

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

*He is Risen!*

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## *Death, Where is Your Sting? Easter Sunday*

*April 12, 2020*

**Sermon Text:** 1 Cor 15:12-32

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 24

The master theme of the Bible which begins in the very first verses of Genesis and is culminated in the last chapters of Revelation is *God's new creation of a new Eden, a new humanity, a new heavens and new earth, where no sin or curse or death or sorrow or any such thing will ever be known again. It is the cosmological temple of God where He dwells with His people and they with Him in His immediate presence.*

This new creation and new humanity has begun. It has been accomplished in Christ and is moving toward its full culmination. One of the central events in all this this is *the resurrection*. First, *the resurrection of Christ from the dead*

*after He paid fully and completely for our sin, and then (since He is the "firstfruits" of a great harvest) the resurrection of all who are in Him.*

In fact, the Bible tells us that all who are joined to Christ have already been raised with Him:

Ephesians 2:4-6 ESV But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, (5) even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— (6) and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Colossians 2:11-13 ESV In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, (12) having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (13) And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision

of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,

Every Christian is joined to Christ so that His death is our death and His resurrection is our resurrection. This is why we are told over and over in the New Testament to *live as the people we now are*. We have been born again and when Christ ascended into heaven, we went with him.

Colossians 3:1-4 ESV If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (2) Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (3) For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (4) When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

But this is not all there is even yet! There is more to come. You see it in verses like this:

Romans 6:5 ESV For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

What is this future aspect of our resurrection that is like Christ's

resurrection? It is the literal and actual resurrection of our body into our new body, just as Christ was raised.

This is not only vital to understand because we look forward to eternal life, but *because understanding our coming resurrection is essential to our hope to come*. It tells us about the real nature of the new heavens and earth. Did Adam and Eve have real bodies? Yes. Was Eden real? A real earth? A real place you could see and smell and touch and walk through? Yes. Was it so real in fact that there were animals there? Yes. And rivers. And trees. And the sun. And the moon. And the stars.

Therefore, we need new, eternal, incorruptible, real, physical bodies just like Christ was raised with in order to live in this new Eden to come. It is not here yet in its fullness, but it has begun. A new Light has come into the darkness and the divine Word has brought life.

Now, with all of this in our minds, follow along as I read from what is probably the central resurrection chapter in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 15 –

1 Corinthians 15:12-32 ESV

The Denial of the Resurrection

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised

from the dead, **how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?**

If Christ is not Raised:

(13) **But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.** (14) And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. (15) **We are even found to be misrepresenting God,** because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

(16) For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. (17) And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

(18) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (19) If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But Christ IS Raised!

(20) But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the **firstfruits** of those who have **fallen asleep**.

(21) For as by a man came death, **by a man has come also the resurrection** of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all

die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

(23) But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, **then at his coming those who belong to Christ.** (24) Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. (25) For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (26) The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (27) For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. (28) When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

(29) Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? (30) **Why are we in danger every hour?** (31) I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! (32) What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? **If the dead are not raised,** “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

## The Denial of the Resurrection

The Old Testament teaches the resurrection of the dead. For example:

Daniel 12:2 ESV And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Hosea 13:14 ESV I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol; I shall redeem them from Death. O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes.

These Scriptures and more were clear enough that the Jews of Jesus' day recognized the resurrection:

John 11:23-24 ESV Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." (24) Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

But there were always those who denied it and taught that there was no resurrection of the body:

Matthew 22:23 ESV The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked

him a question,

And you have it here too in the church at Corinth. This is what Paul is refuting. It was probably fueled by Greek gnostic thought that claimed anything physical was inferior to that which is spiritual. At any rate, this was the heresy Paul is dealing with.

Of course we have the same thing today. Either an outright denial of a future bodily resurrection or some twisting of this doctrine. Notice, incidentally, that the Bible teaches the physical resurrection of ALL human beings – some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt – as Daniel puts it. No one is going to leave this life into some kind of *non-existence*. Each of us is going to exist forever in the body, either in the presence and life and glory of God, or in darkness apart from God which is torment. That is what Christ tells us. That is what the Bible teaches.

### If There is no Resurrection...

(13) *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.*

Paul argues very logically here, challenging the Corinthians to think this through to where this denial leads.

If there is no resurrection, if the resurrection of the body is a fallacy and impossibility, then that means NO ONE is ever raised. No one. No one has been. No one will be. What does that mean? It means that not even Christ has been raised from the dead, and what then does that mean if it is true? It means:

1. The preaching of the gospel is an empty, false message of a fiction
2. The faith of the Corinthians is in something that is a fiction
3. The Apostles are liars who have falsely claimed what God said, when He hasn't said it
4. Christ is not raised
5. The Corinthians are all still dead in their sins
6. You will never, ever see loved ones who have died ever again, even if they died in faith in Christ
7. And Christians are the most pathetic, deceived, fools on the face of the earth.

There have been and still are many people who claim to be Christians, who have all kinds of degree titles after their names, but who insist that anything miraculous in the Bible – Christ's miracles and His resurrection and ascension or even His incarnation – is false. Myths that only ignorant fools

believe. Paul however is showing us that it is these intellectuals who are the fools, and that their Christianity is not of Christ at all. He is telling us that we cannot "have our cake and eat it too." No one can deny the resurrection of Christ and be a Christian.

NOTE: I want to emphasize what the Bible emphasizes about Christ's resurrection, and therefore about the Christian's resurrection on the last Day. It is a *resurrection of the body*. It is real.

Luke 24:36-43 ESV As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" (37) But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. (38) And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? (39) See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." (40) And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. (41) And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" (42) They gave him a piece of broiled fish, (43) and he took it and ate before them.

We are given a glimpse of it in Matthew's account of the crucifixion:

Matthew 27:50-53 ESV And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. (51) And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. (52) The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, (53) and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

*This is not all there is! At the end of this present life in this present world, it is not the end of us or of our life, but the beginning.*

### But Christ IS Raised

(20) But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the **firstfruits** of those who have **fallen asleep**.

That first scenario Paul just led us through is like a dark nightmare, and here we awaken and the Light comes on! *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead!* He IS risen. The news is good!

And this isn't the end of the resurrection. Christ is just what Paul calls "the firstfruits" which you have symbolized in some of the OT offerings and festivals. It means that Christ's resurrection is just the first of the harvest, with myriads more to come. And notice who it is that are going to be raised in *this harvest* (not including the resurrection of the wicked in this particular aspect of the resurrection) –

*...Christ is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

Now, this term is very clearly defined in the Bible. It is not some kind of doctrine of supposed "soul sleep" that says when we die we enter into some kind of unconscious sleep, not to regain consciousness until Christ comes. No. It isn't teaching that we will be in hypersleep while traveling in a spacecraft for years and years.

What "fallen asleep" is used for in the New Testament is – *Christians who have died physically and whose bodies are awaiting the resurrection.* Understand? The resurrection we are awaiting is *a resurrection of the body.* Our souls have already been raised with Christ, as we have seen. So remember this. "Fallen asleep" is just in reference to the body of the believer. For instance:

Matthew 27:52 ESV The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,

Acts 7:60 ESV And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 ESV But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

Understand? Easter, the resurrection of Christ, means that when we lay our loved one in the grave, if that loved one was a believer in Christ, *it is not the end*. They are with the Lord immediately when they departed this world, and their body is what is "asleep" because, what is true of you when you are sleeping? You are going to wake up!

And this is what is going to wake our bodies up as they are sleeping in the grave:

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 ESV I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the

imperishable. (51) Behold! I tell you a mystery. **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,**

(52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.**

(53) For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. (54) When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (55) "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (56) The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

(57) But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. And that means WE are risen, and WE shall be raised. Death is defeated for all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.