

The Risen-ness of Us Easter 2016

I cleaned out my fridge earlier this week.

I understand that a lot of people clean their refrigerators on a fairly regular basis, but I don't really get that.

To me, that takes the fun out of it.

If you wait a good long while, as I do,

then cleaning your fridge becomes kind of an enjoyable trip down memory lane, like looking through old pictures.

It's like "hey, here's the whipped cream I bought for our Thanksgiving pies -- yeah, that was a good time."

Or "look at that -- the fresh dill I got for that sauce at Christmas. Not so fresh anymore, but ah, the fun we had that day."

If you clean it out every week, you miss out on moments like these.

I was actually thinking, as I scraped hard at the inside of a Tupperware container, that given my penchant for letting things grow in my fridge,

I really oughta get into sourdough.

Let me explain.

Growing up, my mom was quite the sourdough baker -- pretty sure she still is.

And if you're not familiar with what that's about,

what it means is that in your refrigerator, at all times, you have this jar of goo fermenting.

All the time.

You never clean it out.

How it works is this -- when you want to bake some bread,

you take out the jar of glop, which is called sourdough starter, and you scoop out a cup of it.

And that cup that you scoop out, it becomes the leaven for your bread --

you mix it up with flour and sugar and water and stuff, and set it aside and it rises like crazy.

And that goo in the jar, well, you throw some flour and water into it to make up for what you scooped out, and stick it back in the fridge, and it sits there in the dark bubbling and before long the sourdough starter is ready to leaven another loaf.

Two days ago, David asked me how my thoughts for Easter were coming along, and I said, "you know, I thought I'd talk about sourdough."
And as soon as I said it, I realized -- maybe that's a little weird.

So, yeah, this is a little weird.

In fact, I feel pretty certain that this will be the only sourdough-based Easter sermon in America today.

But here's what strikes me.

Resurrection is an awful lot like sourdough.

I'm not kidding.

Resurrection is like sourdough because it never stops, it leavens again and again, it has the capacity to raise up again and again.

David said earlier --

if Resurrection was something that was good only for Jesus, a happy ending to only Jesus' story, then there'd be no point, we wouldn't be here.

If it was only that **once** that God did what God did, if it was only on that **one** particular morning long ago that God reached in with power and chased away death, if it was only once that resurrection happened, well then, this story would be interesting but it wouldn't mean much anymore.

We'd be marking a moment in history, but not a moment for us.

But it keeps happening.

The risings keep happening, again and again.

Here's the thing:

God actually has a habit of doing this.

Resurrection is what God does for a living.

Again and again and again,

God goes into the darkness, into our darkneses,
and shines a holy light;

God goes into the darkneses
and breathes life into death.

Raises up, again and again.

Resurrection is what God does for a living.

A number of years back NPR had a segment on the weekends called the National Story Project.

They asked Americans to write down their own stories and send them in -- there were just two requirements: they had to be short, and they had to be true.

The segment ran for a number of years, and I loved it.

And there was one little story in particular that stuck with me, because in truth it was a resurrection a story, a story of what God does for a living.

It was sent in by a woman remembering what it had been like to be widowed at the age of 34,

remembering the overwhelming grief of her first year of loss,

and recalling also how utterly unprepared she had been to handle life alone, bemused by home repairs and how things worked;

things her protective husband had taken care of.

And her story recalled the day, not quite a year after her husband's death, when she had a new freezer delivered, in the hopes of saving some money by freezing her own vegetables.

And the delivery man warned her:

"Don't plug it in too soon -- the oil needs time to settle.

Plug it in too soon and you'll blow a fuse."

So dutifully she waited a couple hours, and then, hesitantly, plugged in her freezer.

Immediately not only her house but the entire city around her plunged into darkness.

"Was it possible?" she wrote,

"Had I blown the fuses of an entire city by plugging in my freezer too soon?

I heard sirens in the distance and feared they were coming to get me, the widow lady with the freezer.

Then I heard over my battery-powered radio that a car had taken out a breaker pole on the main road,

and I was overwhelmed with relief.

And then I began to giggle.

And standing there in the darkness,

I felt something replace the fear that I had been living with.

The feeling was somewhere between lightness and joy.

I had lived a sorrowful and frightened year.

But deep within myself, there was laughter again,

and the laughter somehow made me feel powerful.

After all, hadn't I just blacked out a whole city?"

If resurrection was something God did once,

then we wouldn't have much of a story to tell today.

But resurrection is what God does for a living,

what God does every day,

what God did that one night in a woman's life,

when a spiral of grief reversed itself upwards,

when life-giving laughter replaced paralyzing fear.

Each one of us knows a story that we too have lived,
a resurrection story.

Each one of us can point to a time in our lives

when light overtook the shadows,

when laughter returned,

when we suddenly realized that we'd turned a corner,

gotten through it after all,

gotten the weight off our shoulders.
Those are resurrections. Those are the risings,
God leavening our spirits again and again.

In the darkness, in the quiet, in the valleys, in the shadows,
God is at work in laughter, love and light,
to raise us up.
Again and again and again.
Alleluia! Amen.