

RESURRECTION

Good morning to all of you. This is a morning that is different from any other morning in any of our lives. We live in a very different world than we did just a few weeks ago. And for many of us, the reality of our own death is suddenly a whole lot closer. The daily death toll from this virus just keeps growing and growing. How appropriate, then, that we are here to celebrate the day that death was defeated. And whatever else this CoronaVirus may take from us – it cannot take our worship – it cannot take our faith – and it cannot take the promise that because Jesus defeated death – we can also defeat death!

Today is the day that Jesus defeated death. Friday He hung on a cross until He died. Then His body was laid in a tomb – and a large stone was rolled across the entrance to the tomb. The next day, Saturday, the Romans posted guards in front of the tomb to make sure the dead body of Jesus stayed in that tomb. Then came the third day – Easter Sunday – this day – Mary Magdalene and the other women go to the tomb – they find that large stone rolled away – and an angel of God is there – and the women are understandably alarmed. Then the angel spoke and said - **Mark 16:6** – **“Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen!”**

I just want to repeat those last 3 words – “He has risen.” Listen, you can strip away all the different doctrines in Christianity – you can strip away all the different denominations in Christianity – you can debate about how to worship and when to worship and where to worship – but the true Christian always comes back to those 3 words – “HE HAS RISEN!”

You see, in the end – that’s why we’re here – that’s why we follow Jesus – because He defeated death. I love the teachings of Jesus – love His wisdom – I love the way He healed the sick and

the blind and the lame – I love His many miracles – I love the way Jesus always challenges us to be better – but in the end, it is the fact that He defeated death – that’s why I’m here.

Actually, that falls a little short of the truth – I am here because Jesus defeated death – AND because He promised that if I follow Him – I can also defeat death. And that’s what I want to talk about on this Easter Sunday. I have spent every Easter Sunday in my ministry talking about the resurrection of Jesus – this year I want to talk about YOUR resurrection. Because the great fact of Christianity is that Jesus was resurrected from the dead – but the great promise of Christianity is that you can be resurrected from the dead. And at a time like this – at a time when most of us are locked in our homes – at a time when it’s dangerous to get within 6 ft of each other – at a time when death feels closer than it ever has before – at a time when the death rate is growing at a terrifying pace – I think this is a pretty good time to talk about OUR resurrection. Amen?

Now we know

that when Jesus was resurrected – that it was a physical, bodily resurrection. In other words, Jesus returned to life in the same physical body that had been killed and buried. He didn’t return as a spirit. He didn’t return as a ghost. He returned in a physical body that was as real as the one you inhabit right now. We know that about Jesus. We know that about His resurrection body.

But what about our resurrection bodies? What does the Bible say to us about our resurrection from the dead?

Well, the Apostle Paul was

once taking to a group of Christians who were asking the very same thing. **1 Corinthians 15:**

35– You ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” These

Christians are asking Paul – “What is waiting for us after death?” See, these people – they

believed that Jesus was resurrected from the dead – but they weren’t sure about their resurrection

from the dead. And so they ask the Apostle Paul these two critical questions - **“How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”** These are good questions. Very reasonable questions. Even then they knew that people don’t just die – and then get up and start walking around in their bodies again. And there are many modern Christians who don’t understand the resurrection that’s waiting for them – they think that when they die they’re spirits will go to heaven – that their soul will live on – but they don’t understand the bodily resurrection that is promised to every one of us. **“How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”**

Well, the Apostle Paul

answers – **42-44,49 -- You ask “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” This is how it will be with your resurrection: The body that is sown is perishable – it is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor – it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness – it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body – it is raised a spiritual body. Just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man – so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.**

The clear message of

the Apostle here is that God wants to redeem ALL of you. His plan is not just to redeem your spirit – His plan is not just to redeem your soul – His plan is to redeem ALL of you – heart, mind, body, soul, spirit – God plans to redeem every part of you. He created every part of you – and He wants to redeem every part of you. And that’s why our bodily resurrection is so important to God – because the resurrection of the body means the resurrection of the whole person - body, mind and spirit together. If God only redeemed your spirit – if God only redeemed your soul – then that would only be a partial victory – and if you know anything about our God - .you know that He does not do partial victory. He did not send His Son to save part of

the world – He sent His Son to save the whole world. Jesus didn't die on the cross to forgive part of our sins – He died on the cross to forgive all of our sins. And God doesn't plan to redeem part of you when you die – He plans to redeem the whole person when you die – and that includes your bodies. That's why a bodily resurrection is so important. **“How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”** That's the question. And in response to that question the Apostle starts talking about the body that is sown vs. the body that is raised – “The body that is sown is perishable – it is raised imperishable. It is sown in weakness – it is raised in power.” Now, to sow means to plant – so when Paul talks about the body that is sown – he's talking about the body that is put in the ground – just like a farmer puts his seeds in the ground. Now, if you've ever planted seeds – then you know that what you put in the ground is very different than what comes out of the ground. There's a big difference between the seed and the plant that comes from the seed. Paul even says here - **37 – When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed.** In other words, the seed that you put in the ground is not the final result. The seed is not the same as the plant. Now, I hope you're following what Paul saying here. He's talking about seeds and plants – but he's really talking about us. He's telling us the body that goes in the ground is not the same as the body that is raised up. He even says – **Just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.** That means two things will happen when you die: 1. You will have a new body, and 2. Your new body will be very different from the body that died. Now, I know this is a big and difficult concept. Many people – including many Christians – they just have trouble with the idea of our actual physical bodies coming to life again after death. But this is the great promise

of Easter. Easter is not just about the resurrection of Jesus – it’s about the promise of your resurrection – it’s the promise that death cannot hold you – and you will live again in a physical body just like Jesus did. That is the clear biblical teaching. And it’s amazing to me – because many Christians still hold onto this idea that it’s just our spirits that go to heaven – that we will be disembodied spirits that just kind of float around with God for the rest of time. Can I just tell you – if that’s all there is – if that’s really the whole promise of Christianity – that when I die, my spirit will float around for the rest of time – if that’s all there is – that doesn’t sound all that remarkable to me. If that’s all there is – that doesn’t sound like much to look forward to. But that’s not all there is. And Paul wants to make sure you know that’s not all there is – he wants you to look forward to your new body – he wants you to be excited about spending eternity in your new body. And so he offers you that compelling argument about the seeds and the plants – and then he says this...

The body that is sown is perishable

– **it is raised imperishable.** Your body that dies is perishable – it dies – it rots – it decomposes. Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust. But your new body will be imperishable. Imperishable means immortal – never ending. Imperishable means that pain, sickness, coronavirus – are no more. Doctors and funeral homes will be out of business. Graveyards will be forgotten about. The perishable will be raised imperishable.

It is sown in dishonor, it is raised

in glory. Now “dishonor” is all that stuff that bends our shoulders and breaks our hearts – it’s all that shame we live with – it’s all that greed and pride and envy and lust – it’s our selfishness. And we carry that stuff around in this body our whole lives. But our new bodies won’t have any of that stuff. All that dishonor will stay in the grave with our old bodies – and our new bodies won’t even have the capacity for shame or dishonor. Our new bodies will be capable of many

things – but they won't even be capable of greed or pride or envy or lust. Our new bodies will know only the glory that God intended for us all along. Sown in dishonor – raised in glory.

It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. Probably all of us can remember a time when we were young – and our bodies were strong – no challenge seemed too great – no mountain seemed too high – because we were young and our bodies were full of strength and energy. Then we got old – and all the strength seems to have gone out of our bodies. But the Apostle says that our resurrection bodies will be full of strength and energy again – and this time that strength and energy will never run out. We are sown in weakness – we are raised in power.

Then finally – **it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.** Here's what that means: The body you're in right now – what keeps your body alive? Well, the air you breathe – the water you drink – the food you eat. Those are the things that sustain the life of your natural body. But when your body is raised – it will no longer be sustained by air and water and food – it will be sustained by the power and the love and the spirit of God Himself – and thus, it will never, ever end. It is sown a natural body – it is raised a spiritual body.

Will you close your eyes for just a moment and imagine your resurrection body? Try to see it in your mind. It's a real, physical body just like the body that you're in now – but its better – stronger – eternal. In this new body you will walk the streets of gold – sit down at the table and share a meal with Jesus – you'll talk with friends and family. In this new body you can climb and swim and run and jump. In this new body you can build and create. You can think and see and hear and smell and communicate. Try to imagine it. Listen, if God didn't want us to imagine it – He wouldn't have given us all this information to drive our imagination.

I know you came here today expecting to

hear about the resurrection of Jesus. But listen to me, Beloved, the whole point of Jesus being resurrected is so that we could look forward to our resurrection. So I'm very glad that you came today to celebrate His resurrection – but I hope you leave today celebrating YOUR resurrection. I hope you leave today celebrating this –**Philippians 3:20 – But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.**

Heavenly Father, we come before you now in the powerful, death-defeating name of your son Jesus Christ. Death could not hold Him. And because of what He did – death cannot hold us, either. God, I cry out from my heart this morning – and I thank you so much that the grave is nothing more than a doorway that leads me to you.

God, we have gathered today as best that we can in these difficult times – and we have gathered to celebrate the empty grave of your Son. But more than anything else, God, we have gathered to celebrate our resurrection. Fear is our most powerful enemy – and fear is having its way in our world right now – but because of what happened on this day 2000 years ago – we have no reason to fear – we don't have to fear our yesterdays – we don't have to fear today – and we don't have to fear tomorrow. The resurrection of your Son replaces all our fear with faith.

Stay

strong, my dear friends. And stay safe. And may Jesus Christ, our living Savior, remind you that if you follow Him today – your tomorrows never have to end.

