

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. Our sacred writings, that include Jesus teaching on sacred writings are put into our life so that we might have life. Sometimes it feels like wrestling an alligator to wrestle with the scripture and with God, for we are designed and created to know God.

The letter of I John contains these verses: “No one who abides in him sins; no one who has sins either sees him or knows him.”

Read through the lens of hyperbole, we understand that The author of 1 John is talking about the purity of life found in following Jesus, that lifestyle is an indication that one is following God. I am most interested in the word “abide” for to abide in God is to harken back to what is written a few verses before “beloved, we are God’s children now: what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we

will see him as he is.” What was Jesus like? We do not have it in this gospel reading, but we know that he was resurrected with his pierced hands and feet, so when he says to his disciples here, that he showed them his hands and feet, he was showing them his woundedness, his resurrected self bringing along his brokenness, his history, not only his history, but the history that inflicted these wounds that we hear about it Acts; You rejected the Author of Life....you killed him...The resurrected Jesus did not white wash the suffering of his human days and death. He brought his wounds into the resurrection

So do we. We bring our wounds into our resurrections.

Remember at Easter I reminded us that the message of Easter is that all of our tombs are to be opened and we are delivered from them? Like Jesus we come from our tombs bearing the history, the life choices, the self-inflicted hurts,

the hurts made by others. The marks of those wounds stay. We do not know what we will become, but we will be like him. Jesus was fully resurrected and glorified while bearing the marks of that which broke him. So do we. This is part of the mystery and mercy in which we live, that our very wounds can be part of our resurrection journey, that our very sinfulness can be a key to learning how to abide in God.

Let's go back to No one who abides in him sins; no one who has sins either sees him or knows him. The key to understanding how we are resurrected from our personal tombs is getting underneath the meaning of these verses.

These verses are not an indictment. They tells us the role that sin can play in our lives: and this is it: it can lead us to abide. So we know from this verse that when we sin, we are not abiding in God....

So what is the opportunity here: that when we catch ourselves sinning we know that we are far from abiding

The opportunity here is that when we catch ourselves sinning we run back to God as fast as we can...it is the only solution to the situation anyway. And I highly recommend skipping the self-recrimination and self-flagellation. When we are shown how we are off the mark, into lawlessness as the scripture says, we have to run back....to God. For when we abide in God we are free from sin. Think back on the wonderful story of intimacy in the garden of Eden, that God and Adam and Eve would walk and talk together in the shade of the evening. That is a picture of abiding with God. Some scholars say that the Fall was a natural, developmental step in terms of the psyche: that the Fall had to happen so that complexity would come into humanity, that maturation via separation could occur, that the creation story

mirrors human psychological development and the necessity to embrace complexity and leave home, necessary disillusionment that leads to a closer understanding of our human selves and, ultimately, a deeper relationship with God. I tend to agree with this assessment and this non-judgement view of the story of the garden of Eden. It is hard to have our eyes open to the knowledge of good and evil, it would be lovely to stay and innocent child, but that is not the human journey.

Hence Jesus, fully human, fully man, and fully God, was wounded psychologically and relationally and physically. When he comes back in his new body, eats some fish to show that his resurrection was bodily, he brings with him those resurrected wounds.

That is one of the places of hope in our faith journey with God: that our very sinfulness, our

lawlessness and its effects can lead us into a fuller walk, a close walk with God.

This happens not only on the daily level of our being, where we notice that we are out of touch with love, that we are acting in ways that do not promote harmony and then we run back to God to abide in the shelter of God's care, but it happens on the on the archetypal level of our being, the place where mystery and deep formation occurs.

When I was studying Spanish Literature back in the early 90's, I became fascinated by the archetypes that would appear in works of literature that were popular in their day and whose appeal stood the test of time. When it came time to write my thesis, I ended up writing it on two works of fiction from the Spanish Renaissance. Fernando de Rojas published his famous book *La Celestina* in 1499.. In 1606, a short story was published

called “La tia Fingida” or the false aunt, by Cervantes, the same man who wrote Don Quijote. Both of these books were written during the Spanish Inquisition, a time when hatred towards women and towards women’s wisdom was at a peak. In both of these books we find the figure of the medianera, or go-between whose profession was to manage illicit love affairs between men and women, sometimes for pay and sometimes to break established norms.

In both these books, I became fascinated by the archetypal wisdom in the hidden characteristics of the women of ill repute. My thesis title was “The prostitute as Spiritual Guide”. Using tools of literary analysis and close reading of the texts, I was able to ferret out the hidden talents of the women characters: like readiness, and persistence, sly self-esteem, and an ability to defy authority in order to claim power. Indeed, what fascinated me the most is that two male

authors: Fernando de Rojas, and Cervantes, writing pieces that were supposed to demean women, ended up writing into their female characters strengths that defied their characterization as wicked women of the streets. Indeed, their very identities as fallen women or enablers of fallen women were the very key to their archetypal power.

Part of the wisdom of these characters is that they did not change in order to become wise, that their very “fallenness” or sinfulness or nefarious character was the source of their amazing strength.

Going through this process of literary analysis with these fictional characters made me see that the same process that appeared on the fictional level to these women occurs in us. That our very sinfulness, the darkneses of our lives, when combined with the mercy and



insight of God can lead to characteristics of strength that we have never had before.

I see this all the time: the very thing in our humanity that brings us low and separates us from God within and God without is the very thing that builds in us unusual strengths of insight and character. The twelve step programs are based on this premise, so is our confession and absolution of sin, so is much counseling and spiritual direction, so are our baptismal promises. Our whole life in God is this process of living into our lives, experiencing brokenness and alienation with God, having it propel us back to God, and there, experience a resurrection that includes our very woundedness, this woundedness that becomes a source of character and mercy.

“No one who abides in him sins; no one who has sins either sees him or knows him.”

As we go forth today, let's let our minds and hearts be reminded to harvest the mercy from our broken humanity, and in the loving embrace of God, abiding in God, let's let God remind us of the giftedness that has been built into us because of our wounds.