

Resurrection Stories – based on Luke 24: 13-35
Aspen Community UMC
April 6, 2008

Page 1 of 5

I want to tell you three stories.

Three stories that give us images of resurrection – divine encounters
that we might miss were we not awake to the possibility.

They are all short, and they are different.

They are really quite simple,
but then what happened to the brothers on the road to Emmaus
was simple also - and yet illusive.

It's really how we are willing and ready to recognize Christ moments.

Here are a few of them:

The first is called "Filled with Fear, Accepted with Grace."

It's about Ernie Pyle who was a WWII correspondent.

Pyle was known for writing about the average GI. He didn't write about the
strategy and the campaigns. He wrote about the guy slogging through the mud and dodging
bullets to get back home.

He knew the GI's because he lived with them, and eventually died with them.
In one of his books, he tells the story of a German soldier who had been taken prisoner.

This German soldier had been told horrible stories about
what the Americans would do to POW's, and so he was scared.

The German was wounded and was taken to the medical station.
The medics tried to give him a shot of morphine so they could tend to his wounds.

But, the German objected furiously, afraid that he was going to be tortured.

After some time, after observing the attention given to the other wounded.

and the other POW's, this soldier finally started to figure out

that he was being treated like everyone else –

and he was amazed.

Finally, the chaplain, making his morning rounds, gave the German soldier
cigarettes, candy, tooth powder, and soap - just like everyone else.

The German soldier started to grin and sat up playing with his new
possessions like a little boy with new toys.¹

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Page 2 of 5

That's what Easter looks like, the wartime journalist writes.
We are in the hands of a power that we think should destroy us -
Instead, gives us a gift and expresses that power in love.

And, I will say that we sometimes have the opportunity to participate in stories like this -
Christ moments - resurrection moments.

The second story is called "Lunch in the Park."

It is about a little boy who decides he wants to find God.

He knew it would be a long trip, so he decided to pack a lunch -
two packs of Twinkies and two cans of root beer.

He set out on his journey and went a few blocks until he came to a park.

On one of the park benches sat an old woman looking at the pigeons.

The little boy sat down beside her and watched the pigeons too.

When he grew hungry, he pulled out some Twinkies.

As he ate, he noticed the woman watching him,
so he offered her one.

She accepted it gratefully and smiled at him.

He thought she had the most beautiful smile in the world.

Wanting to see it again, he opened a can of root beer
and offered her the other one.

Once again she smiled that beautiful smile.

For a long time the two sat on that park bench eating Twinkies, drinking root beer,
smiling at each other, and watching the pigeons.

Neither said a word. Finally, the little boy realized that it was getting late,
and he needed to go home.

He started to leave, took a few steps, turned back and gave her a big hug
and a smile.

When he arrived at home, his mother noticed that he was happy, but strangely quiet.

"What did you do today?" she asked.

"Oh, I had lunch in the park with God," he said.

Before his mother could reply, he added.
"You know, she has the most beautiful smile."

Meanwhile, the old woman left the park and returned to her home.
Her son noticed something different about her. "What did you do today, Mom?"
he asked. "Oh, I ate Twinkies and drank root beer in the park with God."
And before her son could say anything at all, she added.
"You know God's a lot younger than I imagined."²

Sometimes the resurrection is that encounter you have
that would have been easy to pass up if you are not awake for it.
Lunch in the park with God – or Twinkies and a root beer.

And now a third story: let's call it "The Owl" - and this one is about encounters
that begin as disasters that take on enormous meaning at a later time
when they are redeemed.

There was a young boy named Walter.
Born in the city, his parents one day moved out to the country to become farmers.
Walter had a vivid imagination and the farm was the perfect place for a young boy
with a wondering mind.

One day in the apple orchard he was amazed when he saw sitting on a branch
of one of the apple trees - an owl.

He just stood there and stared at the owl.

He thought about what his father had told him about owls:
owls always rested during the day because they hunted throughout the night.

The owl was asleep.

He also thought that this owl might make a great pet.

Being careful not to make any noises he stepped over sticks and leaves.
The owl was in a deep sleep because it never heard Walter walking toward it.
Finally, standing under the owl, he reached up and grabbed the owl by the legs.

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Page 4 of 5

O The events that followed are difficult to explain.

Suddenly everything was utter chaos.

The owl came to life.

Walter's thoughts about keeping the bird as a pet were quickly forgotten.

The air filled with wings, and feathers, and screaming.

In the excitement Walter held the legs tighter.

And in his panic, Walter still holding on to the owl,

threw it to the ground

and stomped it to death.

After things calmed down, he looked at the now dead and bloody bird,

and began to cry.

He ran back to the farm, got a shovel, and buried the owl in the orchard.

At night he would dream of that owl.

As the years passed he never got over what had happened that day.

Deep down it affected him for the rest of his life.

As an older man he said he never, ever killed anything again.

But something transformed him – redeemed him from those terrible moments.

He dedicated his life to bringing life

to thousands of animals on the big screen – Walt Disney.

The resurrection has a way of changing things – transforming things in our lives.

And it will happen when we are not expecting it,

but at the same time - we want to be open.

It's like it opens our eyes to something we would not expect

like the German POW,

Or like something we might be looking for

like the little boy in the park sharing Twinkies and root beer -

or the little boy who in his fear killed the owl.

Resurrection Stories – based on Luke 24:13-35
Aspen Community UMC
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Page 5 of 5

Or like the two brothers that day on the road to Emmaus
who had lost their dream.

There is an aliveness that the universe has
surprises of the universe – divine moments.

And, by all accounts we find it on our own roads
in our own predicaments
and in our own observations of the world around us.

So, look for the resurrection stories in your own life.

And be ready for new ones when they appear.

Amen.

¹ J. Daniel Hester, *Recognized in the Breaking of Bread*

² Jef Olson, *Hearts Burning Within*