

7 Epiphany Year C

2/20/2022

Genesis 45:3-11, 15; Psalm 37:1-12, 41-42; 1 Corinthians 15:35-58; Luke 6:27-38

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Today is our third and final section on 1 Corinthians 15.

Two weeks ago, we proclaimed the importance of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

Last week St. Paul connected for us that because Jesus rose from the grave... so will his followers...

the ones that believe in Jesus will also rise from the grave.

This means of course that death is defeated.

Sin was overcome at the cross.

Death was overcome at the resurrection.

This is the hope that we have in Christ Jesus...

That we too will rise again.

Now in today's reading St. Paul writes about what our resurrected body will be like.

I think this is an important part of our doctrine on Christian hope...

The bodily resurrection.

After we die... we await our future resurrection with Christ Jesus.

This will happen in an instant when Christ returns to set the world at rights.

St. Paul writes in our present chapter:

...in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. (v. 52).

When Christ comes back the dead will rise...

And they are not risen as ghostly bodies or disembodied souls...

They are raised with an immortal body...

A body that is imperishable...

A redeemed body.

You see our future in Christ Jesus is that we will be raised back to life...
in a redeemed state.

Since Christ Jesus was raised bodily – he was buried, raised, and seen –
there must be a bodily resurrection of believers...

Christ resurrection is the first fruits of our future resurrection.

This same body that we have now will one day be raised up...

It will be renewed, redeemed, it will be made new...

This same body...

The atoms, the molecules...

everything that makes up my body will be made new...

This is what St. Paul is saying here...

That our physical bodies will be raised imperishable at our future bodily resurrection.

That is what we believe as Christians.

How do we know this?

Because that is what happened to Jesus Christ.

If he was raised in a disembodied state...

Why would the grave have been empty?

No, it was his body that was raised...

He was fully human and God...

Human in the redeemed state...

The first fruits of our future resurrection.

He had a body... right? After the resurrection...

He saw Thomas who questioned the authenticity of our Lord's resurrection.

Jesus said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands.

Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

(John 20.27).

Many people saw Jesus during those 40 days after his resurrection.

Yet the scriptures say he walked through walls, he appeared, and disappeared.

His body was different than the laws that define our world.

Jesus had a redeemed body.

And so will we.

St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Philippians:

...by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control,

[He] *will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

(Philippians 3.21)

In our glorified state...

When we are raised our body will be like Jesus' glorious body.

This theology of our bodily resurrection is picked up in our catechism.

In our catechism the question is asked:

What do we mean by the resurrection of the body?

And the answer given is:

We mean that God will raise us from death in the fullness of our being, that we may live with Christ in the communion of the saints.

(BCP, 862)

The fullness of our being is both body and spirit...

Or body and soul...

To be human is to be with what makes us who we are...

Our physical bodies and the invisible parts of us...

that we usually refer to as our soul.

We do not become ghosts, or angels, or floating spirits...

We are raised to life with our bodies...

Redeemed...

Imperishable...

In the opening anthems of our liturgy for the *Burial of the Dead* found on page 491 in the Book of Common Prayer it is proclaimed:

As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives

And that at the last he will stand upon the earth.

*After my awaking, **he will raise me up;***

And in my body I shall see God.

I myself shall see, and my eyes behold him

Who is my friend and not a stranger.

We understand that we will rise again...

To see God with our own eyes...

In our own bodies...

Our glorified and redeemed bodies.

St. John writes to this belief...

He wrote in his epistle:

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known.

But we know that when Christ appears,

we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

(1 John 3.2)

Some may ask...

How is God going to bring back the bodies of people who have been dead for centuries, or lost at sea, etc.?

The same God who created the world from nothing can surely tackle that problem.

Well, what age are our bodies going to be?

Of course, the Bible does not spell that out for us...

Some have speculated that we will be around the age of 33 because that is the age that Christ died...

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote:

Now Christ rose again of youthful age, which begins about the age of thirty years.... Therefore, others also will rise again of a youthful age.

(The Summa Theologiae, Question 81)

We do not know for sure...

But one thing we do know...

That because Christ rose again in bodily form...

And because His resurrection is the first fruits of our resurrection.

We will rise again in bodily form.

And that is why St. Paul can proclaim in our second reading today:

Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God!

He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You see... our bodies are falling apart, they are perishing...

And the older we get the better we understand that...

But because of Christ's work on the cross and His resurrection...

What has been cursed...

Will be redeemed.

Christ is making all things new...

Creation is being restored...

Our bodies...

Will be raised...

And death will be no more.

And it is this hope...

This confidence...

That St. Paul can give this affirmation at the end of the chapter...

He says:

Therefore,

In other words, in light of all of this talk about the resurrection of our Lord Jesus and our own future bodily resurrection...

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm.

Let nothing move you.

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord,

because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Because we will be raised with Christ...

All that we do for our Lord in the here and now...

Is not meaningless or in vain...

The Christian belief is true...

Jesus has died for our sins on the cross...

He rose victoriously from the grave...

He ascended into heaven...

He will come back again...

And in that moment...
We the children of God...
Will be raised with him...
And we will be with him forever.

So may we...
dear friends, stand our ground.
And don't hold back.
May we throw ourselves into the work of the Master,
confident that nothing we do for him is a waste of time or effort.
(The Message, 1 Corinthians 15.58)

We will live with Christ forever...
This is the good news...
The good news that we proclaim in this world.
We can be free from the power and penalty of our sins...
In our Lord Jesus...
And our hope is in him.

Amen.