

(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x09 Sunday 04th March_2018.

Human condition: questions about death. RESURRECTION ETERNAL.

Background text: 1 Corinthians 15: 1 – 4, 12 – 20, 42 – 49, 55 – 58. (Resurrection) Genesis 2: 16 -17. (READ both).

(PP2) Our AIM for the beginning of this year will be for each of us individually and all of us together to explore what it means to be truly human. The Latin phrase “Memento Mori” – remember you have to die has passed into our language. It is a **serious Christian practice to reflect on our mortality.** It is a means of considering the vanity (passing vapour - Ecclesiastes 3) of earthly life and the transient nature of earthly goods and pursuits. Jesus in the NT was not averse to reminding people that we will all die and be called to give account for our lives to God. (It is increasingly my view that to think about our death means we can live life more fully in the now. Remove the *sting of death* and it no longer has power to terrorise us. (1C 15: 56, 57).

DEATH – including both physical and spiritual mortality has become a part of our human condition (Genesis 2: 16, 17). No one is immortal – except by gift of God (Romans 6: 23). The fact of our mortality is something which should challenge our human pride and limit us in a way which makes us creaturely rather than thinking we are gods.

We have been asking: what does this consequence of “death” mean? Humanity – men and women did not drop dead immediately – they “began” to die, in their soul death and **become mortal.** Initially it meant the interruption of human fellowship with God. That “**walking-talking relationship**” **was interrupted.** When God comes to walk and talk with Adam (humanity) in the garden in the cool of the evening the man and the woman hide from God. (*3: 8 God cries: Where are you?*). Some obvious consequences are the entry of both **fear and loneliness into the human experience.** We also see **blame, shame and guilt** enter into the human consciousness **and lying and fake truth take over.**

(PP3) Life after death fascinated not just the Jews but most other human beings. Life after death (the immortality of the soul) is not necessarily the same as eternal life or **Resurrection Life** which Christians believe in. Jesus’ life, death and resurrection are obviously foundational to Christians ways of interpreting Scriptures and looking forward to resurrection life beyond this “mortal coil”. (Poetic term for the troubles, strife and suffering of daily life).

Last week I said that the Sadducees were earth bound they had no eschatological hope for the future Eschatology is the part of theology concerned with the final events of history, the ultimate destiny of humanity. **For Followers of Jesus** it is not just about the “end of the world” but rather about the “new heaven and new earth”, the dwelling of God with humanity, the healing of the nations, the coming of justice and shalom in the full expression of the Kingdom of God. It is about bodily resurrection and the redemption of creation through Jesus Christ. It is about oneness with ourselves, with others and with God. It is not about escapism but about living in the reality of the now with all its

struggles whether they appear purposeful or not but holding to the promise and hope of **Resurrection**.

In the Christian religion, the *Resurrection* is Jesus Christ's return to life on the third day after his death, or the return of all people to life at the end of the world. It is a bodily as in the case of Jesus and not just a spiritual resurrection. It is a resurrection to judgement before God and to eternal life for those whose "names are written in the Book of the Living" and for others the "Second Death"- separation from God. (*Revelation 21: 8*). Life after death is clearly a Christian belief – but it is a distinct belief – a gracious gift of God – Resurrection Eternal Life found in Jesus Christ.

NB Conditional Immortality – conviction that the "second death" is essentially annihilation and it is final. Some Christians but not all believe the "second death" is a conscious experience of perpetual and never-ending suffering. Christians believe mortality is the experience of all human beings unless we receive the gift of immortality and so live forever. Those who believe in conditional immortality believe that Hell is an eternal and final punishment but not an everlasting punishing. **(PP4)**

(PP5) Belief in **eternal life as God's free and gracious gift has sustained Christians** day by day through the many struggles and difficulties which beset human beings. (*Eternal life means knowing you the only true God and knowing Jesus Christ whom you sent. I have shown your glory on earth...John 17: 3, 4*) And future hope of **the day of Resurrection** has given strength and help through not just difficulties but as we face death itself.

Paul in his letter to the Corinthians writes powerfully of this hope and his reasoning behind that hope. **1 Corinthians 15** is not just a reading for funerals it is a theological basis for living in the now. It is Good News of the highest order and the substance of what we pass on to others. This news is to be shared with others as part of our mission – part of the work God has given each of us to do. He sees it as necessary to REMIND the Corinthians of this since some are again saying either that there is no resurrection or that the resurrection has already taken place.

From first to last our faith in our own resurrection is based on the fact that Jesus Christ was raised from death to life. Eternal Life begins now for those who believe and receive Jesus, but resurrection is a future event. Vv3 and 4 (READ) are propositional truths: *Christ died for our sins as written in the Scriptures, that he was buried and that he was raised to life three days later, as written in the Scriptures.*

Paul reels off some of those who met the risen Jesus, including himself – presumably on the Road to Damascus but maybe on another occasion. Since then millions of Followers claim to have encountered the Risen Jesus – these are nearly all spiritual encounters in prayer, vision or dreams (including myself). As we mentioned last week these are those who know the Scriptures but also have experienced the power of God.

If Christ has not been raised then our faith is indeed a delusion and we have based our lives and work on a delusion. Some would say – well maybe it has kept you happy! But says Paul (v19) that would mean we are to be pitied cos the hope would only be good for this life! He declares (v20) *But the truth is Christ has been raised from death as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will be raised.*

(PP6) A resurrection body (vv35 – 41) will resemble the human seed sown/ buried in the ground. Human beings made in the image of God will be distinct from other things that die and fall into the ground – whether fish or fowl, sunflower or other plant. Christians do not believe in reincarnation but resurrection of the body and soul.

The body we receive will resemble our former body but have resurrection powers and qualities as did Jesus' body. It will be a spiritual body of power and beauty. Rather than being made of the elements of earth it will be made of the elements of the heavens. *V49 Just as we wear the likeness of the man made of earth, so we will wear the likeness of the man from heaven. (Read v54 mortal is swallowed up in immortality (TEV) . Or New Living – Death is swallowed up in victory).*

Death gets its power to hurt from sin (breaking God's Law). But victory comes through Jesus Christ. Again, Scripture says that God gives us the victory through Jesus Christ. The victory is not my victory in living a good or righteous life – but the victory of the only fully righteous "God-Human" – Jesus Christ.

But our service and work is not useless if done for God. So, then brothers and sisters stand firm and steady and keep busy in what the LORD has given you to do. You have a distinctive job to do and only when that is finished will we go to be with the LORD. Meanwhile let us enjoy Eternal Life now – getting to know the Father God and Jesus who he sent.

Let's by God's grace and work in us become more truly human enjoying and worshipping God until we meet him face to face. When we get to those gates into the New heaven and the new earth, over which is written Resurrection and we are asked for the Password (not the pin) we will declare "Jesus Christ is Lord".