

Are you, like, me, I wonder, annoyed, yet intrigued in equal measure, by the mobile phone calls one overhears on the bus, in the supermarket, in the waiting room. Or should I say the half conversation, for one hears question or answer only on one side of the dialogue, the caller at the other end remains, at the other end, silent, anonymous. That's the situation we have today in the reading form St Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Let's face it, it's a bit of a rant, it's pretty assertive- almost aggressive in tone, hectoring, as Paul, makes explicit his thinking and teaching on resurrection. The problem is, of course, we know nothing of the situation he is writing into. It's just like a mobile phone call in which we only hear half the conversation and the

other half is left to our imagination. What had gone so very wrong with the Christian community in Corinth, that Paul had to lambast them with these words? Had they forgotten about the dimension of new life in Christ, had they been denying the existence of the resurrection, had they been sitting around drinking oozo discussing resurrection late into the night like a group of undergraduates?

What is clear here is that, even as early as the AD 50's when Paul is writing, the resurrection is no afterthought, no added extra to the Jesus story, but is right at its heart of that story, as Jane Williams asserts, this is a 'let's sort this out once and for all' type message from Paul.

The resurrection is not only the affirmation of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth- Paul is

asserting- but it is God's demonstration, incarnating, actualizing, of what lived faith looks like, for that power which brought about new life, resurrection life for Jesus of Nazareth, is the same power, that both created us and assures us of salvation, that is wholeness. Paul is doing his put up or shut up best here. He's challenging his hearers- If you believe it, then live it.

And Luke, writing perhaps twenty years or more after Paul, picks up the theme. You will recognise of course, the Beatitudes, usually we read them from Matthew's version, part of the Sermon of the Mount, we've come to call it. But Luke, in remodelling these blessings, deliberately speaks into another conversation too. For he uses four blessings and balances them with four woes. The

blessing, ie Beatitude, of the poor is balanced with the woe of the rich, the blessing of the hungry is balanced against the woe of the full, the blessing of those who weep against those who laugh, the blessing of those who are hated against the woe of those who are feted.

In this see-saw like equation Luke is asserting that pivot, the crux, which is-as the word implies, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the pouring out of life and the openness to new life, is the very fulcrum around which this blessing or woe hinges.

Are we content to be rich, while not using our richness to transform the poverty of others, are we happy to be full without sharing creation's bounty with others, are we happy to laugh, without any solidarity with those who weep, delighted to be

feted and spoken of well, while neglecting those who are hated. If so, we, like those Corinthian Christians, are simply denying the resurrection life, the fullness of life, which Jesus of Nazareth establishes by his self-outpouring and the new life of his resurrection.,

These beatitudes and their partner woes are deliberately designed to shape the lives of disciples who seek to live as citizens of God's kingdom in this world, pioneers, sowing the seeds of transformation for all. Choosing to trust the God of the resurrection is never without risk- far from it. But agents of transformation is our career path as Christians.

Luke and Paul are both asserting in the passages we heard today, that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus redraws the entire human map. Jesus breaks

down the entire pattern of calculating worth through any system of exchange- this or that person is worth taking seriously because of their status or virtue. In its place, the perspective of the new life, is that God is already in those gaps, those connections we fail to make, always inviting us to join him, to inhabit those gaps and fulfil those connections.

Which begs us look at the gaps, the unmade connections in the worlds we inhabit: Economic, emotional, familial gaps; connections with others whose very otherness may frighten or shock us.

We have a choice to make, if we really do believe in that New Life, resurrection life, we find in Jesus of Nazareth- a choice made stark, hundreds of years before Christ's birth in the life of Jeremiah the prophet:

Are we making human flesh our strength, with its easy security and profit, or are we taking the infinitely riskier path of trusting in this godly invitation to step out in new life, with a new compass to guide our steps, a compass whose lodestar is love. Love outpoured, and love endlessly replenished. That, unlike those overheard mobile phone half-conversations, is a dialogue to be had within ourselves, and within our christian community, that all may receive the fruits of its outcome. Then we can sing

Love Divine, all loves excelling

Joy of heaven to earth come down

Fix in us thy humble dwelling

All thy faithful mercies crown.

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