

Easter Sunday 2012

Resurrection

Sermon

Hobart, April 8th, 2012

Launceston, April 15th, 2012

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I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

¹³ And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died* so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

¹⁵ We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died.* ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died* will rise from their graves. ¹⁷ Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ So encourage each other with these words.

5 Now concerning how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters,* we don't really need to write you. ² For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. ³ When people are saying, "Everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be no escape.

⁴ But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief.* ⁵ For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night. ⁶ So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded. ⁷ Night is the time when people sleep and drinkers get drunk. ⁸ But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.

⁹ For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. ¹⁰ Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. ¹¹ So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.¹

* Greek *those who have fallen asleep*; also in 4:14.

* Greek *those who have fallen asleep*.

* Greek *the dead in Christ*.

* Greek *brothers*; also in 5:4, 12, 14, 25, 26, 27.

* Some manuscripts read *comes upon you as if you were thieves*.

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (1 Th 4:13-5:11). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

INTRODUCTION:

I. PEOPLE LOVE TO CELEBRATE

A. WE CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS, ANNIVERSARIES, MOTHER'S DAY, FATHER'S DAY, AUSTRALIA DAY,

1. Sporting victories, graduations and the giving of awards for special achievements
2. We celebrate new beginnings, like the birth of a child, marriages, a new job, new ships, new buildings and new homes

S.P.S:

II. TODAY WE CELEBRATE THE EVENT MOST WORTH CELEBRATING

A. JESUS RESURRECTION!

1. The transformation of human life, the victory over death and evil, the beginning of new and better life for all mankind, and all creation

B. PRAYER

BODY:

A. MANY OF US HAVE BEEN DEEPLY IMPACTED BY DEATH THIS LAST YEAR

1. Martin mentioned he has been to 7 funerals
2. We have lost husbands, fathers, mothers, grandparents, brothers in-laws, friends and colleagues

B. DEATH IS SOMETHING WE DON'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT

1. But it is an harsh reality that is never more than a breath away for all of us

C. IN THE EARLY CHURCH

1. The members were deeply aware of the resurrection of Jesus
2. They rejoiced that he conquered death, and that in him they had eternal life
3. So how do you think they felt when the first one of them died, and then more as time passed

D. HOW IS IT THAT WHEN WE ARE PROMISED ETERNAL LIFE, VICTORY OVER DEATH, THAT WE STILL DIE?

III. TODAY WE CELEBRATE JESUS' RESURRECTION

A. WE FOCUS ON THE FACT

1. That he who was crucified, dead and buried on Friday
2. Walked out of the tomb early Sunday morning, leaving his grave clothes neatly folded behind him
 - a) And appeared to Mary Magdalene, then Peter and later the rest of the disciples on several occasions, (mostly Sundays), over 40 days.

B. ACTS 2:22-24

²² "People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene* by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. ²³ But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. ²⁴ But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip.

C. V29

* Or *Jesus of Nazareth*.

³¹ David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah's resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave.

³² "God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. ³³ Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today.

1. This is the heart of the message Peter preached at Pentecost, and led the conversion of so many, and the founding of the church

D. THIS IS WHAT PAUL TAUGHT THE EARLY CHURCHES

2 Timothy 1:9

⁹ For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. ¹⁰ And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News.

E. WHEN THE MEMBERS OF THE EARLY CHURCH STARTED TO EXPERIENCE DEATH AMONG THEIR MEMBERS

1. Paul reassured them and helped them understand why we still died, even though Jesus has broken the power of death and opened the way to life and immortality
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IV. I THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

¹³ And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died* so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.

A. THIS WAS AN OBVIOUS AND DEEP QUESTION AND SOURCE OF CONCERN FOR THE MEMBERS

1. What is the situation with all the believers that had died?

a) Paul gives them a straightforward and simple answer;

¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

¹⁵ We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died.* ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died* will rise from their graves. ¹⁷ Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ So encourage each other with these words.

B. THEY NEEDED ENCOURAGEMENT

1. And so do we.

a) As Paul says, these words, these truths are the ones we need in order to be encouraged when loved ones die, and when we contemplate, and eventually face our own death

b) The resurrection is what helps us grieve with hope, and not like those who have no hope.

* Greek *those who have fallen asleep*; also in 4:14.

* Greek *those who have fallen asleep*.

* Greek *the dead in Christ*.

V. BUT HOW DOES THE DEATH OF A FAMOUS JEWISH TEACHER 2000 YEARS AGO EFFECT OUR DEATHS?

A. IT IS WONDERFUL TO KNOW THAT JESUS DIDN'T STAY DEAD, BUT THAT HE WAS RISEN FROM THE DEAD

1. But how does what happened to him individually back then, effect our mortality, our deaths?

B. FIRST WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND SOME FUNDAMENTALS ABOUT OUR LIVES

1. God—who is eternal, and not created, out of love, and desire to share communion with others—created a world of space and time

2. And us as his creatures within that space and time

a) We were created to live in communion with him from the point of our birth onwards

b) But we were not created eternal, or infinite as God is

(1) We were created with a beginning, and with many human limitations that distinguish us from God

(2) But, as Ray Anderson writes in his book, "Theology, Death and Dying; "Mortality, an aspect of created nature, was not God's ultimate purpose for human personhood."²

3. God intended for our lives in communion with him, to continue on within the parameters of the creation, within created space and time

a) He didn't intend for death to be the end of us—and our relationship with him

4. But we rebelled and went off to live our lives independently of God

a) Anderson,

With sin, came loss of relationship to God, with the result that natural mortality now appeared to set the limit for finitude—this is human death.³

² Ray S. Anderson, *Theology, Death and Dying*, 1986, Basil Blackwell, p.94

³ Anderson, p.94

C. SO WE ALL HAVE A PROBLEM

1. Our lives are mortal, we all end up dead.
2. This fact still applies to all of us, including Christians
3. And we saw that it happened to the very early the church as well

D. SO AGAIN, HOW DOES JESUS' RESURRECTION CHANGE THIS?

1. It is all because Jesus became one of us
2. The Son of God became human, taking on our flesh, including our mortal nature, subject to death
3. He experienced our finitude, our limitations, our suffering, our pain, our weaknesses, but all without turning from his Father
 - a) In other words without sin
 - b) Without depending on his own human capacities
 - c) But always trusting completely in his Father and the Holy Spirit to guide and empower him to live fully connected and in full communion with God.
4. But because he took on our full humanity, he still suffered human death

E. THIS IS WHERE HIS RESURRECTION COMES IN

1. Jesus was the second Adam, living the human life God intended for the first Adam
 - a) God raised him from the dead, to transform and redeem human life to what he intended from the beginning
 - b) To break the hold of sin and death, not only upon Jesus, but upon all those who are taken up into him
 - c) Who trust in him as Saviour
2. Jesus was the first born of many brethren
 - a) He was raised from the grave, and ascended bodily to the right hand of the Father

- (1) His finite humanity has been taken up into his divine being as the Son of God
- b) Through Him the Father and Spirit have transformed human life, redeemed it, and released it from death
- c) And brought us into communion with him that will never end

3. Anderson sums this all up;

The resurrection of Jesus 'saved' him from death by extending his personal history through [and beyond] death.

Temporality, as a factor of Jesus' human personal identity, is thus redeemed from death by his resurrection.

By assuming a humanity which was limited by death, Jesus brought humanity within God's own time and history as the time and history of the eternal Son with the eternal Father.

Death has not been cancelled and replaced with something else; rather, the time of the human person as represented by Jesus of Nazareth has been extended through death, so that death no longer is the boundary of finiteness and the history of the human person.

This is first of all a theology of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, but as such, it includes the death and resurrection of all persons who are united to this Jesus through a common humanity and through a shared experience in his resurrection life.⁴

F. SO WE WILL ALL STILL DIE

1. But that will not be the end of us
2. In dying our human death, as God, and as one of us, and being raised from the grave,
 - a) Jesus has secured the resurrection of our lives from our graves, by giving us his own Spirit and resurrected life
 - b) He shares and includes us in his extended life in fellowship with God
3. We will still be human, still living on earth
 - a) But our lives will no longer be subject to the results of sin

⁴ Anderson, p.96

b) We will no longer be mortal, sin-filled and racked with pain and suffering

c) We will live as God created us to live, in his image, in communion with him and one another and all creation, forever

d) As Anderson describes it;

It is through the indwelling of the Spirit of this resurrected man that our personal and spiritual existence is transformed “from death to life” (Romans 8:1-9).⁵

It is through the Spirit of God that we are brought into the continuum of the new time and history of Jesus Christ, and we share in that life which is his by virtue of his having overcome the power of death.⁶

Romans 8:10-11

¹⁰ And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life* because you have been made right with God. ¹¹ The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

VI. SO WHY DO WE STILL DIE?

A. BECAUSE GOD HAS CHOSEN TO BRING US ALL INTO IMMORTALITY AT THE SAME TIME

1. When his kingdom becomes fully realized throughout the creation

I Corinthians 15:20-28

²⁰ But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

²¹ So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. ²² Just as

⁵ Anderson, p. 100

⁶ Anderson, p. 101

* Or *your spirit is alive*.

everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. ²³ But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

²⁴ After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power. ²⁵ For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. ²⁶ And the last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For the Scriptures say, “God has put all things under his authority.”* (Of course, when it says “all things are under his authority,” that does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.) ²⁸ Then, when all things are under his authority, the Son will put himself under God’s authority, so that God, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere.

I Corinthians 15:35-57

The Resurrection Body

³⁵ But someone may ask, “How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?” ³⁶ What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn’t grow into a plant unless it dies first. ³⁷ And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting. ³⁸ Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have. A different plant grows from each kind of seed. ³⁹ Similarly there are different kinds of flesh—one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.

⁴⁰ There are also bodies in the heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies. ⁴¹ The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their glory.

⁴² It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. ⁴³ Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. ⁴⁴ They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.

* Ps 8:6.

⁴⁵ The Scriptures tell us, “The first man, Adam, became a living person.”* But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. ⁴⁶ What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. ⁴⁷ Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. ⁴⁸ Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. ⁴⁹ Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like* the heavenly man.

⁵⁰ What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.

⁵¹ But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! ⁵² It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. ⁵³ For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

⁵⁴ Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die,* this Scripture will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.*

⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?*

⁵⁶ For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. ⁵⁷ But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. THIS NEW LIFE,

1. this new time and history is, as Paul puts it in Colossians 3:3 is “hidden with Christ in God” until when Christ returns

Colossians 3:4

⁴ And when Christ, who is your* life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

* Gen 2:7.

* Some manuscripts read *let us be like*.

* Some manuscripts add *and our mortal bodies have been transformed into immortal bodies*.

* Isa 25:8.

* Hos 13:14 (Greek version).

2. Ray Anderson,

From outside the perspective of Easter, there is no apparent reality to this life through and beyond death.

But for those who have received the Spirit of the resurrected one, there is a view 'beyond death' even as it is a new perspective on our temporal life itself.⁷

A. **CHRIST IS RISEN!**

1. Death has been conquered
2. The victory has been won
3. But we must wait for that victory to be completed in us until the time of the future resurrection when Jesus comes to bring all creation into communion with God

I Thessalonians 4:15-18

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* Some manuscripts read *our*.

⁷ Anderson, p. 101

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* Greek *the dead in Christ*.

CONCLUSION:

A. IN THE MEANTIME...

1. We are to be living the future relationship, the life of the kingdom
 - a) The life lived in faith, in communion and partnership with God right now
2. By doing so we bring the future into the now, and display the light and hope of the future to those who live in the dark now

I Thessalonians 5:1-11

5 Now concerning how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters,* we don't really need to write you. ² For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. ³ When people are saying, "Everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be no escape.

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⁹ For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. ¹⁰ Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. ¹¹ So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

B. PRAYER

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