

MORE THAN MEDIOCRE - RESURRECTION  
A SERMON BASED ON 1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-58  
PREACHED AT CHIPPAWA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO  
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2019  
10:00 a.m.

It is the biggest and most important question in the Christian faith.

Is the resurrection real?

Not “Is it real metaphorically?” but is it physically, actually real?

Is it more than a resurrection of hope?

Is it more than a resurrection of the human spirit?

Is it more than a resurrection of our potential?

Is it more than renewal, and fresh start and do overs?

Is the resurrection real?

It is not a new question.

The modern mind does not have the market on challenging questions.

The church in Corinth asked the same question almost 2000 years ago.

But as we have seen over the past number of weeks,

the church in Corinth was struggling to get a lot of things right

when it came to faith.

When they questioned the resurrection,  
you can almost hear Paul sigh and roll his eyes  
and do a discreet face palm.

He answered

“How can some of you say  
that there is no resurrection of the dead?  
If there is no resurrection of the dead,  
then not even Christ has been raised.  
And if Christ has not been raised,  
our preaching is useless and so is your faith.  
More than that,  
we are then found to be false witnesses about God,  
for we have testified about God  
that he raised Christ from the dead.

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile;

you are still in your sins.

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

Resurrection is the key, it is the lynchpin, it is the DNA of our faith.

There were those who struggled with it.

They pushed Paul further with their questions.

“How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”

To answer this question he uses the analogy of the seed.

But not before giving them a little shot to the faith.

Paul answered, ‘How foolish, what a question.

What you sow doesn’t come to life unless it dies.

Take a seed,

you won’t know what it will be

until it’s taken in to the ground,

and the seed dies and becomes the body that will be.

So it will be with the resurrection of the dead.

So it will be with the resurrection of the dead.

How are the dead raised?

The body that is sown in perishable.

It is raised imperishable.

It is sown in dishonour.

It is raised in glory.

It is sown in weakness.

It is raised in power.

It is sown a natural body.

It is raised a spiritual body.

Paul explains the resurrection using a seed.

For a seed to reach its fully intended purpose,

it must give up being a seed,

and become not another seed,

but a whole plant or tree that bears fruit

and more seeds.

These bodies of ours are seeds.

Planted in the soil of this world,

watered with the word,

we grow, and transform and bear fruit,

and in so doing generate more of what God intends.

Producing lives that are characterized by fruit of the Spirit

Love, grace, redemption, forgiveness, generosity, goodness, joy

Lives that because they carry the life and DNA of Christ,  
because they carry the Spirit of Christ,  
will also know victory over the grave  
and life beyond life.

Christ has been planted in us.

We grow and transform into greater Christlikeness,  
which includes joining him in his resurrection.

Christ is planted in us.

And we continue planting the seed of Christ around us.

This past year we undertook a final capital campaign,  
to raise funds to fix our roof and our side door,  
and to finish paying for our mortgage.

It was an amazing experience to watch God work in us.

We had a beautiful dinner together,

generously sponsored by an anonymous donor,

we heard stories about how God has worked

in and through this congregation in the past,

and is continuing to do so today.

We easily paid for the roof and the door  
and paid a bunch more principle of the mortgage  
because people were immediately generous  
in meeting their pledges.

We are going after the principle on the mortgage like a dog on bacon.  
It's amazing.

It happened so easily and so smoothly

that you might not even realize that it was kind of a big deal.

Other congregations can go into full meltdown with the size  
of the projects we handled last year.

We were busy thinking about

sending teams to help do Habitat for Humanity builds,

and Nicaraguan workers who had gone without pay in

the unrest of that country,

We were busy thinking about funding a Nicaraguan school

and making baskets for local teens in need for Christmas

among many other things you can read in the annual report.

More than raising money and paying bills,  
the Building Legacy campaign was an opportunity to reflect on legacy,  
on the seeds that were planted that bore fruit in our lives,  
but also to consider the seeds that we are planting  
that will bear fruit today and into the future.

We used the image of a dandelion gone to seed.

A dandelion flower, the yellow flower your five year old picks for you,  
can produce from 50 to 175 seeds.

The dandelion plant, having a number of those yellow flowers,  
can produce up to 2000 seeds.

One weed science expert says that a dense stand of dandelions  
could produce up to 240 million seeds an acre.

God's kingdom spreads.

The gospel writer Mark presents an unusual picture of God's kingdom.

He says, "This is what the kingdom of God is like.

A man scatters seed on the ground."

It doesn't sound like power, control, dominance, wealth and security.

This is what the kingdom of God is like.

Instead, a man scatters seed on the ground.

Night and day, whether the man sleeps or gets up,

the seed sprouts and grows,

though he doesn't know how.

All by itself the soil produces,

first a stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.

Then he puts the sickle to it,

because the harvest has come.

Not power, control, dominance, wealth and security.

Seeds, and growth, and fruit.

The kingdom of God is being a little reckless.

It is letting something fall to the ground.

Out of your control, beyond your management.

It is letting the shell of protection break open and

letting something new emerge.

So it will be with the resurrection of the dead.

How are the dead raised?

The body that is sown in perishable.



It is raised imperishable.

It is sown in dishonour.

It is raised in glory.

It is sown in weakness.

It is raised in power.

It is sown a natural body.

It is raised a spiritual body.

The kingdom of God is like a person scattering seed

and letting our life in Christ, the gospel,

sink into the soil of lives around us, the world around us,

to germinate.

Night and day, whether the person sleeps or gets up,

the seed sprouts and grows,

though he doesn't know how.

All by itself the soil produces,

first a stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.

Then he puts the sickle to it,

because the harvest has come.

This past year with the capital campaign

we fixed the roof and the door and are attacking the mortgage,  
what is really exciting to celebrate and should be celebrated.

But equally are the seeds our congregation scatters  
and the seeds of resurrected lives it represents  
new, eternal lives of hope, and forgiveness,  
and redemption and purpose and grace  
which are being sown and spreading.

As we move forward this year,

the roof and door are fixed,  
the mortgage will shortly be something in our past.

We will have before us, greater opportunity and greater freedom,  
greater opportunity to scatter even more seeds.

Seeds that grow and transform into  
new eternal lives of hope, and forgiveness,  
and redemption and purpose and grace

That is the legacy and the beauty of this place.

Scattering seeds of resurrection.

We are building a legacy of seeds going out from this place,  
planted at Project Share Grand Prix's,  
at Habitat for Humanity lunches and builds  
in Nicaraguan children and churches  
in Egyptian mission work,  
in the lives of our young people  
who have served at camps and in places around the world,  
in the friendship and comfort of funeral lunches downstairs,  
and meals together at Christmas,  
in coming together to worship  
and to be prayed for, and to pray for others,  
seeds are planted through lives  
being brought to an awareness that God sees them,  
loves them, will redeem them, and restore them  
to hope and purpose and goodness.

Paul says,

So it will be with the resurrection of the dead.

We will be changed.

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable,

and the mortal with immortality.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable,

and the mortal with immortality,

then the saying that is written will come true:

‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’

We have an amazing congregation here.

We continue and continue to produce hundreds of seeds.

Completing the mortgage, finishing the roof and the door,

makes us stronger for more seed planting.

This coming year,

we will take time to discern

where and how we can most effectively

and in response to God’s leading, continue to plant seeds.

We will ask the questions

Where can God best use our focussed obedience?

Who needs us to bring the hope of the gospel to them?

Where does the seed that is new life need to be planted.

It will be a main conversation of our elders.

We will be attending some conferences.

We will have a Friday night and Saturday together  
as a congregation in April.

We want you to pray and consider, and listen and share  
how you feel God may be leading us.

Where is there soil ready to receive the seed of new life in Christ?

We have the opportunity to further spread the seed of the gospel,  
the seed of resurrected life,  
so that many others,  
in our neighbourhoods, and even around the world  
may experience the seed of Christ's love planted in them  
repentance and forgiveness taking root,  
grace growing,  
and life producing the fruit of the Spirit  
transforming into imperishable, immortal victory.

Resurrection is real.

The full, bodily resurrection of Christ is what the disciples and Paul  
gave witness too.

Death does not win.

So rather than being frightened, or discouraged, or apathetic,  
or defeatist,

we stand firm.

We let nothing move us.

We continue to work of planting the gospel.

Because the seed of the gospel that has been planted in us,  
is the seed of new, eternal, resurrected life.

The seed of the gospel that we plant

will bring new, eternal, resurrected life.

We will not be frightened, or discouraged, or apathetic, or defeatist.

We will stand firm.

We will own our victory over death through Christ.

We will bring his kingdom.

We will scatter seed and plant

the splendour of the imperishable, glorious, powerful,  
immortal and eternal, life,

that is life in Christ.

Amen.

Video