Resurrection as Aftermath

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The Chaplain

In Christian tradition, Easter is not the undoing of crucifixion, but the unsettling aftermath of it. If Lent descends into absence, then Easter does not immediately lift us into triumph. The Gospels are clear: resurrection does not arrive with clarity, but with confusion. The risen Jesus is unrecognised, uninvited, and uncontainable. He appears not in power but in pieces — to grieving friends, fractured communities, disillusioned followers. Resurrection, then, is not the reversal of death, but the transformation of it. It does not cancel loss, but speaks from within it — reframing the ruins without erasing them.

This is crucial to hold onto, because it is so easy to reach for Easter as a kind of theological reset button. The violence of Good Friday becomes bearable, so the logic goes, because Easter will fix it. But Easter doesn't fix it. At least, not in any way that can be charted or planned or controlled. When Mary Magdalene meets the risen Christ, she mistakes him for the gardener. When the disciples encounter him on the road to Emmaus, they are blindsided. When Thomas hears the report from his friends, he wants physical evidence. And when Jesus does appear — behind locked doors, to terrified men — he brings not explanation but scars. Resurrection in the New Testament is not the clarifying reward of faith. It is the traumatic disclosure of truth.

We see something of this, oddly enough, in the story of Noah. After the floodwaters recede and the ark finds dry land, you might expect a scene of jubilation: a hymn of thanks, perhaps, or a renewal of covenant. Instead, Noah plants a vineyard, ferments wine, and gets himself well and jousted. The man who has witnessed a genocide — who has heard the rain fall as humanity drowned — does not break into song. He gets drunk and collapses naked in his tent. Because resurrection, even in the loosest metaphorical sense, is not easy. When you have seen what Noah has seen, when you have lost what Noah has lost, and when you alone are left to repopulate a world that used to be full — then joy is not the first emotion that arrives.

In that sense, Noah's behaviour is not disgraceful, but recognisable. It is the behaviour of a man who has survived catastrophe. And that is what Easter is. Not a festival of light after a gentle Lent, but a moment of eerie silence after public execution. Jesus is raised into a world still ruled by empire. His followers are still

hunted. Their trauma is not removed; it is merely accompanied. What changes at Easter is not the world, but the way Jesus' followers begin to relate to it.

This is why the New Testament's word for transformation is not joy, or clarity, or even belief — but *metanoia*. A term usually mistranslated "repentance," *metanoia* does not mean to feel bad about your sins or perform pious sorrow or acts of penitence. In classical Greek, it literally means *to change one's mind*, to shift perception, to see the world differently — usually only afterwards, often too late. It names that difficult, disorienting moment when something breaks in us, and we can no longer see things the way we once did. This is far more demanding than the glib and shallow virtue of open-mindedness – that virtue we smugly demand of people with whom we disagree.

This is what resurrection demands: not a moment of applause, but a process of *metanoia*. To believe in the resurrection of Jesus is not simply to accept that something happened long ago. It is to allow that event — that other — to break into your sense of the world. To let that voice, that story, that scarred and risen body speak across time. In that sense, resurrection is not just something to affirm, but something to undergo. It is not belief, but breakage. Not certainty, but disruption.

The early followers of Jesus understood this, and it terrified them. Their resurrection encounters do not read like inspiring Sunday school material. They read like trauma reports. Confusion, fear, disbelief, trembling, silence — these are the first reactions. Because they had to face the possibility that everything they thought they knew about God, about power, about death and life, was wrong. And worse — not just wrong, but implicated. The resurrection shows them that the one they followed was not just killed — he was betrayed, and they were part of that betrayal.

To undergo *metanoia* is not to admit an error. It is to let that error take you apart. It is to see how your certainties are entangled in systems of harm. It is to discover that you were wrong, not in theory, but in the deepest structures of your life. That is what happens to Peter when he weeps. To Thomas when he touches the wounds. To the disciples when the stranger at their table breaks bread and is gone.

We think of resurrection as joy — and it is. But not the easy joy of escape. It is the fierce, costly joy of transformation. The joy that comes after grief has had its way, and still, somehow, you are here. The joy that knows what it means to lose, to shatter, to collapse — and still be loved.

That is why the resurrection of Jesus is good news. Not because it puts the world back together, but because it shows us how to live in a world still coming apart.

Because it promises that death is not the final word. Because it insists that love can speak from the grave, and still be heard.