

## The Resurrection of the Body

Text: Acts 3:12-19

1 John 3:1-7 (Series B. 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter) Ps.4

Luke 24:36-48

While the two were telling them this, suddenly the Lord himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were terrified, thinking that they were seeing a ghost. But he said to them, "Why are you alarmed? Why are these doubts coming up in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet, and see that it is I myself. Feel me, and you will know, for a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones, as you can see I have."

Prayer:

The Resurrection of the body has been a controversial issue since day one; today is no different. There are several theories floating around, and we can delve into only a few of them due to limited time:

- One theory says that Jesus didn't die on the Cross but switched places with Judas.
- Another theory says that Jesus regained consciousness in the middle of the night and rolled away that huge stone. He hooked up with Mary Magdalene, had a family, and lived in Northern Syria.
- Ahmadiyya Muslims believe Jesus did not die on the cross but escaped the Romans and moved to Kashmir in northern India, married a wife, and had several children. The tomb is there to this present day.
- Then, there is another one that repudiates the belief of resurrection all together. Scientifically, it is impossible, it says; it concludes that when we die, that is it. Therefore, the resurrection is just *hogwash*. It is just a fine conclusion to a story.
- Another theory says that Jesus only rose up ***spiritually*** and not in a bodily resurrection as recorded in Scripture.
- There is the school of thought that bases its belief on the biblical account of witnesses (*over five hundred people*) of the resurrection as we have today in the Gospels.

The doors were locked. There was a great deal of excitement as Cleopas and his companion described their encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. They told how Jesus was revealed to them as they sat down to an evening meal and Jesus broke and blessed the bread. All of sudden, Jesus was standing there, smiling. He suddenly appears from out of nowhere.

The last time they saw Jesus, he was dead, and they had laid him in a tomb. When you do that, you don't expect to see that person standing right there in front of you again. It's no wonder that Luke says that they were "startled and terrified." I think that's an understatement.

I once read about a judge in the former Yugoslavia who had an unfortunate accident. He was electrocuted when he reached up to turn on the light while standing in the bathtub. His wife found his body sprawled on the bathroom floor.

She called for help; friends and neighbours, police - everyone showed up. He was pronounced dead and taken to the funeral home. The local radio picked up the story and broadcast it all over the airwaves. In the middle of the night, the judge regained consciousness.

He realized where he was and rushed over to alert the night watchman, who ran off, terrified. The former corpse was to phone his wife and reassure her. But he got no further than, "Hello, darling, it's me," when she screamed and fainted. He tried calling a couple of the neighbours but they all thought it was some sort of sick prank.

He even went so far as to go to the homes of several friends but they were all sure he was a ghost and slammed the door in his face. Finally, he was able to call a friend in the next town who hadn't heard of his 'death.' This friend was able to convince the judge's family and other friends that he really was alive.

Jesus had to convince the disciples that he wasn't a ghost. He had to dispel their *doubts* and their *fears*. He showed them his hands and his feet. He invited them to touch him and see that he was real. And he even ate a piece of cooked fish with them; all to prove that he was alive; all to prove that he wasn't a ghost, a spirit. He was standing there in the flesh. He was as real and alive as he had been when he had walked, talked, and ate with them the past 3 years.

The last statement we confess in the Apostles' Creed is "*I believe ... in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.*" We are saying, along with Paul, that Jesus "*will change our weak mortal bodies and make them like his own glorious body*" (Phil. 3:21). We are stating that death is not the final "Amen" of our life.

We will rise again to life, not just as a ghost or a spirit, but we will rise bodily and enjoy eternal life with a new body. Saint Paul gives this wonderful description; he says, "*This is how it will be when the dead are raised to life. When the body is buried, it is mortal; when raised, it will be immortal. When buried, it is ugly and weak; when raised, it will be beautiful and strong ... What is mortal must be changed into immortal; what will die must be changed into what cannot die.*" (1 Cor 15:42,43,53).

Paul declares, without apology, that in heaven our failing, aging, decaying, and dying bodies will be replaced with bodies that are immortal and incorruptible. Our bodies, our hearts, our minds, our personalities, our relationships will become what God originally intended they should be.

No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, new hearts, and new minds. Only in the Gospel of Jesus do we find the promise that no matter what may afflict us here, that affliction will be removed in the world to come.

Can you imagine the hope this gives to someone who is suffering? Can you imagine what this promise does for each of us as we face the day when we will leave this life and our bodies are placed in a grave?

I'm sure you have a million questions about all this just as I do. What kind of body will we have? Will we all look alike? Does our glorified body also have a glorified digestive system? Will we need to eat? What about sleeping? Are we going to recognize each other? We could go on. You and I are not among the first to have questions.

The apostle Paul tells us that his readers were puzzled by all of this as well. He says, **"Someone will ask, 'How can the dead be raised to life? What kind of body will they have?'"** Paul doesn't answer most of our questions but he does say that we will have a new and wonderful body.

Like Paul, the best we can do when trying to describe what will happen to us when we rise from the dead is to go to nature for pictures to help us understand. When we look at a dahlia bulb, it doesn't look very interesting; in fact, it's quite ugly. But when the bulb is planted, it grows into a bush that has the most wonderful flowers.

☞ At this time, we are the bulb with all of our imperfections and weaknesses but, one day, we will rise to be like the flower, more beautiful, and attractive than we could have ever imagined. The dahlia flower has some connection with the bulb but it is far more glorious. So, it will be for us when we leave this life and are raised to eternal life. To use Paul's words, *"This is how it will be when the dead are raised to life. When the body is buried, it is ugly and weak; when it is raised, it will be beautiful and strong (1 Corinthians 15:42-43).*

☞ Not only will our bodies be new and glorious but also our minds will be renewed. In this life, our minds are filled with all kinds of stuff; selfishness, greed, deceit, hatred and so on. When we are raised, all of this will be a thing of the past.

☞ We will know what God's will is, perfectly. Our relationships will be perfect, especially our relationship with God. In other words, we will be just as God had intended the human race to be when he first created them.

What it will be like in heaven is something far more glorious than anything we could try to imagine in this life. The apostle Paul writes: *"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).* Jesus' resurrection defeated the power of death.

If the power of death had not been destroyed, then we would have to face the judgment of God. If the power of death had not been destroyed, our last breath would be the end of us, and there would be no hope of life beyond the grave.

Christ has risen. He is alive. He showed himself to the disciples to be alive, bodily. Christ has risen, and we will too! We will rise from the grave and enjoy a life in heaven without any of the weaknesses and blemishes in our bodies that we have now. We will have a life without the worries, stresses, pain, and uncertainty of life in this world.

In our Gospel reading, we heard how the disciples were terrified because they thought they were seeing a ghost. The once-dead Jesus stood right there amongst them and invited them to touch him, to look at his wounds, and to join him in a meal. And even though they couldn't understand how this was possible, they were full of *"joy and wonder."*

We don't understand everything about the resurrection and especially about our own resurrection. There are those who say we are foolish believing such things, but the whole idea of a resurrection after this life also fills us with *"joy and wonder."*

It gives us peace and comfort when we become afraid of what death will do to us and our families. In a moment ... we will share in the Eucharist, the Lord's meal, an invitation to come to the presence and share in his life... fore-taste of the resurrection and life to come.

Saint Paul summed up our confidence like this, "*Christ has been raised from death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised*" (1 Cor 15:20). **Amen.**



**Prayer concerns:** *Matilda Molyneau-Piper, Wes Bourgaize & COVID-19 patients, essential and front-line workers.*

**Let us pray:**

**God of the Beginning, the Now, and of all that is to Come, raise us as You raised our Christ, into the faithfulness of heart, mind, and soul that leads us to the glory and the better times with You. We ask through the name of Jesus, our Risen Saviour; and the Holy Spirit, our Sanctifier; who together with You reign as One God, forever and ever. Amen.**

**Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:**

- A Hymn of Glory Let us Sing # 393
- Hallelujah! Jesus Lives # 380
- Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing # 385

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