

"RESURRECTION PEOPLE"

ISAIAH 65

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Last week the woman took her children to a restaurant. Her 6-year-old son asked if he could say grace. As they bowed their heads, he said, "God is good, God is great. Thank you for the food, and I would thank you more if Mom gets us ice cream for dessert. And liberty and justice for all! Amen!"

Along with the laughter from other customers nearby, the mother heard a woman remark, "That's what's wrong with the country. Kids today don't even know how to pray. Asking God for ice cream! Why, I never."

Hearing this, the 6-year-old burst into tears and asked his mother, "Did I do it wrong? Is God mad at me?"

As she held her son and reassured him that he had done a terrific job, and God was certainly not mad at him, an older gentleman approached the table. He winked at the boy and said, "I happen to know that God thought that was a great prayer."

"Really?" the boy asked.

"Cross my heart." Then in a theatrical whisper, he added (indicating the woman whose remark had started the whole thing), "Too bad she never asks God for ice cream. A little ice cream is good for the soul sometimes."

Of course, the mother bought her kids ice cream at the end of the meal. The boy stared at his for a moment and then did something remarkable. He picked up his sundae and without a word, walked over and placed it in front of the woman who had made the critical remark. With a big smile, he told her, "Here, this is for you. Ice cream is good for the soul sometimes, and my soul is good already."

Now, was this boy heading for sainthood, a 6-year-old saint. Not according to his mother. She described her son this way. "Of all my children, he is by far my most trying. The quickest to anger, the first one to break something, and the last one to do as he's told. None of it matters though, 'cause like he said, his soul is good already."

Resurrection people. Good already soul people. People who are open to God's Spirit, to the Christ Spirit and respond in the moment to the needs of others. We are all God's people, loved by God no matter what. But resurrection people are different.

Jesus was a "resurrection people." God was in him, living and loving others through him. The powers of the world didn't like the power of God's love as Jesus was living it. So they killed him. But God's love cannot die. God's love cannot be silenced. The resurrection is the power of God's love that was in Jesus and continues through us. The Christ Spirit. The resurrection.

The Isaiah text tells us of one person's vision---one person's understanding of what the world would be like if all people were open to letting the power of God's love continue through us. Isaiah 65: v 17 ff God is creation Jerusalem as a joy. Joy!! What would a truly joyful world be like? No more weeping. No more cries of distress. No infant will live only a few days. No old person will die before their time—one who lives to be 100 will be considered a youth. Those who build houses will inhabit them instead of building them for others, while having no home of their own. Those who plant vineyards will eat of the fruit, instead of growing crops for others to eat, while not having enough to eat for themselves and their families. They will not labor in vain or bear children for calamity. The wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion shall eat straw like the ox. The serpent will eat dust. They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain.

Resurrection people know this vision in their souls, in their hearts and know that in the ordinary, the dullness that there is a responsibility to partner with God to help bring about this vision---to share the power of the resurrection throughout God's creation----to be Christ's presence in the world.

Like this. A family was standing on the sidewalk in front of their home, watching firemen swarming in and out of the house. A grease fire had severely damaged the kitchen, and smoke was now infiltrating everything else they owned. They watched in dismay as the fire was put out---holes in the walls, scorched beams, destroyed dishes---a real mess awaited them.

Suddenly a pizza delivery care pulled up next to them on the curb and a young man hopped out, bearing a large pizza. The father of the family looked annoyed and said, "I'm afraid you've got the wrong address---obviously none of us ordered pizza. Besides, " he added ruefully, "My wallet was in my jacket in the kitchen."

The pizza guy smiled, and shaking his head, said, "Oh I know you didn't order this, but I saw you all standing here, and I had to do something. There's no charge. Just try to take it easy and have something to eat." Astonished the family watched as the delivery man quickly returned to his car and sped off.

A resurrection people—reaching out in care, compassion to those in need. Now, don't get me wrong. It isn't always as easy as sharing a pizza. Sometimes resurrection people pay a high cost. Shannon Wright was the young teacher, mother and wife, who several years ago stepped between her students and a bullet and paid with her life. Her intent wasn't to die---it was to live and to ensure that others lived. God's intent for her was a long life not to die. She lived God's love. We are not called to sacrifice, we are called to be faithful and sometimes as a result there is sacrifice. But sacrifice is not God's intent or part of God's plan. Living God's love is the plan.

To be sure, being resurrection people takes as many forms as there are heartbeats on this earth. A child's offer of ice cream, a humble offer of a pizza or the risk of one's own life for another are only a few example. Others might be a hand held out to steady the steps of the very young or the very old; a hand shake to seal a vow of peace between enemies; a helping hand to hammer and nail together a Habitat for Humanity home; teaching junior or senior high, or Church School or so many other ways.

But there are real barriers to our being resurrection people. Our choices get in the way as do the choices of others. And our choices are influenced by all the experiences we have had, good and bad. Because of our past experiences some people are arrogant—figuring they know better than God, or indifferent—maybe no one ever told them about a loving God, or bored—understand that anything to do with God is boring, or mean---bullies and mean-spirited people who have no compassion. People's greed, compulsive behaviors, insecurities all get in the way of God's influence. With other people it's their understanding of God as a harsh, judging, vindictive, "zapper" God that gets in God's way. And the reality is that none of us are perfect, none of us are totally open to God's influence, none of us will get it "right" all the time. But there is always a Plan B because of God's incredible love for and desire to be in relationship with all of God's creation.

No matter what God never abandons us—God's love continues to surround us—God's presence is always with us. And it is the power of that love that can break through all these barriers so that we can be transformed into resurrection people—so that we can make the kind of choices that lead to real peace and harmony. As more people become open to God's Spirit living within us and through us, as more of us are open to God's guidance the closer we can come to Isaiah's vision of the world being a reality. There will always be those who will say—"can't be

done—we're just too bad." Don't let them get you down. We're talking about God here—we're talking about the power of God's love. Never underestimate it. Let us be resurrection people with our "good already" souls, hearts, mind and strength.