

Resurrection Sunday - Revealed in Love

One of the biggest spiritual influences of my life has been the orthodox writer Father Seraphim Rose. In a lecture almost forty years ago to the World Religion classes at Cal-Berkely, he asked those attending his lecture.... *"Why does a person study religion"? He proceeded to answer his own question by saying that there are many reasons that people have for studying religion, but there is only one reason that a person is genuinely sincere about it. Seraphim went on to say, the genuine seeker of religious truth studies so they can come face to face with reality. To find a deeper reality than the everyday reality that so quickly changes, fades, and disappears, leaving nothing behind and offering no lasting happiness to feed, fill, and nurture the human soul. Every religion that is sincerely genuine tries to open up contact or receive a revelation of this reality."*

I know that is a big idea for Easter and a Resurrection Sunday, but nonetheless here we go...

I believe with my whole heart and with a clear mind the reality for those who genuinely seek that revelation do not recognize or

understand that they (in all reality) are seeking Jesus. He is God's revelation to the human heart, and the conscious reality to the mind of men and women of all race, color and creed.

If you were to study most theology textbooks you would discover that the truth just doesn't come to the unaided powers and efforts of man - we need help. Most can read a book of religion or even their bible for that matter and not necessarily understand what it is saying. In fact, there are some good examples of that in the Book of Acts chapter 8.

God's angel spoke to Philip: "At noon today I want you to walk over to that desolate road that goes from Jerusalem down to Gaza." He got up and went. He met an Ethiopian eunuch coming down the road. The eunuch had been on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and was returning to Ethiopia, where he was minister in charge of all the finances of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was riding in a chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah. The Spirit told Philip, "Climb into the chariot." Running up alongside, Philip heard the eunuch reading Isaiah and asked, "Do you understand what you're reading?" He answered, "How can I without some

help?" and invited Philip into the chariot with him. The passage he was reading was this:

*As a sheep led to slaughter,
and quiet as a lamb being sheared,
He was silent, saying nothing.
He was mocked and put down,
never got a fair trial.
But who now can count his kin
since he's been taken from the earth?*

The eunuch said, "Tell me, who is the prophet talking about: himself or some other?" Philip grabbed his chance. Using this passage as his text, he preached Jesus to him.

As they continued down the road, they came to a stream of water. The eunuch said, "Here's water. Why can't I be baptized?" He ordered the chariot to stop. They both went down to the water, and Philip baptized him on the spot. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of God suddenly took Philip off, and that was the last the eunuch saw of him. But he didn't mind. He had found what he'd

come for and went on down the road as happy as he could be.

There are several supernatural and mystical elements to this story: the angel tells Phillip exactly where to go to so that he can find the Eunuch (even though he thought it was by chance), and then after the baptism Phillip is supernaturally transported by the power of the Holy Spirit, never to be seen again by the Ethiopian. But this is not why he was baptized and found faith - it was definitely a mind blower, but not the reason he accepted Jesus. His life was changed by the revelation of who Jesus was - and how that revelation changed his heart. Yes, miracles do help people find faith and help to understand truth. However they are not the reason people accept Jesus and decide to follow Him with their whole heart - that only comes by God's Spirit pulling a person or persons towards Him and then what is revealed to their heart while they are there with Him. When Phillip spoke to the Eunuch, the reality of the truth he heard changed his heart. This whole process better known as - Christ revealed to us in love. The love of God revealed to the human heart - is the crucified, buried and resurrected Jesus. Not dead Jesus - live Jesus! Not unreal Jesus - real Jesus. Sometimes we need help

finding and understanding that Jesus. It is difficult for some because that Jesus is not a religion or a denomination - He is the reality of God's love for us, revealed directly to us. Directly to our heart.

Something similar happened with Jesus and His disciples only hours after His resurrection. In His resurrected state of being, Jesus apparently did not look like his previous self.

(Understandable for a man who had been beaten, nailed, speared, buried, pronounced dead, and then glorified). Luke's biography of Jesus tells the story of two of His disciples walking on the road to Emmaus. Jesus actually joined them as they walked, and yet they did not recognize or understand that their teacher and Lord walked with them. He even asked them why they seemed so excited. They in turn asked him if he was the only one in Jerusalem who did not know what had happened. They told him that a great prophet had been killed, and that word was getting around had allegedly risen from the dead; but they did not know what to believe. As they walked, Jesus began to open their hearts to explain what the Old Testament scriptures said was going to happen to the Messiah. Even as they journeyed together with Jesus they still did not recognize Him - quite amazing. Maybe

because He did not perform more miracles and supernatural signs? I don't know? As they finally arrived to Emmaus, Jesus acted as if He would continue on traveling without them. But the two disciples out of simple love for a stranger, asked him to dinner and to stay on with them. As they sat to eat together, Jesus blessed and broke the bread as He had done with them only days earlier... suddenly in that moment came the reality and the revelation of who Jesus was. They could see Him - they could see Jesus revealed to their hearts. And then, He vanished right before their eyes. They questioned themselves, and as they did the reality that they had been with their resurrected Savior the whole time on the road burned in their hearts - they were finding His love all over again, only this time in a way that they knew for certain would never end. All that He had said to them was true and being revealed to their hearts and imprinted in their minds. What made them recognize Jesus was the presence His love causing their hearts to burn for God. The reality is that when He reveals Himself to us - His love burns in our hearts.

I hope today you can see today the reality of God's love for you - and that it will move and inspire you to love Him as you have never loved Him. Revealing Himself to you will come about when

your heart is openly moved and burns for more of His presence, more of His truth, more of His love, and more of His life. Maybe you are like the Eunuch - reading the truth but needing help with your understanding, or maybe you are like the disciples - your heart is longing for, or missing something that has been right there walking with you all along. Either way it is His Love that is revealed to your heart if you will simply open it on this Resurrection Sunday...