetings.

Whenever we meet to do the ministry of Jesus, I believe that those who have died in the struggle are present with us. They live in the midst of the ministry.

(Whisper) I see resurrected people. I see resurrected people. I see resurrected people in the midst of the ministry, in the midst of the struggle.

Sometimes when we take offerings in church, my father is so near that I can almost see him. I will remember forever the Sunday our church had a missionary from Cuba speak. Back in the days before ATM machines, you cashed your check once a month and then you lived on the money that you had in your wallet. He didn't know I was watching but I saw my father slip all of the money out of his wallet and putting it in the offering plate to support the missionary from Cuba. My father always gave. He was always generous. Sometimes he gave everything he had.

And when we take offerings I can see my father here.

There are people that I can see whenever the children are up front here in church. I see them because they gave their lives for the children.

There are people that I can see when our GLBT group meets, because they gave their life for the struggle.

I see resurrected people.

Treat me, even dead, as someone who has a place to go and something to do.

We live in the ministries to which we give ourselves; we live in the struggles to which we devote ourselves; we live in the commitments that we make that are more important to us than life itself. We spend eternity in the commitments to which we give ourselves.

Tell Jesus' disciples to go to Galilee where sick people are being healed, the possessed are being freed, the hungry are being fed, hypocrisy is being confronted and you will see Jesus there in the midst of the struggle. If we are in the struggle with him, that is also where we will see you, and we will see me. In the midst of the work, I see resurrected people.

Treat me, even dead, as someone who has a place to go and something to do.