

Sunday, May 12th, Fourth Sunday after Easter, 2019

Readings: Acts 9:36-43, Psalm 23, Revelation 7:9-17, John 10:22-30

In Celebration of Women: Easter Resurrection Taming the Powers

Introduction

Let's think a little about the scene concerning Katherine and her relationships with first, the space program of NASA in general and then with the men – and they are all men – with whom and under whom she works. Let's begin from the perspective, the angle of feelings: what did you feel as you watched?

What I would like to do is to begin our thinking together from the perspective, the angle of relationships. What is going on in the scene when it comes to relationships? First, the race thing. Second, the women thing. Third, the employee thing. Fourth, the civilian thing. Katherine appears to fall short in all these dimensions: she is not white amid whiteness; she is not male amid maleness, she is a black-female employee (“black computer”) amid higher placed, higher valued employees of NASA; and she is a black-female civilian amid white military men. We can conclude then, that relationships in this situation are always defined, delimited by constraints: all of which make genuine togetherness, genuine community, impossible. These constraints operate like powers – in fact that is the name the Bible uses to explain them – powers, like race/culture, powers like gender, powers like economics and markets, through which we are either valued or not, making us real communities or simply tribes.

So, to put it biblically, Katherine is a *casualty of the powers*.

The Bible

So, let's think biblically for a few minutes!

We are celebrating Christian faith after Easter: we are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus. What does resurrection mean? Clearly, at its most simple and basic, it does refer to the resurrection of Jesus himself– God's approval of, God's 'signing-off' of Jesus' ministry, his actions of healing and restoration of people.

But at a deeper level, when the New Testament speaks of resurrection, it is about resurrection, the rising from death of the *whole world*, a celebration of life over death, a celebration of life against death. But something that is often missed in this, is that a resurrected world is a particular sort of world: it is about communities, relationships that work, that prosper. Martin Buber the great Israeli-Jewish philosopher replaced the Biblical saying, “In the beginning God created the heavens”, by “in the beginning was the relationship”. So, *resurrection is about relationship, about positive interaction, about the social*.

When we turn to the readings for today, relationships that work, relationships freed from the powers that distort them, stands front and centre. In the story from the Acts, Luke tells us that Peter raises Tabitha from death. Tabitha “hears” Peter, and responds. It is the relationship between the two, of them, that causes, that facilitates a new future, a new life.

In the Gospel, which deals with the problem of the breaking-apart of John's Christian community, again, it is about "hearing" Jesus, and hearing each other, responding to Jesus and responding to each other, that ensures a real, living community of people. But to hear and respond means recognizing and trusting: ultimately, restoring others, and in turn becoming restored.

So, let us conclude: for the Bible, *resurrection* is about renewal of relationships, is about restoration of people and communities, is about relationships that work, that prosper, as we recognize each other, and move toward trusting each other. It is in these practices that we begin to touch upon, to get close to resurrection's meaning.

In Celebration of Women

Back to women! What would a restored, renewed, resurrected Katherine look like? What would a restored, renewed, resurrected NASA look like?