

1) I can't really blame them, can you? Disciples cringing behind locked doors.

Fear can do that, can't it—precipitate lock downs that are self-imposed

Lock-downs that are instinctual, but rational.

Lock-downs that become, in time, habitual—"security" systems of many kinds—
dead bolts, passwords—all designed to keep threats at bay—
all in hope for a measure of protection.

Hearing this story of terrified disciples,

I have compassion—don't you—for their rapid heartbeats, their straining sensory alertness.

At every sound—an adrenaline rush, in every silence—a gnawing dread.

These followers of Jesus have good reason to lock THEMSELVES IN.

The best chance they seem to have of self-protection is to lock OTHERS OUT.

2) I also have sympathy for the harried officials, who, not long after,
make a similarly fear-driven move to lock these disciples UP.

Lock them up to keep them from proclaiming Resurrection power.

Using the law to their own advantage, even if it isn't "on their side."

The best chance these officials seem to have for THEIR self-protection
is to seize these threats to social order; and put them under lock and key.

3) Two stories—two lock-downs—neither one successful.

Resurrection has a way of getting inside the doors behind which we lock ourselves.

Resurrection has a way of springing doors open behind which others lock US—
or behind which we lock THEM.

How does Resurrection DO this? There's no "one size fits all" answer.

In Storyteller John's account of the Resurrection,

Jesus selectively employs a whole set of different keys:

- For Mary Magdalene. Raw grief, and a desperate attempt to cope as best she can—
all these are doors behind which she is locked,
and insulated from the prospect of the seemingly impossible.
MARY says the One whom she presumes to be the gardener.
A single word from Jesus is all it takes to turn the lock and spring her free.
- The self-locked down disciples.
Terror-stricken at the danger of being themselves executed;
feeling guilt, surely, about THEIR desertion at JESUS'S execution.
For them the Risen Christ slips, not once, but twice
behind doors they've closed and locked.
He proclaims not twice, but three times over a forgiving gift of *PEACE*.
- Thomas. He'll accept neither a single word, nor a set of words; he needs a touch.
So that's the key Jesus gives him—though, once offered,
Thomas finds he *DOESN'T* need what he *THOUGHT* he needed.
- Yet all these words and gestures of Jesus about peace and forgiveness—
they don't redirect the disciples from returning to business-as-usual.

So, as we'll hear next week, Jesus shows up on a seashore
to make a success of their all-night fishing failure.

He then feeds his friends a breakfast he's fixed just for them—

a word-and-action key that opens them further to Resurrection freedom.

- Last, there's Peter. With him, Jesus has a one-on-one heart-to-heart talk;
gently but relentlessly naming and forgiving Peter's earlier denial.

Then Jesus reissues to him, the mandate

He gave to all of the disciples on the evening of Easter Day.

In all these ways, each tuned to the individuals involved and the factors in play,

Resurrection gets inside the doors behind which the disciples have locked themselves.

Slowly, slowly, they receive forgiveness—find their way to freedom, bit by bit.

4) Storyteller Luke picks up this Resurrection narrative of Forgiveness, Peace, and Freedom:

Once released—not just from behind that room door in which they were hiding,

but from the heart doors of which the room door was a symbol—once they were set free;

how confined WERE these Forgiven and Forgiving Resurrection Peace Makers REALLY

in that prison cell to which THEY were remanded by officials who were so afraid of THEM?

Well, those disciples are not confined at all.

An angel lets them out of jail, turns them loose; and they claim their freedom boldly—
freedom to proclaim God's forgiveness of sin.

They stand up to those who had tried to get rid of their now Risen Lord
(not much luck those officials had with that!);

The disciples stand up to those who try to shut them down
(good luck to those officials who think they can do that!).

We must obey God rather than any human authority,

that's what the disciples tell their frantic accusers, not backing down an inch.

And they just go right on ahead—fearlessly proclaiming forgiveness and freedom.

Knowing firsthand what it's like to sit with THEIR sin retained behind locked doors,

they aren't shy in reaching out to OTHERS the way Jesus has reached out to THEM.

5) And now a seeming focus shift that's not shift at all—

another man named John, the author of Revelation,

he's living in exile, banished on a lonely island—is he locked down?

You'd never know it, would you? Just listen to him sing:

*To him who loves us and freed from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom,
priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.*

Why shouldn't John the Elder sing for joy?

He's just had a vision of Christ Risen and Exalted,

who brings this so-called prisoner a message of liberation with his name on it:

Do not be afraid, I am the first and the last, and the living one.

I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever.

And I have the keys of Death and of Hades.

6) What does it mean for us to be a Resurrection people? Four practices, closely related:

- 1) **Perception**—perception of how many are the locked doors behind which we may be hiding; and the doors behind which we might consign others.
- 2) **Recognition**—recognition of how closely connected are fear and incarceration. And how intimately intertwined forgiveness and freedom are as well.
- 3) **Imagination**—imagination in discovering for ourselves, and in discerning for others the particular word-and-action keys that can open the different doors behind which all of us are incarcerated.
- 4) **Affirmation**—affirmation again and again, over and over, day-by-day, step-by-step—that the power of the Risen Christ is not a “get out of jail free” card.

It is not a power that merely resuscitates us—
and brings us bouncing back to business as usual.

NO, Resurrection is a power that breaks in upon us, forgives and unfetters us,
sets us free for the challenging work of constructive forgiveness—
which, in fact, is what we mean—what we do—when, in word and example,
we proclaim: *The Lord is Risen—In Deed. ALLELUIA.*