

Intro: Garrison. Pastor. 1 Corinthians 15.

THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Pray.

What's going to happen when we die? Ever linger on that one? Are we going to be spirits? Are we going to be ghosts? Is nothing going to happen at all? Just sort of like going to sleep? What happens when you die? That's the question we're going to answer as we wrap up our series on the creed.

The creed has looked past tense- that God the Father has created the heavens and the earth. That His Son Jesus came to earth, died for us and raised from the grave 3 days later, eventually ascending to heaven.

The creed has looked present tense- that the Holy Spirit is active and moving now, that the church is something we're saved into now, that because of what Jesus is done we're forgiven now. And, now the creed will look forward.

And it does so with this final phrase: **the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

Now similar to a couple weeks ago when Tim talked about hell vs heaven I think many of us might have some big question marks when it comes to this line. Because at a basic level it's concerned with the afterlife. What comes after we die? We're going to be resurrected? So what happens with all of this?(my body). What's life everlasting? How's that going to work?

We have to have answers to these questions. Because at the end of the day, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting are supposed to be what we as Christians are looking forward to with a deep hope and certainty. This line that is a Biblical reality, should be part of the bedrock of your faith that you lean on in the midst of suffering, trial, sin and everyday life.

This line in the creed should give us immense confidence, assurance and peace— but it can't do any of that if we have no idea what it's actually talking about. It can't do any of that if it truly makes us more confused than it does hopeful.

So what I want us to do this morning is simple. I want to break down this phrase piece by piece and show us how this matters for our lives today. We're going to be really heady/theologically dense and then I'll show you why this matters.

Pick it up in 1 Cor 15:12:

12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, ^ahow can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, ^athen not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that ^bhe raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and ^cyou are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who ^dhave fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope² in this life only, ^ewe are of all people most to be pitied.

1. Resurrection

Paul's writing to the Corinthian church where some of the church had apparently rejected the idea of the resurrection. The line of thinking was that although Jesus had been resurrected, that didn't mean anything for His followers. They were essentially saying sure, Jesus rose, but that doesn't mean we will.

And what Paul's arguing is that there's actually a connection. The resurrection of Jesus is connected to the resurrection of His people. Paul is adamant about this. He's essentially saying, you can't have one without the other. Because Jesus rose, so will we.

Resurrection is one of the things we have in store after we die. To be overly simplistic, it means that everyone lives after they die. But there's some complexity.

Like we talked about a few weeks ago, when we die we go to one of two places. Believers spirits go to be with God in heaven, or Abraham's bosom. And non believers go to Gehenna, what is commonly called hell. But after a time, when Jesus returns, everyone will be raised from the dead and given a new body, more on that in a bit. This is what Jesus says Himself in John 5:

John 5:28-29 "For an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."

Both those who believe and those who don't believe will be resurrected. For the Christian, we will be raised to eternal life with God. And nonbelievers will be raised to judgment and eternity separated from God.

Now, the reason that we can trust that such a supernatural thing can happen is because, in fact, it already has happened.

We will be raised just as Christ was. That's the promise of the Scriptures. We believe we will be raised because we believe Jesus was raised. If you believe in Jesus' resurrection, then you have to believe in

the resurrection of His people. This is what Paul means in v 12: *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

Because Jesus rose. So will we.

And then he tears into the counter argument. If you don't believe in the resurrection of believers, you're undermining the resurrection of Jesus—which is basically undermining the whole thing we're doing. Paul writes if Jesus has not risen from the dead, everything we're doing here is completely pointless. Your faith is in vain. Even worse, it's futile and you're still in your sins. Everything Tim talked about last week, there's no hope! Without the resurrection of Christ there is no forgiveness. Because sin and death are tied together. Without the resurrection, the power of sin is not broken and the consequence of sin, death, would still be undefeated. The sign that sin has been taken care of is that Jesus defeats death. And if He has not defeated death, we're stuck in our sin!

So without the resurrection of Jesus we're wasting our time. But because Jesus has been raised we have victory over sin and hope that we will be raised. See how Paul says it:

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead

Notice what he's saying. Jesus' resurrection is the 'firstfruits'. If you're unfamiliar, the first fruits are the first parts of the harvest. When the firstfruits come, you know that the harvest is near. That's what Paul is saying here: Jesus' resurrection is the firstfruit. It's a sign of what is to come. Jesus' resurrection has set something into motion—THE resurrection of the dead.

We will be raised just as Christ was.

22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule 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.

The resurrection is not an 'if', it's just a 'when'.

The resurrection of the dead will happen. If we believe Jesus rose, we can trust that we will rise with Him. Now I'd argue the more confusing part is what comes next. What's that going to look like? Well let's keep going. V 35.

2. The body.

35 But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"

The Bible acknowledges exactly the questions everyone would have. Even thousands of years later halfway across the world. If we're going to be raised, what kind of body are we going to have? Keep going:

36 You foolish person! ^eWhat you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. 38 But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. 39 For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. 40 There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. 42 ^fSo is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; ^git is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 47 ^hThe first man was from the earth, ⁱa man of dust; ^jthe second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, ^kso also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just ^las we have borne the image of the man of dust, ^mwe shall ⁿalso bear the image of the man of heaven.

So here's the deal. When you die, a believers spirit goes to be with Jesus in heaven. When Christ returns, we will have a body in the new heavens and the new earth. When we are resurrected, we're not going to be spirits. Your future is not as a floating soul. You're not going to turn into an angel. You're not going to turn into a ghost. You're going to have a body. A resurrected body.

And that body is going to be different. We're not just getting resuscitated. Like we were dead and Jesus brings us back as were. Think Lazarus. Lazarus was brought back to life. Just as he was before he died. And he had to die again. Kinda sucky. That's not what's going to happen to us. We're not being resuscitated. We're being resurrected.

Not right away. Not immediately when we die, but when Jesus returns. Now that is clearly what we know from the text. But unfortunately there's some ambiguity.

I want us to really notice what the text is doing and what it's not doing. It IS saying that there is going to be a resurrection. It IS saying that it will happen when Jesus returns. It IS saying that it going to be a bodily resurrection. It IS saying that it's going to be an amazing and good thing. But it's not giving precise clarity on what that will look like practically. It's not answer questions like:

- What age will we be?
- What will we look like?
- Will we sleep?
- Will we go to the bathroom?

And it's important to know that because all sorts of people out there will saying the weirdest things about the resurrection, many times very confidently. Like I heard someone recently say they heard a pastor say that we'll all be 33 in our resurrected bodies, because Jesus was 33. Ya know maybe? But

also pretty much got no verses to back that one up. Also kinda a bummer if 33 wasn't a good year for you physically.

No that's not what the text does. What it does do is it shows that there will be a sort of continuity between what is now and what will be. That's what Paul means when he uses the language of sowing and reaping. That a seed will be planted and will be raised. You have a natural body that will be planted and a spiritual body that will be raised. There's a continuity.

In my backyard is a massive Oak tree. It would probably take 3 or 4 people to wrap around it's base. Maybe 50-60 feet tall. It's huge. Mesmerizing to look at sometimes. In the fall it absolutely obliterates my backyard with acorns and leaves. Now without any knowledge of how trees work, if you were to pick up an acorn you would in no world think, yep, that's gonna become the Oak tree. Nope. But it will. Given the right conditions that acorn will become an Oak tree.

This is the line the text is trying to draw. The seed goes into the ground, the plant comes out. The earthly body dies, the spiritual body comes out. There's continuity. There will be similarities, but also differences you can't even imagine.

But the specifics aren't laid out. However because Jesus was raised first and is the 'firstfruits' of the resurrection, we can look at the Gospel accounts for glimpses of what our resurrected bodies will be like:

- **Jesus had a body.** John 20:20 "When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side."
- **Jesus' body was recognizable.** John 20:16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher)."
- **Jesus ate food.** Luke 24:42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, [b] 43 and he took it and ate before them.
- **Jesus' body was physical, but beyond-physical.** John 20:26. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

So yes, there's plenty we can glean from these verses as well as when looking at the Gospel accounts of Jesus' body post resurrection. Maybe we're gonna be super heroes. Just appearing out of nowhere. Probably not. But maybe.

But it's still not cut and dry. We're not given the blueprints. Instead we're invited into a mystery. That's what Paul calls it just a few verses later:

51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. ^sWe shall not all sleep, ^tbut we shall all be changed, ^u52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For ^vthe trumpet will sound, and ^wthe dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

'We shall be changed!' in a twinkling of an eye. A mystery. So instead of a blueprint we get an invitation. An invitation to use a sanctified imagination and think about what it will be like to have a resurrected body.

A body that will not be marked by sin. A body with no disease. Not burdened by death. Imagine what that would be like. Which is a beautiful invitation; but something that has been hard for Christians to do.

I mean think about it: So much false teaching in the history of the church has been centered around the body. That the body is bad. Unspiritual. Worldly. Even think back to the incarnation. The creed was correcting a false teaching that Jesus didn't take on a real body because God could never be confined to something so disgusting. But we know He in fact, did. So much false teaching has had to do with the body.

Which sort of makes sense right? It makes sense why we would think the body is so bad. How much of your sin is tied to and affects your body? When we're angry, we can feel it boiling up in our body. When we're anxious, we carry it in our bodies. We can feel it. We see the affects of lust or substance addictions and how they affect our bodies. So it makes sense that many people across time have thought 'In a perfect world, there won't be any bodies'.

But the Scriptures point us to something else. New bodies. A resurrected body untainted by sin. A renewed, better body that will never die. Which leads to the last line in the creed I want to break down.

3. Life Everlasting

53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and ^wthis mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 ^v"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

When we are raised from the dead we will be raised in bodies that cannot die. Our bodies will be perfected and imperishable.

This is what the Bible calls **Glorification**. At the coming of Christ sin and death our bodies will be resurrected and perfected. Redemption will be complete. See, God has a plan for your life. And that plan is to redeem you from your sin and to form you into the image of Jesus. And the way that plan works is like this:

- **Justification** -- Jesus has made us righteous.
- **Sanctification** -- Jesus is shaping us.
- **Glorification** -- one day we will be made perfect.

Wayne Grudem -- "Glorification is the final step in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, and

reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like his own."

We will be like the resurrected Jesus. Hear how Paul says it again in Phillipians 3:

20 But ^cour citizenship is in heaven, and ^dfrom it we ^eawait a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform ^four lowly body ^gto be like his glorious body, ^hby the power that enables him even ⁱto subject all things to himself.

'We will be changed'. This side of eternity we're transformed by God through salvation and sanctification. We slowly, day by day are growing to be more like Jesus. But when Jesus returns, we'll finally be like Him! We will be glorified.

And we will live with God in our glorious state forever.

Death won't just be defeated, it will be destroyed. It will be gone forever.

This is what eternity will be like for the Christian. Jesus will return and we will be raised from the dead and given new resurrected bodies, untainted by the Fall. No sin. No addiction. No pain. No more death. We will live with God and His people forever, just as God intended.

That's what we believe in. Life after death. New, resurrected and glorified bodies. Life everlasting.

Alright. Like I said, lots of good Bible and theology. I'd love to try to get this on the ground for us. What the creed is ultimately doing in this final line is pointing us to a future hope. This is the Bible's hope for the future.

Now regardless of whether you're a Christian or not—How you live your life is dictated by whether or not you have hope. Hope is the engine that fuels us.

When I was a kid I hated going shopping with my Mom. I literally would lose my mind at the thought of having to go to the grocery store or running other errands. But there was one place I never really minded going. In fact, I actually loved going. The mall. Which may seem strange because we would be at the mall way longer than we'd be at the grocery store or any other store. Every time we'd go to the mall, we'd go around from store to store, getting things I didn't care about. But at the very end we'd go to my favorite place at the time. A store called the Fine Art of Baseball. And at this store my mom would buy me packs of Pokemon cards, the holy grail of my childhood. I'd throw a tantrum at the thought of going to the grocery store, but going to the mall, well I have no problems, because I have something to look forward to. I had a promise from my mom that every time we go to the mall, there's something great at the end. As silly as it sounds, when we went shopping places other than the mall, I had nothing to hope for. But we go to the mall? I'm an angel. Because I have hope!

Hope drives us.

At a basic level, it's something that I'm looking forward to. Now we all tend to have things like this that we hope in. More like general hopes:

- Like me at the card shop. To have that thing that's been in our amazon shopping cart for a few weeks or months.
- A better job.
- A better house, or to just have a house.
- Better car.
- More money.
- A relationship or marriage.
- Stages of life
- Next vacation
- More time to rest

The list goes on and on. These things aren't bad. In fact they can be great! And they're not bad things to hope for in the general sense. But when they become your ultimate hope, well then we have a problem.

An ultimate hope serves as the bedrock of your being.

An ultimate hope is still something we look forward to. But the stakes are higher. It's what you *must* have if you're going to make it. It's what you rest in on your bad days. It's what you think about when you have a dull moment. It's anything that you fill in the blank with:

As long as _____ happens, I'll be okay. As long as I have _____, I'll be okay. Anything can happen to me, but I'll be okay. That's your ultimate hope.

- As long as my kid's doctors appointment goes alright, I'll be ok.
- As long as my family stays healthy, I'll be ok.
- As long as I can get a different job, I'll be ok.
- As long as I get married, I'll be ok.

The problem is a misplaced ultimate hope will ruin your life.

Because when anything other than Jesus and what He has prepared for us is your ultimate hope—it will fail you. Surely you see this in your life? -when don't get what you want. When you do...

- Anxiety? Not all, but a lot of the time—Can't you trace that to a false ultimate hope failing you? Anxious that things won't turn out the way you need them to. Anxious that you aren't the way you should be or want to be. Might it be that your ultimate hope is that people would like you? That you're impressive to others?. Or successful? That a certain level of wealth is your ultimate hope? Or a certain quality of health?

- Depression? Not all, but a lot of the time—Can't you trace that to a false ultimate hope failing you? I don't have the relationship. Or marriage. Or family. I didn't get the job, the promotion.
- Anger? Jealousy? Lust? Do you see it?
- When you begin to feel restless, anxious and angry etc over your not having something or not being something or finding yourself growing bitter when you see others with these things—well those feelings and experiences are a flashing, bright, check engine light trying to tell you that something other than God has become your ultimate hope.

The only ultimate hope that is worth having is the hope that there will be a resurrection of the body and life everlasting. That's a promise that you can rest in. Because it was given by Jesus Himself.

It can actually be the hope that you fill in the blank with that works. Anything can happen to me, but one day I will be raised with Christ in a new, perfected body to live with Him forever.

For the entirety of the Christian faith, this is what has given Christians confidence to face anything and everything. The hope of eternity. It's what has given Christians over thousands of years the courage to be martyred. To be killed horrifically. To endure through persecution. To face down disasters and disease. It's how Christians in the face of immense suffering can and have endured, not perfectly, but with deep hope. It's what every Christian is invited to hold onto as we still live in a broken world. A world full of toil, aches, pain, sin, and death.

And it's what we're invited to hope towards too. In the mundane. In the good. IN the bad. In the pain. In our suffering. There is an incredibly bright future ahead.

Preparing this sermon. I was talking to a friend in our church and I was just being honest with him. This topic is a hard one at times. I was praying this week like, ya know God, I know it's a mystery but I'm familiar enough. I cranked that part of the sermon out. But the application. I'm struggling. Because it's sort of just too good to be true. Like this seems sort of crazy. Pipe dream. Definitely optimistic. That's it. It just feels like silly optimism. And anything optimistic is just hard for me, because if I'm being honest, I find it difficult to believe good things are coming. Especially an unending future of everything being perfect.

As I was continuing to prepare. I came across a quote. I thought it'd be a perfect way to wrap up.
Theologian J.I. Packer

“Optimism hopes for the best without any guarantee of its arriving and is often no more than whistling in the dark. Christian hope, by contrast, is faith looking ahead to the fulfillment of the promises of God, ...Optimism is a wish without warrant; Christian hope is a certainty, guaranteed by God himself. Optimism reflects ignorance as to whether good things will ever actually come. Christian hope expresses knowledge that every day of his life, and every moment beyond it, the believer can say with truth, on the basis of God's own commitment, that the best is yet to come.”

Eternal life with God is a certainty for those in Christ. We will be raised with new bodies and will live forever with God.

When we read that last line of the creed. It's not a bow to tie up the rest. It's not naive optimism. It is a faith-filled declaration that we long for deep down in our soul.

We believe that there is something better to come. But it's not a fools hope. Jesus has secured it for us. That Jesus is so committed to it was paid for with blood. In the middle of whatever trial you're going through, we have an ultimate hope that's been secured. So we can joyfully, hopefully say:

We believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting!

Pray.