

# Practice Resurrection

April 26, 2009 – Youth Sunday at Spokane FPC

Sermonette by Teagan Norton

## Intro

Hi, I'm Teagan. I'm a senior at Ferris. The first time I came into this sanctuary I was 5 days old. I think I'm more nervous today than I was then.

## OT Reading

The first verse I'd like to read to you today is from Genesis. It's Joseph's response to his brothers who sold him into slavery.

*Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid. Do I act for God? Don't you see, you planned evil against me but God used those same plans for my good, as you see all around you right now – life for many people. Easy now, you have nothing to fear; I'll take care of you and your children." He reassured them, speaking with them heart to heart.*

Joseph understands the fundamental meaning of the phrase "Practice Resurrection." God has always been taking things that are evil, that are dead, and using them for good; bringing them to new life. Joseph can see the new life, the good, that God has made out of a bad situation, and through that, he is able to forgive his brothers and also help them to see the new life. This is "Practicing Resurrection."

Sounds easy enough, right?

Wrong.

It's not easy. Why? What's holding us back?

This scripture in Hebrews gives us some answers.

## NT Reading

Hebrews 12:1-3 says ....

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.*

Sin is that weight that slows us down;  
that keeps us from running;  
that keeps us from "Practicing Resurrection."

I know for me my most pesky sin is *laziness*.

It's so much easier to say,

“Someone else will do it.

Someone else will solve world hunger,  
someone else will fund wells in Africa.”

But the truth is no one else is running the race for me. I have to strip off the weight of my *laziness*, my sin;

focus my eyes on Jesus and run the race,

finding the good in a bad situation.

Finding the life amongst the death isn't easy but it's what we're called to do. We have to focus on Jesus so that the sinful can die and there can be new life.

One way to focus on Jesus is to look for where he already is. I've learned to do this through mission trips and other places I've served God.

### Quote

I'd like to read a passage from a book called Velvet Elvis by Rob Bell.

*Mission then is less about the transportation of God from one place to another and more about the identification of a God who is already there. It is almost as if being a good missionary means having really good eyesight. Or maybe it means teaching people to use their eyes to see things that have always been there; they just didn't realize it. You see God where others don't. And then you point him out.*

Some of us went to LA expecting to take God to people who didn't have him. But the truth is he was already there. All we had to do was point him out; to find the new life he was creating and be a part of it.

All over the city we saw brokenness. We saw things that were dying; were no longer the way they were intended to be. But in the midst of that death there were snapshots of hope. There was healing there. There was new life.

I'd like to show you a few of these snapshots by telling you some stories of places I've seen God create new life.

### LA Story - Midnight Mission

The first night we were in LA we drove down skid row. The sheer number of homeless living there took my breath away even though I knew what to expect. The hopelessness of it was apparent. That night we saw the brokenness and death that fills the streets of LA. At some point over the next four days each of our van groups traveled to a mission called Midnight Mission. Their mission statement is: “To offer a bridge to self-sufficiency for homeless people through

counseling, education, training, and job placement.” This place was clearly a light in the darkness. A source of hope for the skid row community. A place of new life.

### LA Story - SLASA

Another place where there is immense death in LA is within the school systems in South LA. Many of the schools have very little funding so there are no afterschool programs - no sports; no art classes. Kids get passed through classes because there isn't enough money or space to hold them back. It's not good. But there is hope. There are centers like the Salvation Army that provide programs for students. They have Art classes and Dance classes, help with homework, and provide good role models so more kids can learn in school and won't drop out. Centers like this are giving new life to kids who wouldn't otherwise stand a chance in school.

### Girls from Camp Spalding

This summer I counseled at Camp Spalding. There were 8 girls in my cabin. The first night at cabin time I asked them to get out there Bibles and open to 1 Samuel 16:7 so we could read it together. I quickly leafed through the pages of my bible to find the verse, and looked up to see all but one of them staring at me with blank looks on their faces. One girl was bold enough to say that she'd never opened a bible before and had no idea how to find a verse. As it turned out 7 out of the 8 girls in my cabin were in the same boat. So we spent cabin time that night learning how to look up verses in the bible. It's tradition at Spalding to read your cabin a few chapters from a book each night as they are falling asleep. The first few nights I read Narnia. But the third night one of the girls asked if I would read the bible instead. And from that night on we read stories from the bible every night. Those girls went from never opening a bible in their lives to begging me to read bible stories instead of Narnia at night in a span of two days. That's resurrection.

### Westport Story

The past two summers I've spent a week in Westport teaching a VBS. I was blessed to have the same kids in my class both years so I've gotten to know them pretty well. There's one girl in the class who was always running. She would roll out from underneath the walls of our makeshift classroom run out the door and be halfway to the beach before any of us could catch her and when we did catch her and try to bring her back she would scream and cry. Slowly through the first week my first year and the second week of my second year she started to trust us more. She started to participate in games and would stay in the classroom if we asked her to! On the last day she cried when she had to leave. Through the many times I'd chased her down and carried her back to class I'd gotten to hear little bits of what her home life was like, and lets just say it

accounted for a lot of her behavior. To get the chance for those two weeks to be a light in the darkness of her life was a blessing. The change in her behavior from the beginning of that first week to the end of that second is proof that God is giving things new life.

### D Group Example

Even within the walls of our church I see new life rising from the ashes. Take for instance my D-group. When youth group first started for us we were all feeling pretty alone, which is something God never wanted mankind to experience, but God brought us together into a group with amazing leaders and now those girls are some of my best friends. I know that if I ever need anyone they are there for me. Not only are we not alone anymore but the community we've formed is such that we are all able to lean on each other as we run this race. That is new life.

### Conclusion

Just as I have been your tour guide pointing out to you places that I have seen new life and joined in them, Joseph was a tour guide. He pointed out to his brothers the new life that God had risen from the ashes of their sin. Also, in focusing his eyes on Jesus and recognizing the good God brought from a bad situation he was able to find new life within himself and forgive his brothers for what they did to him.

So . . .

Search your heart for Goodness.

Long to be made whole.

Grab hold of every opportunity to do good.

Look for places of new life. Focus your eyes on Jesus.

Be a Tour Guide.

Practice Resurrection.