

“Real Time Resurrection”
Ephesians 2: 1-10
the Reverend Marsha E. Brown, Pastor
New Horizons Presbyterian Church, Overland Mo

You have before you three pictures today. Do you see anything about them that is similar? Mushrooms are a fungus. Fungi grow in things that are dead and dark and wet. That's sometimes how you know the log on the ground is decomposed and really dead- when it is supporting the growth of fungi and lichens and such. Isn't that interesting that such wonderful life comes out of death?

How many of you have ever seen a butterfly emerge from its chrysalis? I have hatched them for children to watch and it is a lot of fun. You can order the caterpillars from a company and they eat the stuff inside the container and grow fat and then crawl up to the roof of the container and spin a web around themselves to become a dead looking thing hanging there: a chrysalis-- For a while. And then one day the butterfly starts to emerge from the chrysalis and it has to push and pull and tug and it is difficult to get out of this tight fitting enclosure. But if you help it, you hurt it. It needs the struggle to get life in its wings and be able to fly properly. Beautiful life is born from what looks like death.

The last picture is flowers blooming out of rock. There has to be some good soil there somewhere to support the roots of that flower, but you sure can't see it and it is not a lot. That flower has the ability to use absolutely every bit of nutrition it can to produce such a lovely plant. Who would think that a lovely flower would grow in such a desolate place? Life has grown from what looks like a barren landscape.

Nature is pretty instructive I have found. It can inspire us to imitate it and nurture it and observe it and be guided by its wisdom sometimes.

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This letter to the Ephesians could have been illustrated with any of these pictures like what you see here today. For the author-who was a follower of Paul, tells the people in this area that abundant life is possible with God; that you can turn from what brings death and be productive have immeasurable riches! through God’s grace. The famous passage about faith and grace is here in verse 8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not you own doing; it is the gift of God.” What do you think it means to be saved? Not what were you taught, but what do you think now in this stage of your life?

Verse 4-5 says, “For God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-by grace you have been saved” God is the substance that makes us blossom, bloom, grow, fly instead of crawl. God’s grace in our everyday life here and now is abundant when we look around for it-receive it and give it. And each of us can do that. Each of us can be resurrected here and now and I think that is the emphasis here- in this time and space of our lives-not the after life.

It is interesting that the words in this passage move from first person to plural quickly. This resurrection is not just about our own person faith-it is about a community and their faith and therefore their actions-works.

When Session met on Wednesday night, I brought something to them that I think is the most exciting thing I have ever done in ministry. I believe I have been called to begin a new worshipping community downstairs on two Saturdays a month for folks we are getting to

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know who come to get food here. I have been asked to counsel the grieving, listen to situations, help in emergencies, provide guidance on what Lent is about, asked for prayers for loved ones who are sick and dying and I am finding that a community is growing. When the patrons come in the register for their next appointment, they usually need to wait a few minutes. We have arranged the chairs in a semicircle on purpose-so folks will talk to each other- and they do! Yesterday when I passed out flyers for the first healing service and explained what it is, I had several people who seemed very interested. This new worshipping community is not a second service of New Horizons Presbyterian Church. This is a NEW WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY, and they need their autonomy especially as we begin. So I would like to ask you all not to come unless you volunteer in the pantry and know some of the people; at least at first. They need to feel comfortable as they are. I plan to read a little scripture, speak to it briefly in relevant ways, have a time of personal prayer with anointing, rock music and other meditative music and communion at the second service. It will be short, we will start in the mother’s nursing room- appropriate don’t you think?- and as we grow, move into Fellowship Hall.

I know that many of us in here have wondered how long we will have a worshipping community called New Horizons with so many getting old and dying and the membership not growing as fast as we would like. We have declined in number about 25 since I have been here-but boy are we vital!! Here is what came to me this week: I am not a pastor of a dying church, I am a pastor of a new worshipping community and I can pastor both congregations at the same time-with the help of a lot of people, use of the building and the resources that

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we have. WE are going to be growing a new worshipping community. The PC/USA has recently announced that they have a goal to start 1001 new worshipping communities. This is a new concept -to worship with people WHERE THEY ARE-not for them to join us. This was the goal of New Beginnings assessment that we did two years ago. Actually the future story that was written by the assessor pretty much describes what is happening downstairs 6 days a week now. New people are still walking in to help us out. Yesterday I had two new ones- one was a patron who came really early. I greeted her and asked her if she would like to help since she was so early and she eagerly sorted the chips and stocked the store. I got to know her as we worked together and asked her to come every Saturday at 8:30am! And she is planning to be there on April 4 at noon when we have the first healing service. Important ministry has been happening there: people ministering to and with each other, hosts with the people, volunteers with each other and even with the people we meet who give us the food- they are touched too, at what is going on here. You all have a part in this even if you aren't in the room while any of this is going on.

-You have provided the space and utilities for this mission to grow over the years.

-You have brought food every Sunday.

-You have given money to the Food Pantry and time to it and prayed for it. And now it is growing, flourishing in fact.....just like those mushrooms in the log up there or those beautiful yellow flowers coming out of the rock.

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Wednesday night I played a song for session that had words that mean a lot to me. Van Morrison is one of my favorite rockers from the past decades. In the 80’s he wrote a song called, “Whenever God Shines His Light On You” here are the words:

“Whenever God shines his light on me, opens up my eyes so I can see. When my Lord calls in the deepest night, I know everything is gonna be alright. In deep confusion and great despair-I reach out for him, he is there. When I am lonely as I can be, I know that God shines his light on me.

Reach out for him-he’ll be there. With him your troubles you can share. If you live the life you love, you’ll get the blessings from above.

Heals the sick and he heals the lame. Says you can do it too, in Jesus name. He lifts you up and he turns you around. And he sets you feet on Higher Ground.”(I am going to play it after the service today while I roam around getting pictures of those of you I missed last week.) I have this song in my head and it is leading me to call this new group “Higher Ground”.For all of us need to do what this writer of Ephesians is talking about: be turned from death into life, given grace and mercy and love so we can change no matter what our situation in life. God brings us to Higher Ground here and now and that IS salvation. It is glorious, it is a miracle, it is grace. Thanks be to God.