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**Resurrection People**  
**1 Corinthians 15:12-20**

*Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup> If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; <sup>14</sup> and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. <sup>15</sup> We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. <sup>17</sup> If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have died<sup>[e]</sup> in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

*<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.*

As a pastor and chaplain, ***I am around death and dying—a lot.***

God knew this was my calling, so from a very young age I was taken to funerals, and around loved ones who had died.

Most people try to avoid such experiences,  
but I think being with the dying,  
and with families when their loved one has died,  
are incredibly ***sacred*** moments.

That movement from death to life, is ***sacramental***.

It is beyond words to witness someone going from ***this life to new life***.

I have had the opportunity to do it with so many loved ones,  
friends, and church members over the past 20 years.

In fact, truth be told, I like doing ***funerals***, because they are so sacred.

My heart breaks for the families,  
but my heart grows, because I can remind them  
of our ***Christian hope in the resurrection***.

Death is when most of us truly ***reflect*** on our lives, our legacies,  
and our faith in life after death.

These are the times when we ***really need hope***—  
 sometimes our lives and ability to go on depends on it.  
 As Christians, we have something that others do not—  
***a living God, who promises us new life here, and after death.***

We believe in the ***resurrection, of Jesus, and one day all of us,***  
 and that belief gives ***meaning and hope*** to our lives ***today.***

***But what do we MEAN when we say resurrection?***

We ***don't mean resuscitation.***

When Jesus raised ***Lazarus*** from death—it was a temporary revival.

He was brought back from the grave, but he went on to die again.

What we believe is that we will be raised from death, to live eternally.

And we believe that we will ***literally*** be resurrected.

Made ***new, but with a body and soul.***

When Paul was ***writing to the church in Corinth***, he knew they were a  
 divided church, with disagreements about almost everything.

They were trying to decide how to be different than their culture.

His letters address these disagreements, by encouraging them to remember  
 their foundational beliefs about Jesus,

and to treat one another with the love of Jesus Christ.

Apparently in Corinth, ***not all of the church members believed*** in the  
***resurrection of the dead.***

And some believed in resurrection, but ***not of the body.***

The same is true ***today.***

Polls show that ***a majority of Americans*** believe that Jesus rose from death,  
 and that we too will have life after death,

but not ***everyone believes*** this,

or has the ***same understanding*** of resurrection.

In the Greco-Roman world, including Corinth,  
 the common idea of an afterlife

was the ***separation of the soul from the body.***

At death, the physical body died,

but the ***soul of that person would live on*** in a spiritual afterlife.

Many people have this ***same idea today*** about life after death for Christians. In the early church this was known as ***Gnosticism***— They believed that the soul or spirit was separate from the physical body.

The problem is ---Christians believe in the ***resurrection of the BODY***. Not just the resurrection of the soul. This is what we affirm in worship when we recite the ***Apostle's Creed***.

***Where do we get this idea of BODILY resurrection?***

From the early believers—who saw Jesus, ***not as a ghost, but as a human being***, walking, talking, even eating dinner with them on the road to Emmaus, and on the beach with the apostles! (Luke 24 and John 21).

When Jesus appeared in the ***upper room*** to his fearful disciples, he came as man, with a physical body. Jesus was so real that He encouraged doubting Thomas to ***touch the scars in his hand!***

Think about that for a minute. We believe in something ***more than dead people becoming ghosts***. When people see a ***ghost*** today, it confirms that the person is ***dead***.

When people saw ***Jesus, it confirmed that he was ALIVE—body and soul***. It was Jesus, but with a new body. He was Jesus, but ***made new***.

This part about being made ***new, whole, and complete*** is important, because this is what Christians believe about ***people, and all of creation***. Paul reminds us in ***Romans 8*** that all creation groans in longing for redemption and new life.

In ***Revelation 21***, when John receives the vision of heaven, he sees a new creation—a new heaven and earth—not just a spiritual world of disembodied, floating souls.

This is ***hard for us*** to wrap our heads around as enlightened, educated, modern people who look to ***scientific facts*** to explain the universe. ***HOW*** does a dead person come back to life, as a new body and soul?

We've all heard of *Near Death Experiences*, where people literally die, their hearts stop, and they have a vision of heaven, a glimpse into that eternal world before returning to this one. Many times people see light, laughter, loved ones, or Jesus.

We affirm the resurrection of the body to *eternal life*.  
AND, we believe that *all creation will be made new, and perfect*.  
Like a return to the Garden of Eden.

I was reading **Adam Hamilton's book *Unafraid***, which we will talk about more during Lent, and he was explaining the resurrection.

He compared it to *getting a new cell phone*...sounds weird, but wait  
Adam Hamilton, *Unafraid*, pg. 212.  
Have you done this recently?

Remember when getting a new phone meant *losing everything from the old* phone?  
Those days are over, right?  
Today, smartphones are almost always *backed up in 'the cloud'*.  
When you upgrade, you buy a brand new physical phone, but it *populates with 'YOU'*—  
all your personal data, contacts, photos, emails, and settings.  
*It is essentially your phone, in a new body.*

Which is similar to the bodily resurrection.  
We'll receive a *whole, new, perfect, complete body*.  
Which is *amazing good news, right?*

**Charles DeGaulle** was a World War II hero and later president of France. He and his wife, Evonne, were the parents of a Down Syndrome child, a little girl named Ann. Charles and Evonne would spend time at the end of every day with their children, making sure to spend some extra time with this special child. When they would put her to bed, Evonne would sometimes say, "Oh, Charles, I have often prayed that she could have been like the other children. *Why was she not like the others?*"

When Ann died at a very young age, the DeGaulles had a private graveside funeral. When the service was over, everyone left but except Evonne. Grief-stricken, she could not pull herself away from Ann's grave.

Until Charles touched her arm gently. "Evonne," he said.

"Did you hear the promise of the *resurrection*?"

***She is now like the others.***"

*"So, What About the Resurrection?", Rev. Dr. Thomas G. Long, Day 1, 2004.*

One of the ***hardest*** things about watching someone die is seeing the ***life slowly leaving them***, as their body gives up fighting, and everything comes to a stop.

It's ***also heartbreaking to lose someone*** to a car accident, an injury, or suicide, because their ***body is broken***—and changed in ways we never wanted.

But isn't this when believing in ***resurrection is so powerful***?

We believe that when a ***baby*** with severe disabilities or illness dies, they are resurrected with a new, whole, healthy body.

When someone dies after a long battle with cancer, or Alzheimers,

Or someone is injured, or even kills themselves,

they are resurrected with ***a brand new body***.

Talk about ***hope for the family left behind***.

When I sit with the grieving,

they can find comfort that their ***loved one is at peace***,

***no longer suffering, hurting, or afraid***.

This is ultimately ***what we want*** for those we love, right?

even though it means we don't see or touch them anymore.

***WHY is it so important for us to believe*** in this bodily resurrection?

Because it is ***central*** to the Gospel.

Theologian John S. Whale once said that "the Gospels don't explain the resurrection; ***the resurrection explains the Gospels.***"

***C.S. Lewis*** used to say that he believed in the resurrection the same way he believed in the ***sun***,

*“not only because I can see it,  
but because by it I see everything else”.*

Our ***belief in resurrection gives meaning to our whole life of faith.***

We believe that Jesus ***conquered sin*** on the cross.

He ***conquered death*** by being raised.

Therefore, we are ***no longer in our sins.***

And ***Death no longer has the last word***—awesome, right?

This is what ***Paul means*** when he says:

*If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.*

*<sup>18</sup> Then those also who have died<sup>[e]</sup> in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

When we stop to think about it,

***The resurrection is a foundation of our Christian hope.***

So much of our ***fears today*** are about ***what might happen to us.***

But ultimately, none of that is the end of our story—

because new and everlasting life awaits!

We ***do not need to fear anything***—because Jesus is the ***victor***,  
he has already won the battle for us.

***We may die, but we will live.***

This is what Jesus meant when he said in John 11: ***I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, though they die, yet shall they live.***

It’s also important to believe in the resurrection of the body because it  
***changes the way we live today.***

Our ***physical bodies matter.***

It’s not right for us to say,

*well, this life doesn’t matter because it’s not my forever home.*

The kingdom of God that Jesus brought,

is ***a new life that begins on earth, and continues in heaven!***

***This life matters*** to Jesus, and it should matter to us.

We are ***not just biding time.***

Jesus made that very clear in his preaching and teaching.

Think about **Matthew 25's** vision of the eternal life.  
 He said that whenever we help the least of these, we are helping Jesus himself!  
 In other words, we've got work to do—  
***through our bodies.***

This is why it matters that we take care of ***ourselves, and all of creation.***  
 Scripture calls us ***stewards***—caretakers of people and creation.  
 We are to treat all of it with love and respect.  
***Not just wait for this life to end*** and the next one to begin!  
*(although I admit at times I watch the news and say,  
 Jesus, it's ok if you want to come back today!)*

Barbara Brown Taylor calls this ***"Practicing Incarnation"***.  
 We believe in the ***Incarnation of Jesus***—in other words, that God became  
***flesh.*** Fully divine, and fully human.

But we also believe that ***we practice this incarnation in our lives.***  
 At the creation story,  
 we are told that ***we are made in the image of God.***  
 In other words, we ***hold the presence of God*** inside of us!  
 Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to live in us after his death.  
 God is in us!  
***What better reason is there for taking care of ourselves?***

When Jesus came to do his life, ministry, and resurrection on earth,  
***it wasn't to just give us something to THINK about.***  
 It wasn't about some good ideas now—and new life later.  
 He gave us ***things to do.***  
 Real, common, everyday things to do.

Think about that.  
 On his last night, he ***washed the disciples feet,*** and ***ate dinner*** with them,  
 blessing, breaking and giving them bread and wine.  
 And he told them to do the same for one another.

*Taylor writes, "early Christians spoke of the resurrection of the body—not only  
 because some believed they had seen the risen Christ in the flesh but also  
 because they believed God meant to raise their own flesh too.  
 The **God who had made their bodies** and declared them good*

would not have a change of heart on the last day.  
Wherever they were going with God, **their bodies were going too.**

*“he gave them **concrete things to do, specific ways of being in their bodies together**, that would go on teaching them what they needed to know when he was no longer around to teach them.*

*Barbara Brown Taylor, “Practicing Incarnation” The Christian Century, April 5, 2005*

### ***Does that make sense to you?***

We believe in resurrection of the body,  
because we have **bodies made** by God, **loved** by God,  
that one day will be **made perfect** by God.  
This means we **need to use our bodies today for God’s work**,  
and **one day in heaven**, for God’s purposes.

When you think about it, resurrection  
is an **important reason for social justice today.**  
Presbyterians have always emphasized the importance of not just doing  
what’s right individually, or helping people one by one,  
but also working for the **good of all creation**,  
and toward **justice in the systems** of our world.

It’s **not enough** to just pray for someone, or give them a cup of water.  
We are also called, just like the prophets in the Old Testament,  
Just like Jesus,  
to work for **justice in our world, and to care for the earth.**

**Resurrection is a real reason** to work for justice, and the care of creation.

Shawnthea Monroe writes in the Christian Century: *There is a lot at stake here and now, too. Every day I see people putting their **Christian faith into action**, sometimes at great personal risk. They deliver meals in dangerous neighborhoods. They visit people convicted of violent crimes. They march in protest and dare to declare that black lives matter. For their sakes, I hold fast to the bodily resurrection. As Tom Long writes, “**A Christ whose resurrection occurs only in our minds has no right to call us to put our bodies on the line for justice.**”* Shawnthea Monroe, Lectionary Commentary, *The Christian Century*, March 10, 2016



So, ***HOW do we believe*** in resurrection,  
 if we have always thought of it as just a spiritual thing?  
 How do we come to understand resurrection  
 as ***tangible, and heaven as real?***

Remember January 2016, when the ***world was introduced to Planet Nine in our solar system?***

Doesn't sound important, except for the fact that all of us who grew up memorizing the planets, had to relearn it!

***Pluto was out, and Planet Nine was in!***

***What do we do with that?***

We acknowledge that ***newly discovered facts change our understanding*** of the world!

This is what happens in ***science, and technology, medicine, even history.***

We are ***constantly discovering new facts, and new evidence—***  
 which requires ***a new understanding!***

And in the case of our solar system, ***new mnemonic devices*** for kids today to learn their planets in school!

This is what the resurrection of Jesus was to the earliest believers.

They had ***no frame of reference*** for the resurrection of a person, who could walk, and talk, and eat food!

Our ***evidence today still comes from the Bible***, especially the Gospels.

People have tried to 'prove' the resurrection, but ultimately what we have is just eyewitness accounts in scripture.

We can ***choose to believe that the resurrection*** was just an allegory, or a misunderstanding, or a mass hallucination, or a Christian conspiracy theory—plenty of people do.

Or we can take ***a LEAP of FAITH.***

***And believe that it's TRUE.***

For Jesus, and for us.

We can take the ***dozens of scriptures*** about resurrection,

to be ***WORDS OF LIFE*** for us today,  
***and HOPE*** for tomorrow.

We can ***be Resurrection People,***  
***who live and die, in the hope that Jesus offers.***

That is the ***Good News of the Gospel*** today.  
And to that, all God's people said, Amen.