

Roll Away Your Stone

Roll away your stone.

I will roll away mine.

Together we can see what we can find.

Don't leave me alone at this time.

For I am afraid what I will discover inside.

That's a verse of a song sung by the great band, Mumford and Sons. They are growing in popularity these days. Stacy Alan, who is our chaplain at the University of Chicago at Brent House, sent a link to that song to me last week, on YouTube a clip of the song, "Roll Away Your Stone". It is a song about the story of the raising of Lazarus; Jesus bringing a friend of his, a dear friend of his back to life, calling him out of the tomb. Roll away the stone, Jesus said, and let him go.

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I will roll away mine.
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In the great Orthodox tradition of making icons, the Gospel in color as they are sometimes called, these images that depict saints and scenes from the Bible, there is a centrally important image of the Resurrection. And in it Jesus is standing astride the gates of death and Hades, and they have been blown off their hinges. At his feet lie the instruments of torture that belong to the underworld. And at either side he is hauling up out of their tombs, Adam on the one hand and Eve on the other, to reintroduce to them to each other.

Christ's Resurrection contains the possibility of the restoration, the reconciliation of everything that has been divided by human sin and death. He is reintroducing Adam and Eve to each other.

If you look closely at the image, he is not extending his hands in a kind of polite invitation: "Hello, would you like to be raised?" Oh, no, he is grabbing Adam and Eve by the wrists and hauling them up out of the safety of their little tombs, their little rectangular tombs. It is not polite. It is very strong.

Tombs can be comfortable places. We know where they begin and end. They are circumscribed. They are keeping us in one spot. Resurrection is about entering freedom. We celebrate the Resurrection, but resurrections can be frightening: I don't know what I will find. We often resist resurrection. We let fear, or sorrow, or uncertainty hold us back from entering into a new life.

I think of the denial, the fear that keeps some people stuck in addiction when the possibility of recovery processes are held out in front of them. I think of people who remain in abusive relationships because it is what they know. I think of the patterns of prejudice that keep us trapped in small-minded views of other people of the world. I think about the crucifixion of the earth itself because of our addiction to the comforts of our lifestyle, our consumerist culture.

Resurrection is central to the Christian faith, but resurrection can be frightening. Eternal life we often speak of as that state of life that happens to us when we die. A favorite author of mine states that eternal life is not so much what happens to us when we die; eternal life is what happens to us when we really start living.

Resurrection is for us a possibility now. The great Good News of Easter, the great Good News of Easter is that Christ is the one who has rolled away the stone. The great Good News of Easter is that Christ will never leave us, and there is nothing to be afraid of, not ultimately. We are free to choose resurrection. We are free to love. We are free to work for the reconciliation of all people to God and each other.

This Easter, I ask you to invite Christ to roll away whatever stones are standing in the way of living your life in freedom and fullness. Remember you are never alone. Together let's roll away the stones and see what we can find.

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