

Virginia Council of Churches
Lenten Series – Easter

Read I Corinthians 15:19-26

19 If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. 21 For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; 22 for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler 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.

Paul recognizes the universal sway which death holds over human beings when he says, “For as in Adam all die...” All persons die physically, but many die spiritually long before physical life ends. Each of us has died a little death a thousand times. Those heartbreaking elements of life are death in themselves. Who hasn’t lost a friend or family member? Which of us hasn’t had a meaningful friendship or relationship dissolve? How many of us have escaped the trauma of losing a treasured job at one point or another? Whose body doesn’t remind them of aches and pains? Who among us hasn’t experienced a spiritual death of one sort or another? Death is reaching out to grab us spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

The apostle affirms that even as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. He is saying that God has broken the cycle of death and brought about new life. This new life is a “resurrection life.”

The resurrection is often referenced as a past event. Jesus was crucified and was raised from the dead to new life. The women went to the tomb and were astonished to find the stone rolled away. His body was gone and a messenger sent from God made them aware that he had arisen. The disciples could hardly believe it. They rushed to the empty tomb. Christ came to them in many ways. Perhaps the greatest manifestation of his resurrection was the power they received. Weak, spineless men who deserted their Lord were empowered to give their selves for the sake of the gospel. Their faithfulness gave rise to the church, Christ’s witness in the world.

Some of the Corinthians may have believed that Christ was raised, but that it was impossible for them. Paul replied that if Christ has not been raised their faith and ours is in vain and useless. Christ’s resurrection is the down-payment on new life for people of faith.

Resurrection is a precious hope we have for ourselves. We believe that “resurrection life” will conquer death. Life is not just a joy in this world, but also in that new heaven and earth to come, where death will die and be nothing at all. Funerals would be sad affairs were it not for this hope.

At times we live as if there is no resurrection. We don’t deny resurrection, but we deny its power in the way we live our lives and relate to one another. Joined to Christ, the story of our lives is

not one of death alone -- but of death and resurrection. Death is realizing that your marriage is over, resurrection is discovering that it isn't the end of the world. Death is an unattainable but cherished dream; resurrection is the fulfillment of desire that remain unseen. Death is losing a job and livelihood; resurrection is regaining your spirit and soul apart from focusing on "the business". Death loses its finality in the new life which God gives; a life everlasting.

We can share the life, death, and new life of Jesus Christ by following him as disciples. We can act upon God's invitation to come and have life more abundantly. Faith is both believing and living, acting out of faith. As we celebrate this Easter, let us not only believe in the "resurrection life" from God, but live from it as well!

**Almighty and Everlasting God, Creator of all that lives and has being,
We thank you that just as life is limited by death, Death is limited by your gift of eternal life,
Through Him who said, "I am the resurrection and the life."
Amen.**

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