



Tuesday, March 30, 2021

Dear Friends

Yesterday I addressed our ministers on the topic of practicing resurrection in the lead up to Easter. I shared with them some ideas on just what this could mean for us and I share them with you today. The phrase "practice resurrection", is the title of a book by Eugene Person and comes from a poem written by Wendell Berry. But how are we to do this? Here are some suggestions:

### **1. Reject Negativity**

Everybody has a bad day, but we must never allow the bad days to ruin our life. While the pandemic has stretched us all, we must not accept all the negative messages and doomsayers – no one knows the future except God and our lives are in God's hand. Even in the midst of COVID remember to live while taking all the necessary precautions.

### **2. Say Sorry**

Two of the shortest but most important phrases in the English language are "I love you" and "I'm sorry,". Despite their brevity, they are immensely powerful words. You should also use them every time they are true. Few things will do more to help bring healing than an honest apology. That said, if you do not mean your apology, do not say it. Wait until you truly understand what you did wrong or how you hurt the other person, then apologize. Just as there are few things more beneficial to healing than an honest apology, few things are more painful to hear than an empty or false apology.

### **3. Embrace Positivity**

Although 10 people might love your sermon and you have one person who is negative, we remember the negative. Often your mind replays your worst moments and most negative events as an attempt to help you learn from your mistakes, but it does not help. To practice resurrection, stop focusing on what you did wrong. Undo your mistakes by some positive action toward the offended person or situation. Remember too that missional awareness is based on the question, "What is God doing in my community and how can I co-operate with what God is doing?" No matter how difficult your situation might be, God is at work in your congregation. Find what God is doing and co-operate with it.

### **4. Live Authentically**

To practice resurrection, we must first allow our old self which is created by our mind and society's expectations, to be crucified. You only live authentically once you have managed to put to death the old self that you have created. You will feel lighter, freer and so much more joyful.

### **5. Nurture Your Relationship with God**

One of the dangers of ministry is that it can negatively impact our relationship with God. Practice resurrection by taking time throughout the day to connect and nurture your relationship with God. You will notice God's presence more in your life and see God's hand in everything and you will find it difficult to feel lonely or hopeless.

### **6. Look Within**

Congregations often have expectations, and they place those expectations on us. Some of those may be unreasonable and some may be things that we simply can't do well.

To practice resurrection, you need to learn who you really are inside. What are you passionate about? What gives you joy? Focus on those things.

### **7. Serve Others**

Paul tells us that the message of Jesus is, "It is better to give than to receive." It is far better and more satisfying to give to another person than to have them give to you. We are called "ministers", which means we are servants of God and servants of God's people. Take time in your congregation to serve your people: wash dishes, put out the chairs, help tidy up, don't always get served first at functions but serve others.

### **8. Do Good**

To practice resurrection, find ways of doing something good for another, without reward or recognition. Seek to do good for others, and whenever possible, pursue the good of your community over your own personal interests. This both creates a ripple effect of happiness and leaves those whom you do good feeling happier and encourages others to do the same.

### **9. Look After Others**

No matter what we might think as ministers, our congregations don't revolve around us. Practice resurrection by focusing on others. Help those in need in your community and reach out to those who are in pain, excluded, or disabled. Do not forget to do this with your own family as well. Show compassion, love and understanding to all in need regardless of whether they are close friends or complete strangers.

### **10. Pursue Justice**

As leaders in our communities, we often have a platform from which to address issues in our communities. Practice resurrection by pursuing justice that will help people heal and succeed in the long term. As such, be an advocate for just systems and policies over mere charity. Feed the hungry, but then don't be afraid to ask why there are so many hungry people when there is more than enough food to feed everybody.

### **11. Express Your Voice**

We have opportunities to speak, both in private and in public, to people who listen to what we say. We have the capacity to heal and to hurt with our words. Practice resurrection by speaking words that are kind and true. You only have one voice. Be sure that it matches up with who you really are inside.

### **12. L-O-V-E**

Jesus gave us just one ethic to cover all our relationships: love. So, never lose an opportunity to love. Love deeply. Love fiercely. Love freely. Love God, love yourself, love your friends. love your neighbours and love your enemies in the same way as well.

Experiencing resurrection requires living a life that is truly yours, not a life that someone else has imagined for you or that they have forced on you. To practice resurrection, you must kill your old self so that your truest self to grow and flourish.

God's richest blessings for this Easter season. May the Lord Christ bring healing, hope, peace, joy, and love to you, your congregation, your community, and the whole earth.

Your partner in the gospel

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Peter', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Peter