

## Reduced to Resurrection



During Holy Week a few years back, Sam (my youngest son) came home late. In simple desperation, he said to me: 'I need Jesus. I need help.' His drug problem was consuming him. In severe mercy, Jesus reduced him to new life. Sam had been baptized years before. Now he needed to be raised from the dead.

This Holy Week a pastor recounted to me the return of Kim, a congregant who had left her husband and kids years before for another woman. Her lover became physically violent and she returned to the Lord. Her family has moved on. Her help is Jesus, and a small band of Christians. Kim has no idea what His new life will mean for her now. She is reduced to Resurrection.

In this Easter season we can hold an overly facile view of the Living God. He can too easily become a familiar 'life-source', as natural as the flowers and birds of spring. We forget the shock: the challenge commanded by the Resurrection.

'Resurrection proclaims true freedom', says Barth, 'and lets us painfully discover our prison chains. It tells us that the one and only refuge is God. It tells us that only because it shows us that all our positions on life's battlefield are lost and we must vacate them.'

Kim and Sam know the lure and illusion of false defenses—drugs or sex or the faux justice demanded by the 'gay self.' These are strongholds that are only overcome by the Risen Christ. He waits patiently as we cling to our flimsy walls. Finally defenseless, we infidels hear again the song of the Beloved. The drone of despair and other demons cannot stifle that song. He won our hearts a long time ago and has never stopped singing. We are reduced to Love again.

I will never forget that season at University when the battle raged between the empowered 'gay self' and the dopey (it seemed to me) Christian one. One side had to give. The former seemed more powerful—fun and sexy and hip. Hanging out with the poor who clung to Jesus? Not so cool.

But real, an authentic response to the God who I honestly believed was alive and calling me into a new life. He won because He is, and He graced me with the freedom to see 'the gay self' as a sophisticated defense against His call to follow Him nakedly.

No doubt, once we are reduced to Him, we need help from His Body to live out our repentance. It will take many turnings, many reductions until we are steadily on track. Kim, Sam and I know the detours. But more than those, we are learning to yield to the faithful Love that surpasses all other loves. We have become wise to our defenses and humble before the One who is the 'anchor of our souls, sure and steadfast' (Heb. 6: 19).

'We must receive assistance from the ground up. Then the steep walls of our securities are broken to bits, and we are forced to become humble, poor, pleading. Thus we are driven more and more to surrender and give up those things which we formerly used to protect and defend and to hold to ourselves against the voice of the resurrection's truth.' Barth

'Father, through the merciful wooing of Your Son, we entrust to You all those we love who are far from home. Forgive our striving. We trust in Your mercy alone. As You overcame our misery through Mercy alone, so we entrust our miserable ones to You. By Your grace, open their ears to hear Your song of love; sing them home. We know it will not be through our cajoling or a ferocious sermon that they will return. It will be the miracle of Mercy, the witness of Water in a dry and weary land. Make the burning sand a pool (Is. 35: 7), we pray.'