

Holy Saturday / Easter Sunday

*Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are confident
that we shall share in his victory over death and live forever - with God*

Jesus didn't wait until his disciples were dead before he appeared to them, he did so right away by changing their fear to courage, their doubt to faith, and their darkness to light.

*Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are confident
that we shall share in his victory over death and live forever - with God*

Jesus isn't waiting till we're dead before he appears to us, he is doing so right now by changing our fear to courage, our doubt to faith, and our darkness to light

Louise

I would like to tell you a contemporary story of Jesus' resurrection. I first heard it from Edwina Gately some years back at the Women's Convocation held in Seattle. Edwina founded Genesis House in Chicago, which is a house of hospitality and nurturing for women involved in prostitution. She is the recipient of sixteen national and international awards. This is story she told.

"In Chicago, I ran a home for women who were recovering from the streets and drugs. A woman came to the door - tall, black, beautiful, a heroin addict, named Louise. And Louise came to the door, and I opened it for her, "*Come in, how you doing, Louise?*" "*Fine!*" And she came in and was welcomed. And she showered and changed and had something to eat and stayed a while and sobered up. And then she left. And then she came back weeks later, and I opened the door for her, "*How you doing, Louise?*" "*Fine!*" And she stayed, and she sobered up, and then she left again, and again, and again. And back again, "*How you doin', Louise?*" "*Fine!*" And she stayed again, and everybody said, "*You're being manipulated.*"

"So??? Why do we have such a problem with being manipulated? What do you expect from someone who's only known twenty years of violence, drugs, and the streets. What other way does she know. And there I stood, like an idiot with the door open being manipulated, because we have to get a message across. And the message is not, "*You keep our rules because we set these rules, because we know, and we are stronger, and we are organized, and we are educated, and we've got our act together, and you've got to get your's together too.*"

"No, we have to be broken in the process of healing others, we have to be vulnerable. But we get so seduced into the way things are, like "*You've got three months to recover from your twenty five years of streets and violence. Now do it.*" And we say, "*Oh my gosh, we've got to get over this in three months.*" Our lives are a lifetime of recovery. How many of us carry wounds and brokenness our whole lives. How long does it take for us to be put back together - a lifetime. And that's all right. This is a journey of healing, it's a journey of carrying our bruises and our brokennesses slowly, healing as we are loved by others, as we love one another.

“And so Louise came again. “*How you doin’, Louise?* “*Fine!*” I knew she was lying. When you are so brokenhearted and so beaten up, you’re just going to get the most you can for as little as possible. And so - Louise in and out -- guess how many times and for how long Louise came to my door. Ten years, Louise came to my door. And I am on fire, because I really want you to live, Louise, and you have to live when you are ready. You will live when you know that you are loved. And when you know there are enough idiots and fools around to stand up and say, we will not go away, we will stand here waiting for you, loving you into health, loving you into new life. We will stand here burning with that fire, we will not buy into the system that will throw you back out on the streets because you’re not cooperating or you’re not ready. We are here for you until the end of time, like Jesus who said he would be with us until the end of time.

“And in the tenth year, after maybe 300 visits, Louise came again. And there I was with the door open, “*How you doin’, Louise?*” And Louise was not doin’ well. She’d just been beaten and more by four guys, and they had broken her jaw, and she’d lost her teeth. And she was weeping. “*Louise, you’re home.*” *Louise, this is where you can come, seven times seventy times, seven times seventy times. We are here for you, Louise, without any constraints for your healing and new life.*” And Louise came because she knew she could. She came because it took her ten years to actually believe that we cared. When you’ve had a lifetime of disbelief and a lifetime of violence and a lifetime of pain, you do not easily believe in love. And Louise stayed and she stayed, and she recovered from her addiction. And she quit heroin, and she quit the streets.

“And today Louise has her own apartment, and she has a job working with battered women. And she has her child back. And she sings in the church choir. And how she sings - because, you see, she was dead and now she is alive, she was lost and now she is found. And Louise went to the gates of hell to come back and tell us that there is life down there in that darkness, there is light down there in that abyss, there is hope down there right in the midst of all that pain. And Louise said to me, “*I would have been dead, if you hadn’t waited for me. I would have been dead.*” I’m so glad you’re alive, Louise, I’m so glad that the violence which you suffered all the days of your life did not kill you. But that you became a healer, and a midwife, and a mother.”

**Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, we are confident that
we shall share in his victory over death and live with God forever**

Can’t you hear Jesus telling you - and even me, “Come and join me, Louise and all of you, with your passion and your fire and your new life. Never lose hope, never allow the forces of evil and darkness and oppression to overcome that little bit of flame that is inside of every single one of you - that flame of my resurrection which is happening in you - right now!”

No wonder we say to each other,

Happy Easter!