

1 Cor 15 pt. 4 - Easter - April 21

Intro and recap of 1 Corinthians 15 and it's bearing on Easter.

Our text: v. 50-58 - The bad news, the good news, the so what of it all...

Let's start with the bad news. We cannot inherit God's kingdom as we are. This truth is equally applied to the believer and the unbeliever. We must be changed, we need a resurrection.

Let's examine - v.50 - Here we find that seemingly unyielding barrier that all people face in their lives and that separates humankind from God - the flesh v. the spirit.

Paul tells us that the flesh and the spirit war against one another that they are contrary to one another. (GAL 5:17)

We find in our own lives that very often the flesh wins out. We are often slaves to our bodies in one arena or another.

We either seek pleasure, momentary satisfaction, or else we yearn for longevity as the old Israelite King Hezekiah praying - only a few more years lord...only a few more years.

[2Ki 20:1-3 NKJV] 1 In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.'" 2

Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD, saying, 3  
"Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth  
and with a loyal heart, and have done [what was] good in Your sight." And  
Hezekiah wept bitterly.

And while the Lord adds more years to Hezekiah's life, death came for him  
as it comes for us all!

Death is a scary prospect that we all face. The statistics are clear - 10/10  
will die - Unless Jesus comes back before our time. Even so, come quickly  
Lord.

We find that in this life, even with death at our doorstep, knowing that we  
will meet our maker - our flesh, and our hearts are treacherous, impulsive -  
prone to betray our best interests for a momentary payoff.

God's word says - flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom - the  
treachery, the corruption, the person we are now cannot enter into His  
kingdom.

That's the bad news.

Take heart, there is good news, we do not sorrow as those who have no  
hope (1 Thess 4:13):

After all it was who God made us flesh, and not as some cruel joke. He  
cares about our personhood, our bodies, our precious skin and bones,

which He knit together in our mother's womb! He redeemed us by the blood of Jesus Christ - by the gift of His perfect flesh we are made holy - we are sanctified, we are made saints here and now in these earthly bodies.

v. 51-57 We find this good news - Jesus Christ is in the business of making things new! It's what He does and we are the evidence of that.

v.51-52 First things first, We ARE Changed - here and now! Those who have believed in Jesus Christ unto salvation ARE made into new creations presently.

[2Co 5:17 NKJV] 17 Therefore, if anyone [is] in Christ, [he is] a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

He has made us new and will make us newer! In this life he has breathed life and holiness into our fleshly bodies and He will transform us completely into His glorious image in eternity.

I love Christ's nature. It's as if He says to us over and over again...watch this. When we think it can't be any more glorious we find ourselves unprepared for the next miracle.

We find ourselves unprepared for the enormity of God's power over creation - as Paul declares, "I tell you a mystery..." And our minds explode in trying to figure this all out.

As God has demonstrated His power over death in the resurrection of Jesus, He promises to demonstrate his complete power over all creation, all powers and principalities - visible and invisible - by translating our corruptible, dying bodies into incorruptible bodies. He will change our mortal bodies, which are presently bound to decay, into immortal and will bring us into His eternal kingdom.

We could, and men do study this for ages and still have barely only touched the surface of this promise. We could, and men do, spend ages writing grand treatises on how all of this works out in the end. But all of this will happen in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye.

[1Jhn 3:2 NKJV] 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

We will put on Christ's eternal glory, we will be finally and totalty conformed into His image.

v.53 - we MUST - it is imperative, not optional.

v.54 - When that happens, God fulfills His promise made in Isaiah 25:8

[Isa 25:8 NKJV] 8 He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.

v.55-56 God, in Christ, fulfills every righteous requirement that was demanded of mankind in the law, pays the price in blood for the sins of the world, and abolishes death in totality.

[Hos 13:14 NKJV] 14 "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes."

Where once death possessed a powerful sting and reigned over mankind they are once and for all humiliated and mocked in their weakness to stand against God.

Death, Where is your sting? Destroyed, removed.

Grave, Where is your victory? Having been on a winning streak for all time, the grave will be defeated.

God made war against death on our behalf, and won!

v.57 - and having won that victory through Jesus Christ, God hands that victory over to us, his beloved creation. We could never pull ourselves up by our boot straps.

V. 58 - This is where I really wanted to get to.

We have labored in this 15th chapter for 4 weeks. All the while discussing the certainty of the resurrection, the implications and importance of the resurrection, the effect that the resurrection has on our lives. We have even

discussed the timing of it all and the glorified state that Christ will make us into.

But we finally arrive to the point of it all!

Therefore...since all of that. Since we have the 57 verses worth of instruction on the magnitude of Christ's resurrection...

Bear in mind that as we discussed our resurrection at some length this morning, it is Christ's resurrection that makes that possible. Without Christ's resurrection we are lost! The cross is made of no effect, we will answer for our sins in totality to a righteous God and be found wanting, or else we've been duped and are more foolish than you could ever imagine and our bones will rot in the grave with no resurrection!

But in v. 58 we get this exhortation: **SINCE THE RESURRECTION IS A CERTAINTY!**

Since this: [1Co 15:1-4 NKJV] ...I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

Since this is the case, THEN..BE STEADFAST, IMMOVABLE, ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD, KNOWING THAT YOUR LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single compelling force for the work of the saints.

We may argue: what about grace? Hear me: you would not have know grace save for the resurrection!

What about holiness - you would not have been able to attain holiness save for the resurrection!

What about righteousness? You would not have been made righteous apart for the resurrection!

Christ's resurrection is the anchor that keeps us steady. It is the compass that keeps our bearings as the Spirit calls out to us in our moment of uncertainty - steady on. It is the foundation upon which the entire household of faith stands immovable against the gates of hell until Christ comes to snatch His church into eternity.

It is the engine that drives us to labor for the kingdom's sake until we can attain to Paul's words and declare in good faith, "I labored more abundantly than they all" because we know that we will see our Lord face to face in glory - because He has risen and has taken death and sin captive and placed them under His feet!

If you find yourself at a crossroads wondering why it is your work for the kingdom is found slack, inconsistent, or shallow - consider the resurrection! Have you been grasped by its reality?!

It is by the resurrection that we know and take hope that our labor is not in vain in the Lord, that what we do for the kingdom's sake has everlasting meaning. While many things we put our hands to may perish - the labor we do in Jesus' name will not perish but will stand as a testament to many - declaring that one glorious and life changing fact - He is risen!

If you take anything away from this message this morning take this:

Since Jesus Christ conquered death, since He laid His life down for our sakes, and in an unmatched demonstration of power took His own life back up again we will be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing the your labor is not in vain.