

### **Luke 6:17-26**

<sup>17</sup>He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>18</sup>They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. <sup>19</sup>And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

<sup>20</sup>Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup>"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

<sup>22</sup>"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

<sup>24</sup>"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

<sup>25</sup>"Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

"Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup>"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

### **1 Corinthians 15:12-20**

<sup>12</sup>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 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.

### **SERMON**

The resurrection is simultaneously so foundational to being a Christian we talk about it constantly...like every single Sunday it comes up in some way shape or form. And, it's so

much a part of our belief system we almost forget it's there. I do this with stuff all the time, and not just heady theological concepts. Like, I don't notice the artwork on the walls of my house because I look at it all the time. My eyes just sort of pass over it. And when I was in college and not particularly good about waking up on time, I actually had to rotate through which alarm clock I used and where I put it in relation to my bed, because my brain adapted so quickly to the sound and placement I would just sleep through it. Much to the chagrin of my roommate, let me tell you. And I have times when I'm looking for a utensil in the kitchen and I'll call John and say, have you seen it? I've looked everywhere and it's nowhere to be found! And John will come in and point to the counter right in front of me, where the needed item is sitting, plain as the nose on my face.

We get used to things that feel familiar, and when they're familiar, I think we start to gloss over them, stop asking questions, and just sort of go with it.

So, sure, Jesus was the son of God, born of Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried, he descended into hell, and on the third day rose again from the dead. Great is the mystery of our faith, Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again, for thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, now and forever, Amen. Right?

We're comfortable, familiar, and that's that.

But it wasn't that way for the church in Corinth.

Now, we have these letters Paul wrote to the churches, but we don't have the letters and messages Paul received from the churches...it's kind of like we have one side of the phone call, and sometimes we're piecing together the other half of the conversation from hints and tidbits. And this is one of those times. We kind of know from what Paul is saying that some folks in the Corinthian church were saying there's no resurrection from the dead, I mean, Paul says that. So, we know it. But Paul just assumes the church would know who he's talking about and what their complaint might be. And that's where we have to guess a little, because we don't know exactly what it was they found objectionable in the profession that Jesus and all of us will be resurrected, bodily, from the dead.

There is, of course, the most obvious answer: resurrection doesn't just happen every day. It's medically impossible, and even folks 2000 years ago basically knew that. So, there's this rational issue at play—resurrection isn't real. But that's probably not the issue the church had. Because why be a part of the Christian community at all if you just wholesale reject the idea that anything miraculous might have taken place? You probably would just stop going to church and that would be that.

Beyond the rationalist issue, there's the always popular zombie complaint. That's actually a more viable candidate for the Corinthians issue. Not that they thought people were literally going to be zombies, just these gross, decrepit corpses rising from the dead. Instead, they might have had a real problem with the idea that our bodies will be resurrected, not just our souls or our spirits. This is a super Greek way of thinking. The

Greeks lived for the idea that our bodies and souls were separate things, and that our bodies were earthy and kind of gross and the lesser part of our existence. But that our souls were our true essence, our real person. So, good solid Greek thinkers, it's actually totally reasonable that they would have rejected bodily resurrection but accepted the resurrection of the soul or the self.

This complaint, the reanimated corpses are made of bodies and bodies are gross thing, that's probably part of what was happening in the church. And it was cracking the foundation of the community, no matter what the specifics, so Paul writes to them and says, friends—how can I make this clear to you? If the resurrection of the body isn't real, we're all wasting our time. Our proclamation is in vain, we're lying on behalf of God, if resurrection of the body isn't real, then Christ is still lying dead in some tomb somewhere, and you all, your sins are still with you. If Christ is dead, then your sins aren't forgiven, and death is still the victor. Everything is for nothing if you reject the resurrection of the body.

It's a pretty dire argument.

Because for Paul, the bodily resurrection is everything. The greatest enemy in Paul's theology is this two headed dragon of sorts, and the heads are evil and death. You can't have one without the other. Evil or sinfulness leads to death, and death holds dominion through the brokenness of this world. This is super important for our own theology. Because Paul would say that our sins are not forgiven in Jesus death, it's not because his dying that we're somehow ok. For Paul, it's like Jesus' death is like the almost climax of a movie, where the dragon thinks it's won. Where death seems to have defeated every hero, even Jesus. Jesus is a dead body. But then, in a twist worthy of M. Night Shamalan, in the power of the resurrection, Jesus comes back onto the scene and slices off the heads of the dragon. Life wins out over death, love defeats evil. And if you don't have that dual defeat—love and life both winning—then nothing matters at all, because if Jesus is actually dead, even just in body form, then death gets the final word.

I think we sometimes lose the power of this thread in worship, when “life” and “resurrection” become buzz words for our prayers and hymns, and we forget to plumb the depth of these great mysteries. There are a lot of great questions about resurrection which are worthy of our time and attention—there's the pragmatic, like, if we believe in bodily resurrection, then is cremation ok? The answer is yes...and I'll tell you that story another time. And resurrection brings up the deeply esoteric, like, will animals be resurrected? And what will our relation to one another be in resurrection? Will I still be Kelly? Will I be married to John? Will I retain my identity? What if I don't like my body that much...will I have a healthier relationship with it in a bodily resurrection? What about time? Is there time? And how does it pass?

Believe you me, these questions are a rabbit hole all the way to Wonderland.

But for today, I think it is simply good to be reminded by these words of Paul—that our hope is built on this crazy, unbelievable, and powerful truth—that Christ was raised from the dead. And he walked around with his friends, in a body, on a beach! He ate food and let

Thomas touch his wounds, and held his friends in an embrace. It's like the line from Harry Potter, "the last enemy to be defeated is death." And in the resurrection Christ defeats that enemy. Jesus casts out all power and dominion that evil and death hold over us, and promises us instead a Kingdom established in love and in life everlasting.