

"If the Dead Are Not Raised"

1 Cor. 15:12-34

--CEFC 10/3/21

So what is the great hope of the Christian?

Why, it's the hope that when I die, my soul will go to heaven, of course.

But is that really how we should think of it?

Justin Martyr, one of the leading Christian writers of the second century,

said this:

There are "some who are called Christians . . .

who say that there is no resurrection of the dead,¹

and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven."

Against what he calls such "godless, impious heretics,"

Justin takes an uncompromising stand:

"Do not imagine that they are Christians," he wrote.

He continues, "I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points,

are assured that there will be a resurrection of the body."²

"Did I hear him right?" you might ask.

"Is he saying that simply believing in the salvation of our souls in heaven

¹*anastasis nekron,*

²*sarkos anastasin. (Dialogue with Trypho, 80).*

How could that be?"

It may surprise you when I say that it can be,
because there is such a thing as being too "spiritual."

In studying Paul's letter to the Corinthians,
we've come across this idea before.
For often in the letter, these Corinthians had got into trouble with the apostle
because they thought of themselves as "super-spiritual"--
rich in every spiritual gift.

But that was just the problem--
They were so spiritual,
that they had no sense of the significance of things related to our bodies.

You may remember back in chapter six,
that some in Corinth were arguing that sexual behavior was not important to God.

In 6:13, Paul is quoting their words:

**"Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food
and God will destroy them both."**

In other words, what we eat involves only our physical existence
which is going to be done away with in the end anyway--
so what's the big deal?

The Corinthians were using this attitude toward food
as a model for their attitude toward sex, another bodily pleasure,

thereby justifying their indulgence with prostitutes.

It's not what you eat or drink,

or even whether you are involved with a prostitute, that matters,

they were saying--

these are mere physical acts--

what matters is what happens to your spirit--

that's the part of you that is eternal,

and which will one day come into the presence of God.

"Not exactly," Paul says.

"God may destroy the stomach and the food which is for the stomach,"

but, v. 13 of chap. 6 he says, **"the body is not meant for sexual immorality,**

but for the Lord,

and the Lord for the body.

And by his power, God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also."

The Christian gospel is not just about the salvation of the soul,

but also about the resurrection of the body--

by his power, God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead,

and he will raise us also.

The body is not simply a husk to be cast off in the next life.

My body will be redeemed.

This means that though my belly may be just a part of me;

my body is me.

Our bodies are an essential aspect of our whole persons.

The Son of God could not become a human being,
if he did not assume a human body.
And because our bodies are an essential part of who we are,
what we do in our bodily existence—
as the visible image of God in the world—
as male or as female—
what we do in our bodies matters—
it has eternal moral significance,
for we will be given glorified bodies
when we are resurrected with Christ.

The reason the Corinthians thought the way they did
was that they didn't take their view of what it means to be a human being
from the Bible,
but from Greek philosophy.

The Bible teaches that the world was created by God,
and God has a purpose for that world.
Our bodies are not mere tombs for our souls,
to be cast off when we go to heaven,
though when we die, in that temporary intermediate state,
we will be with the Lord in a bodiless form.
But because our bodies are a part of our very persons,
our salvation will not be complete
until our bodies are resurrected in that new heaven and new earth to come.

This is what the Bible teaches,
but some very popular Greek philosophers, like some today,
held to a strict division between matter and spirit,
between the secular and the divine,
cutting off our bodily existence from any transcendent meaning.
And it appears that some Corinthian Christians,
like many people today,
live with a similar separation in their lives.

Now, it's important to recognize that those who hold to such dualistic views
can fall into one of two equal and opposite errors.
Some, like the ones Paul dealt with in chap. 6,
say that since the body is of no significance,
really spiritual people can do whatever they want--
"Go ahead and indulge your senses," they said.
They become hedonists--
driven only by their fleshly desires in the pursuit of pleasure.

The other error takes the opposite extreme--
instead of hedonism, they choose asceticism--
an extreme denial of the desires of the flesh.
Since only the spirit or soul is of any significance,
the body doesn't matter—
your male or female bodies don't matter.
The spiritual person ought to avoid
defiling contact with the body altogether.

So sexual activity, for example, would a dirty thing,

inappropriate in any form

for the one who would seek the higher life of the spirit.

There is evidence that some in the ancient world were actually taking this option--
prohibiting marriage and promoting celibacy as the more spiritual path.

In 1 Tim. 4:3, Paul refers to those who "**forbid people to marry**

and order them to abstain from certain foods."

So also in Corinth, it seems, there were those who saw themselves as "super-spiritual,"
to the extent of being like the angels,

who, Jesus says, neither marry nor are given in marriage.

They saw themselves as those who were raised above the mundane affairs of this life;

and some were suggesting a withdrawal from the affairs of this life

in order to live unencumbered in their new spiritual plane.

It seems that some in Corinth were advocating that Christians

should refuse to engage in sexual relations even within marriage.

But at point after point,

Paul emphasizes to these self-avowed "super-spiritual" Corinthian Christians

that our bodily existence is important to God.

He did not create us as disembodied souls.

We dare not disparage the material world as if it were inherently evil,

or at least had no value at all.

God doesn't just save souls,

he saves human beings--

and human beings, unlike angels, have a bodily existence.

And God in his gracious power desires to redeem us as bodily creatures.

This is what the notion of the resurrection of the dead is all about--

it is the completion of God's redeeming work in his creation.

Those who deny this redeeming work of God--

and who deny the resurrection of the dead--

are denying more than they realize.

And the consequences of that denial may be greater than they think.

That's what this passage is all about--

as the theme is set out in v. 12--

"But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead,

(which is just what the gospel message declares)

how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

"there is no resurrection of the dead"—

This was a common Greek view,

but for Paul it was simply inconceivable for a Christian--

and in our passage, he tells us why.

The most obvious and significant reason is in v. 13--

"If there is no resurrection of the dead,

then not even Christ has been raised."

It makes sense, doesn't it--

how can you deny the reality of the future resurrection of believers

and at the same time, affirm that Christ was raised from the dead?

But as we saw last week,

Paul affirms that Christ's being raised from the tomb on the third day
was an essential aspect of the gospel message.

So, let's think about that for a moment, Paul says.

If you don't believe the dead are raised,
then not even Christ has been raised,
and if Christ has not been raised,
then there are all sorts of unpleasant conclusions that must be drawn.

First, in v. 14--"if Christ has not been raised,

our preaching is useless and so is your faith."

"our preaching is useless"--it is without substance,

it is meaningless, it is empty.

We preach the message of Jesus, Paul says,

and if Jesus is now dead in the tomb, so is all that he stood for,

and all that he taught.

You see, the teaching of Jesus stands or falls with his resurrection.

Jesus came as the Messiah, the Son of God,

the Savior of the world, the Lord of life.

Jesus came preaching that the kingdom of God was at hand--

in fact, that the kingdom was present in his life and ministry.

But what could all of that mean if he is still in the grave?

Why should anyone follow him

if in the end his life is snuffed out like all the rest?

What kind of king is this, and what kind of kingdom does he bring,

if he can be so easily put away,

crushed like a troublesome ant under the boot of the powers of this world?

Why should anyone believe what he had to say?

What sense does it make?

Without the resurrection, Jesus is just another martyr for a noble cause--

a martyr with lofty ideals that are simply out of touch

with the harsh realities of a cruel world.

Why believe that the meek will inherit the earth?

Why turn the other cheek?

Why go the extra mile?

Why do it, if it just gets you hung on a cross? /

Throughout his ministry Jesus had laid claim

to a unique relationship with God as his Father.

This, too, was challenged by his crucifixion.

It seemed impossible that one who claimed to be so loved by God as his own Son

would ever have to endure such pain and suffering.

That's why the chief priests, the teachers of the law

and the elders of Israel

mocked him when he hung upon the cross--

"Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him.

He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him,

for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" (Mt. 27:42,43)

And if the story ended up with Christ in the tomb,

then they were exactly right.

If the dead are not raised,

they Christ has not been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised,

our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

Without an empty tomb,

then our preaching and Jesus' teaching is also empty.

And Paul continues his case--

v.15--"More than that, [if Christ has not been raised,]

we are then found to be false witnesses about God,

for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead."

If there was no resurrection, then **our words are false**, Paul says.

We are deceived, or worse, we are deceivers.

Don't talk any nonsense about it being true ***for us***,

or about Christ having been raised ***in our hearts***.

No, if the tomb was not empty--we're liars, plain and simple.

But does that make sense—that those first disciples were all liars?

Is it reasonable to think

that Paul and Peter and James and John and all the rest of them

would all join in a grand conspiracy of deception?

Did they steal the body of Jesus,

and make up this whole resurrection thing?

That seems highly unlikely.

Think about it--

the disciples were the ones who fled in fear the night Jesus was arrested,

Peter denied that he even knew Jesus before a lowly slave girl.

After the crucifixion they huddled together in hiding

behind locked doors.

These disillusioned and disheartened men--

are they the kind that would concoct such a story?

And on top of that, would they then give their lives to this deceit,

suffering prison, torture, and even death for what they knew wasn't true?

Chuck Colson, who was imprisoned for his involvement in the Watergate scandal,

has an interesting perspective on this.

He tells about the secret dealings of President Nixon's top aides trying to cover-up

the obstruction of justice charges surrounding the break-in at the Watergate hotel.

They tried, but not for long, for the instinct for human survival took hold,

as one by one they went public with their side of the story,

trying to save their own skins.

Colson writes--

"With the most powerful office in the world at stake,

a small band of hand-picked loyalist, no more than ten of us,

could not hold a conspiracy together for more than two weeks.”³

He agrees with the words of Pascal, the great 17th-century mathematician:

“The hypothesis that the apostles were knaves is quite absurd.
Follow it out to the end and imagine these twelve men
meeting after Jesus’ death and conspiring to say that they had seen Jesus
risen from the dead.

This means attacking all the powers that be.

The human heart is singularly susceptible to fickleness, to change,
to promises, to bribery.
One of them had only to deny his story under these inducements,
or still more, because of possible imprisonment, torture and death,
and they would all have been lost.”⁴

If Christ has not been raised, then our words are false, Paul says.

We are deceived or we are deceivers--
but don’t talk any nonsense about our being sincere in what we believe.
The question is whether what we say is true.

If Christ has not been raised

our preaching and Jesus' teaching is empty,
our words are false,
and there’s another consequence in v. 17--

³*Loving God*, p. 67.

⁴*Pensees*, (Penguin), p. 125 , cited in Colson, p. 69.

"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile;
you are still in your sins."

That's where we'd be--

still in our sins--

still under the righteous judgment of a holy God

for our refusal to give him our total allegiance and obedience,

for not allowing him to be God in our lives.

Still in our sins--with nothing before us but the awful prospect

of standing before that holy judge

to hear his words of condemnation

and to face the full fury of his wrath.

Dear friends, that's where we'd be, if Christ has not been raised.

For Jesus had been condemned to die as a lawbreaker by the highest court in the land.

And didn't the Scriptures themselves teach that

any person "hanged on a tree" was the object of a divine curse (Dt. 21:22f).

How could this condemned criminal also be our divine Savior?

He could be, only if the verdict was overturned--

only if the Jewish court and the Roman governor Pilate

did *not* have the last word--

and the empty tomb announces that they didn't.

No, God had the last word, when he raised Jesus from the grave.

And this great reversal demonstrated that the curse Jesus bore
was not for his own sin, but for ours.

The resurrection shows that that offering for our sins was acceptable to God his Father.
It satisfied God's wrath against our sin,
It established God's justice, even while demonstrating God's mercy.

On the basis of what Christ did
we are no longer in our sins.

"He was delivered over to death because of our sins," Paul writes in Rm. 4,
"and he was raised to life because of our justification."

That's what the resurrection of Jesus means--
and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile,
you are still in your sins.

Paul continues in v.18--

[if Christ has not been raised,]

"Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost."

Is there hope after the grave?
Is death the end?

When most people,

even the most secular of people,
talk about the death of a loved one,
they talk about that person being “better off,” or “at rest.”

My friend Randy Newman tells of his non-religious Jewish mother speaking that way
about the death of her friend.

Randy simply asked her the question, “How do you know that?”

How do you know that your friend is better off and at rest?”

That simple question began his mother’s journey to becoming a Christian.

She realized that there was no ground for her hope

What happened after death was all speculation.

Paul challenges such naive optimism about life after death--

If Christ has not been raised, then even those who trust in him

for their eternal destiny have missed the boat.

They’ve caught the wrong train--

they have no basis for hope.

All the positive thinking in the world will do them no good.

They’re lost.

"Lost"--

To be lost is a fearful prospect when one thinks of death--

Martha, a 25-year-old woman with ALS, or Lou Gehrig's Disease,

thought a lot about death--

her arms and legs were already useless

and she breathed only with great difficulty--

"What is it you fear most about death?" she was asked.

Martha said this--

"I regret all that I'm going to miss--next year's big movies, for example,
and the election results.

And I fear that I will one day be forgotten.

That I'll just disappear, and no one will even miss me."

"Lost"—forever.

I think of the words of the 17th century French playwright Moliere,

"We only die once,
and for such a long time."

"Lost"-- that's the consequence if Christ has not been raised, Paul says.

If the dead are not raised,

then Christ has not been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised,

Our preaching and Jesus' teaching is empty;

our words are false;

your faith is futile;

and Christian hope is groundless.

And in vv. 29-32 Paul adds to that, as he looks at two specific cases--

First, in v. 29,

If the dead are not raised, he says to the Corinthians,

then your own religious practice is illogical--

"Now if there is no resurrection,

what will those do who are baptized for the dead?

If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?"

Admittedly, this is a difficult passage,

for frankly, we have no idea what Paul is talking about here.

There are two problems--

1) First, there is no historical or biblical precedent

for such a proxy baptism for those who have already died.

The New Testament is otherwise completely silent about it;

there is no such known practice in any of the other churches

nor in any orthodox Christian community in the centuries that immediately follow;

nor are there parallels or precedents in pagan religion of the period.

2) Second, how can Paul appeal to a practice

that stands in such contradiction to his own understanding

both of justification by grace through faith,

which always implies response on the part of the believer,

and of baptism as a personal response to grace received?

It smacks of a "magical" view of religion of the worst kind,

where a religious rite, performed for someone else, can have saving power.⁵

At least forty different solutions have been suggested

as to what to make of this.

But as one commentator puts it,

⁵So, Fee.

"no one knows what in fact was going on."⁶

It's probably best simply to say that

here Paul is arguing for the irrelevance of such a practice,
and, in fact, its absurdity, if the dead are not raised.

Such a practice, however unorthodox it may be,
is just inconsistent with a denial of resurrection.

Finally, Paul turns to his own experience--

v. 30--"And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour?

31 I face death every day—

yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord.

32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes,

what have I gained?

If the dead are not raised,

"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

For Paul, as a Roman citizen not subject to such punishment,

"**fighting with wild beasts**" was probably a metaphorical statement

referring to the opposition he was encountering in Ephesus

even as he was writing this letter--

(see 16:9--"there are many [in Ephesus] who oppose me.")

⁶Fee.

Paul the apostle was constantly encountering opposition--

often very violent, even if it wasn't from literal animals.

So why do it?

Why bother with a concern for righteousness?

Why deny yourself for the sake of Christ?

Why give of your time, your talents, your money,

and your sweat, blood and tears

to the cause of Christ

if the dead are not raised?

Why not go for all the gusto--

do whatever feels right--

eat, drink and be merry--

stick up for your own rights--if you don't, nobody else will.

God won't, you can be sure of that--

a lot of help he was to Jesus.

If the life of Jesus just ends on a Roman cross

why not go for whatever you can get in this life?

Why not lie and cheat and steal and do whatever it takes to get ahead?

Why not?--if only the good die young,

and when they die they just rot in the grave.

Why not?

The issue is as stark as that--

In fact, Paul says in v. 19--

"If only for this life we have hope in Christ,

we are of all people most to be pitied." //

Jesus was either raised from the grave, or he wasn't—

either the tomb was empty, or it contained a rotting corpse.

Let's not hear any of this nonsense about Jesus simply being raised
in the hearts and minds of his followers.

It won't do.

If the tomb wasn't empty,

the Jewish leaders could have simply produced the body of Jesus

and paraded it around Jerusalem,

and all this Christian nonsense could have been quashed

before it even got started.

But the tomb was empty,

and more than that, the risen Jesus himself appeared.

He appeared to more than five hundred people at one time,

many who were still alive, Paul says—

go ask them.

Either it happened or it didn't--

and if it didn't, we who have entrusted our lives to Jesus Christ--

we are to be pitied more than all men.

For we are fools.

Yes, but if Christ has been raised then that's a different story.

In that case, we are of all people most to be envied.

In that case, we are not fools, if we give up our time,

our possessions, even our very lives.

Jim Elliot died as a missionary bringing the gospel
to the Auca Indians of South America.

He was killed by the very people he came to save.

Jim Elliot said it this way,

“He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep,
to gain what he cannot lose.”

Jesus promised that those who take up the cross and follow him
will share in his royal resurrected glory.

If Christ is raised from the tomb, then we are not fools,
for we shall be kings.

That's Paul's precise point in vv. 20-28 of our passage--

**"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead,
the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."**

"the first fruits"--that's an agricultural image--

the first red apple to appear on the tree

the first grain of wheat to mature in the field--

these serve as the first taste of what will come later.

Jesus' resurrection was not just an isolated event, only affecting one man.

v.21--"For since death came through a man,

the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

These two--

the first Adam, and then second Adam, Jesus Christ--
their fates affect all of us.

And Jesus' fate opened up a new hope for a glorious eternal destiny.

It was the first taste of that general resurrection of the dead
that will come on that great day--

It was **"the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."**

Jesus' resurrection is a future event that has invaded the past.

It was the first step in an inevitable chain of events--
resulting in the future glory of God's people--

v. 23--**"But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits;
then, when he comes, those who belong to him."**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is past event that guarantees our future glory./

Do you ever look out at the night sky
and consider that you are looking back into the past.

You are, because the light from distant stars takes years, decades, centuries,
even millions of years
to reach our earth--
so that when you look at the bright star Antares, for example,
which is 250 light years from earth,
the light that reaches your eyes is 250 years old.

You are seeing what that star looked like
before the signing the Declaration of Independence.

It is a look into the past.

And so it is with the resurrection of Christ, only in the other direction--
when you look at the light of that empty tomb--
you are seeing what we will look like when we reach the end of time.

It's a picture of the future--
displaying God's guarantee of the glorious new life
that will come to his people.

In the risen Christ, you are seeing the first fruits of the harvest to come.

But the Apostle also tells us that this glorious resurrection life
is not just for anybody--
Christ is the first fruits only of those who belong to him. --v.23

Belonging to Christ--
it's a relationship of trust and commitment--
in which you turn over the ownership of your life to him
you receive his love and forgiveness,
you submit to his rule
and you entrust your future into his care.

You must belong to him--
Christ's past will become your future
only if you entrust your life to him now--in the present.

Have you done that--

Do you belong to him?
If so, then his resurrection is the guarantee of your salvation.

And Christ's resurrection is not only the guarantee of your salvation,
it is also the guarantee of **God's cosmic victory--**

v.24--"Then the end will come,
when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father
after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.
For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.
The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

v.28--"When he has done this,
then the Son himself will be made subject to him
who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all."

". . . so that God may be all in all."

In Paul's mind, that all-encompassing purpose hinges on one thing--
the resurrection of the dead--
the restoration of God's fallen creation by his power and grace,
initiated in the raising of his Son Jesus from the tomb.

The gospel of God is more than just a message about how our souls can get to heaven,
It's a message proclaiming that human beings,
in body, soul and spirit, can become what they were created to be--
the true image of God in his creation

with the grand purpose of bringing glory to God.

The gospel of God proclaims the victory of God over sin and death--

"so that God may be all in all."

It's true--Christ has been raised!

But will the world believe it?

I don't think so.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is too supernatural

for our secular world to believe;

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is too threatening

for our morally compromised society to believe.

All the historical evidence in the world

would not lead most people to believe that it's true,

not when you can just go on the internet and find plenty of people

who will confirm whatever it is you want to believe.

It takes a miracle of the Spirit of God to open closed minds.

Christ is risen--but I think there is only one thing that can help the world believe it--

What I say that is may surprise you--

that one thing is a church.

I'm talking about a real church--

a strong fellowship of believers, living out with authenticity and fervor

the truth that they profess.

A family of Christians who demonstrate the living reality of the risen Christ--

who truly act as if all that Jesus taught was demonstrated to be true

by his resurrection from the grave.

A church of men and women who live in faith before their Father in heaven,

who embrace the life of the cross,

with all its pain, and humiliation and weakness,

and who give of themselves to others in love, as Jesus did,

yet they do it all, without anger or resentment, but with great *joy*,

knowing that they will if they share in Christ's suffering in this world,

they will also share in his resurrection glory in the world to come.

Somehow in that context, among that kind of people,

the gospel message doesn't seem quite so odd.

It's less incredible.

In fact, it becomes quite plausible.

People who see that kind of church will say,

"Hey, maybe there is something to this after all."

A real church, truly living as the body of Christ--

that's what's needed to shake up the comfortable agnostics of the world

and to provoke them to reconsider

their too easy dismissal of the claims of Christian truth.⁷

Our life together is to be the strongest evidence of the reality of the resurrection. //

⁷John Stackhouse, "Apostles of Truth," *Perspectives*, p.15.

It's true--Christ has been raised--

But will *you* believe it?

Not just assent to it,

will you deal personally with this risen Christ whom we worship today?

He is Lord--

he is risen to the right hand of the Father in heaven

and he is coming again in glory.

and when that time comes

the truth will be plain and clear for all to see--

it will be undeniable;

it will be inescapable--

and when that time comes,

it will be too late to decide where you stand with him.

For at that time, he will come as judge,

and if you have rejected him, he will reject you. /

Here's the challenge.

Here's the risk.

Has Christ been raised from the dead?

Is he who he claimed to be?

Is he still alive today?

It is a question upon which your whole life, your eternal destiny, depends.

You must make up your mind.

You must decide if you think it's true.

Have you come to know that risen Lord

as *your* Savior, as *your* Lord?

What better time to do it than right now,

I urge you to bow before the one who is the way, the truth and the life. /////

Prayer--

Paul concludes our passage--

15:33--"Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

34 Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning;

for there are some who are ignorant of God --I say this to your shame."

Before we come to the communion table—

we will have a time of reflection

with music from our bell choir.

Communion—

Here we celebrate the gospel we have been talking about—

This is a **meal of remembrance**—

Here we look back—at Jesus' death on the cross

This is a **meal of promise**—

Here we look forward--

Jesus told his disciples on that last night with them before his death,

“I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on

until that day when I drink it new with you

in my Father's kingdom.” (Mt. 26:29)

Jesus is alive—and he will come again in glory—

and this communion meal points us forward

to that great and glorious banquet that we will share with him.

And until then we experience his living presence.

We eat the bread and drink this cup

to show forth that he now abides with us

by the Spirit whom he

sent.

IF you have entrusted your life to Christ, if you belong to him,

as that relationship is displayed publicly in baptism—

then you are invited to this table

to experience the gospel you have believed.

If that is not true of you—

then take this time to reflect—

if Christ has not been raised,
then where is your hope?

Words of institution--

As we sing, come to any of the serving stations--

"The Church in the World:
Studies in 1 Corinthians" No. 19
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"If the Dead Are Not Raised"

1 Cor. 15:12-34

Some in Corinth were denying that God will raise the dead in some future bodily existence. This belief, in Paul's view, was nothing but preposterous and totally inconsistent with all that we believe as Christians. In our passage this morning, he tells us why this is so--

I. If the dead are *not* raised (vv. 12-19, 29-34)--

II. But Christ *IS* raised (vv. 20-28)--

A. He is the guarantee of our salvation

B. He is the guarantee of God's cosmic victory

Sermon Response:

"If the Dead Are Not Raised"

1 Cor. 15:12-34

- Review the various consequences of denying the resurrection of the dead (Paul lists at least seven in this passage). Do you feel the force of Paul's argument? Consider the consequences if Christ has not been raised. Reaffirm the statement in the Apostle's Creed: "I believe . . . in the resurrection of the dead."
- Reflect on the importance God gives to history--for Jesus' resurrection is an event in history, and we live in a bodily existence in history. How ought that to affect the way you live your life today?
- Read vv. 20-28. Look back to the resurrection of Jesus as the guarantee of your own resurrection. Take hope in the assurance that this gives you today.
- Read vv. 20-28. Look back to the resurrection of Jesus as the guarantee of the cosmic victory of God over all his enemies, including death. Rejoice today in that future victory of God. Rejoice that you belong to Christ, and that you will share in that victory--the most important victory of all.
- Are you a closet Platonist--secretly denying that God will redeem us bodily? Can you see how important the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is to our faith? Thank God for his powerful work in redeeming his creation while vindicating himself in glory.