

**The Time of Love:
On Allowing to Happen (*Geschehenlassen*)
and Transforming Life**

Jesus, the savior of the world, went to Jerusalem to accept impending death and reconnect heaven and earth in his Resurrection. The key to deciphering the mystery of death and Resurrection is love. In the Gospel of John, love and death create a horizon for understanding human relationships. Jesus loves his friend Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary (J 11:1-44). Knowing about Lazarus's illness, Jesus is in no hurry to visit him. Moreover, he does not react in any recognizable way to the danger of death. He lets his friend die. However, he does not leave Lazarus *in* his death, but he reaches him in a hitherto unknown way. He touches him like never before. In preparation for a face-to-face encounter with Lazarus, Jesus weeps at his friend's grave. Sadness, pain, and passion express the drama of death. By entering this drama, Jesus brings life. His gift is not just the comfort and grieving companionship other friends have given. What he offers is love that is more powerful than death.

Mary and Martha entrust their concerns to Jesus. They leave the environment of their own despair and mourning and enter the horizon of God, who comes to them. And in this horizon, they discover the meaning of living in the Word made flesh so that we would no longer die. The experience of abandonment does not put love to the test. It opens up to a love that never ends. The Samaritan woman, the man born blind, Lazarus, and all those marked by death, met Jesus in different ways when they needed him most. He changed their lives. In each of these stories, there is a record of the drama of wounded humanity. In Jesus, the vulnerable, damaged, and distressed have a chance to discover hope, which is life.

Jesus gives life even when human possibilities and hopes fail. He does this because he himself is life. In this way, he makes us realize that life

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happens in union with Him. In this relationship with Jesus, we discover that we are alive even when our vital functions have ceased. Only in extraordinary circumstances and for reasons not fully known to us Jesus occasionally restores these functions. It is not to show that he has the power to control nature. He confirms that the manifestation of critical functions is changing, but life goes on and will continue.

What is significant in the phenomenon of response is that it gives an answer to an appeal that is heard. It results from the prior speaking of somebody to us and requires our listening to the voice of the request. In the dialectics of reply (*Erwidern*), a reaction to something in the same or corresponding way is needed. This reaction is an action resulting from being summoned (*Ruf, Spruch*). One of the essential traits of response is its inescapability. We can overhear the voice of the Other and not enter into a conversation with the Other. However, the lack of response is as telling as the response itself. It discloses the condition of the person who disregarding the appeal of the Other uncovers their patterns of irresponsibility. By not responding instantly to the need of his friends, Jesus shifts our attention toward what is more important than the immediacy of expected or possible help. The meaning of health and illness, the not mere absence of the sickness, the sense of love and friendship, and the inescapability of death's destructive power are powerfully revealed. The dialectics of seeing unveils the powerlessness of our seeing. Jesus is enraged (*ταράσσω*-stirred up inside) because people cry about physical death and are not able to see that life has not ended, just changed. Life cannot terminate since in the human world lives he who is life. However, people do not see him or recognize him as life. They adhere to their limited vision of life.

Looking at the events surrounding the death of Lazarus, we can envision the foretelling of the coming death and Resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is waiting for the proper time (*καιρὸς δεκτός*, 2 Cor 6: 2), a time that is acceptable and welcome, not in a pedagogically instrumental manner to demonstrate his divine power. His teaching is far more related to disclosing what is important (*ἀποκαλύπτω*, *ἀπο*-away and *καλύπτω*-to cover, hence *ἀποκάλυψις*-an unveiling, uncovering, revealing). Jesus's love of Lazarus and his sisters shows the power and preciousness of friendship, the force of emotions, and the gift and beauty of tears. He emphasizes that believing in and living *with* and *in* him is more precious than preserving life. In our times, when we are practically insanely obsessed with the struggle to prolong life at any cost, Jesus shows the real

■ treasure of life and love. In his death and Resurrection, he demonstrates that life in and love for God is what matters. As the incarnate God, Jesus understands the vicissitudes of the finitude. Only faith in the Father can save us from the tyranny of suffering and death.

The Easter Triduum is not a preparation for celebrating Easter but is the celebration itself. We rediscover the meaning of these days and rethink our lives in light of these events. However, we do it only when we *think*. This is *καιρός* of conversion: *Augenblick* is always here, and now, it is a look (*Blick*) toward God who is love. Resurrection is the final expression of the Father's love. However, the whole of the Paschal Mystery is not a mere waiting for the revelation of this love. It is not less complete than its final expression, albeit less approachable from the human perspective. With the armor of justice and in the power of God, let us prove ourselves in much patience (*Per arma iustitiae virtutis Dei, commendemus nosmetipsos in multa patientia*).

God did not abandon Jesus on the cross. Physical pain and spiritual suffering obscured Jesus's closeness to God. The greatness of Jesus consisted in his deliberate acceptance of this obscuration. By immersing himself in the abyss of darkness and disguise, Jesus got intimate with every human being in their vulnerability, loneliness, and helplessness. His question of why God had abandoned him is neither an accusation of God nor an excuse for his obscuration but a definitive confirmation of God's presence, which has been concealed by human wickedness capable of assaulting the incarnate God. Jesus responded on the cross by delivering himself into the Father's hands. Entrusting himself to God manifests maximal trust, in which "as you wish" (ὡς σύ θέλω) expresses prodigal love in its most radical form. Therefore, the cross becomes the origin of human growth (*origo*, from *oriri* to rise) as the most compelling and powerful source of our rising to God. However, the cross and Resurrection cannot be separated from the Incarnation. The Word of God took up flesh and became a human being to express how God loved the world (Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, J 3: 16). The Greek verb to love, ἀγαπάω voices God's strong preference for the world, his delight in the creation, and his will never to abandon it, but bring it to final communion with him.

In the Letter to the Hebrews, we read: "Therefore, brothers, since we have the confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by

the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.” Hbr 10: 19-20: “Ἐχοντες οὖν, ἀδελφοί, παρρησίαν εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ ἣν ἐνεκαίνισεν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ. Jesus offered us eternal life through his blood (αἷμα as the shed blood). We have confidence (παρρησία) in taking this offer seriously and purposefully. Jesus is the grantor and garant of the promise (ἐπαγγελία). He is the origin (ἀρχή, *Anfang*, *Ursprung*) of the new path (ὁδὸς πρόσφατος). The uniqueness of this new path is that it is a living path (ὁδὸς ζῶσος). Here origin means both, creating the path and walking it for the first time. Understanding of this path is not centered on establishing a method (μέθοδος) that is necessary or helpful to live life but essentially belongs to living life (*Sachverhalt*: “*Der Ursprung von etwas ist die Herkunft seines Wesens.*”) This is the meaning of the transformative action of making something qualitatively new (ἐγκαινίζω), which embraces the action of inaugurating, dedicating, and elevating to the new horizon. A further exceptionality of this path is that it is a path through the veil (καταπέτασμα). And this veil is Jesus’s flesh (τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ). If we understand καταπέτασμα literally as a curtain that separates the Holy of Holies, tabernacle (קֹדֶשׁ קְדוֹשׁ – dwelling place) from the outer parts of the temple at Jerusalem, then the new path is crossing over through the body of Jesus given by him to us for having life in him. To have life means to be nourished by his body. There is no other way to have life: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you: ἐὰν μὴ φάγητε τὴν σάρκα τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πίνητε αὐτοῦ τὸ αἷμα, οὐκ ἔχετε ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.” (J 6: 53) The access to life is never direct but always mediated through the veil. To enter, we need to cross the threshold of mediation. For that, endurance (ὑπομονή) is required, and to endure means to remain under the challenges of life. This remaining (μένω) is not a matter of simple sustaining but being rooted and connected with the source of life. Life ends in the perfection of God’s love. This is the Resurrection to eternal life.

Jesus has risen (ἠγέρθη Mt 28:6). God raised him from the dead (Θεὸς ἤγειρεν αὐτὸν, Acts 13:30). In Jesus, and only in him, the active, resurrected, and the passive, being raised from the dead, mean precisely the same thing. Never, neither before, nor in the Incarnation, nor in death or Resurrection, Jesus was more or less God. The power of love, expressed to the extreme in the culminating moment of humiliation, self-emptying, κένωσις, is the fullest expression of the ability to be the

- Whole (Trinity) and voluntarily submit to space-time limitations and conditioning. Resurrection is the work of the whole Trinity.

Jesus conveys the meaning of κένωσις with the powerful emphasis: “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again.” (J 10:18): οὐδεις ἤρεν αὐτήν ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ τίθημι αὐτήν ἀπ’ ἐμαυτοῦ. ἐξουσίαν ἔχω θεῖναι αὐτήν, καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔχω πάλιν λαβεῖν αὐτήν. A life lost for love does not die. Moreover, it has the power to give each of us the fullness of life.

For a human being created in the image and likeness of God, their corporeality is not an addition but an essential element of this similarity. If we are a unity of soul and body, the highest respect must also be given to the human body. In the final Resurrection of the body we believe in, the nature of a human being brought to life from the dust of the earth will be united with the nature of God and given its new dignity. Since the Resurrected Jesus, who appeared to his disciples, was recognized by them, it means that something from his human nature was still there.



Piero della Francesca, *The Resurrection*, c. 1463-5, fresco, 225 x 200 cm (Museo Civico, Sansepolcro)

Piero della Francesca depicted Jesus walking out of a Roman sarcophagus. The resurrected body retains the traits of crucifixion. This Renaissance painting masterfully expresses the emphasis on geometric order and harmony. Jesus's body anatomical details skilfully capture the realism of stepping out from the tomb. The realism of the depiction beautifully summarizes the painter's understanding of the Resurrection: Jesus's body is the same body but not identical with his previous representation. The serenity of Jesus's face stands in powerful contrast to the facial expression of the soldiers. It aptly conveys the tension between the unattainability of the mystery of the Resurrection and the lack of understanding of the uniqueness of the event shown by the guard.

The resurrected body is a powerful reminder that it is necessary to care for the body we have in order to believe in the Resurrection of the body reasonably. The miracles of returning people back to life brought them back to life from before death. What happened to Jesus's body after his Resurrection cannot simply mean the return to life, ἀναστασις (standing

anew), as was the case in a daughter of Jairus with the famous *ταλιθα κούμ* or *טְלִיחָא קוּמ* (Mk 5: 21-43), a young man from Nain (Lk 7: 11-17), and Lazarus on Jesus's way to Jerusalem (J 11: 1-44). The Resurrection of the body is not about bringing the body back to its previous stage but inviting human beings in their totality to the community of divine life. We are already in God: "All of you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." But the fullness is yet to come: "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and the heart of man has not conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Cor 2:9) The delight in the good news of Resurrection enlightens our ways through life between light and darkness, and discloses the meaning of life and the significance of struggling for living it in its fullness. We rejoice in being bestowed with the Spirit of God. With the delight of the soul, the humility of the spirit, and the simplicity of heart, we sing along with Anton Bruckner's *Benedictus* from his *Mass for Maundy Thursday* (1844, WAB 9): Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini*.

Omnia gaudia paschalia! Alleluia!