

The Resurrected Body

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 November 2022

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, we ask that you would gently but powerfully pour out the Holy Spirit upon us. Father, you know that we're afraid to talk about certain things. You know that we're afraid to think about certain things.

You know that we're afraid to speak about certain things. And Father, some of those things we shouldn't say are things that we shouldn't say. But others are that we need to learn, Father, how to talk about them and how to think about them.

And so we ask, Father, that we would receive the healing medicine, the healing sustenance, the healing food that your word is.

That as we think about Jesus and his death and resurrection, that your word would enter deep into our hearts, deep into the center of who we are. And that your word would rule there and form us so that we might live free lives for the good of others and for your great glory and the furtherance of your kingdom.

And we ask this, Father, in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. I'm going to talk about death.

[1 : 13] I'm going to talk about death this morning. And it's not because I have a fixation about it or anything, but it's because the Bible text talks about it. And we preach through books of the Bible.

Is this mic all right? It seems closer to something than usual. Anyway, we're all fine? Okay. I'm going to talk about death. And so just before we get into it, and I want to just, I mean, one of the things about being here, and not only those of you who are here and those of you who are online, I have no idea whether just this week you've gotten very bad news about a very serious illness, maybe cancer.

Maybe you have had that over the last little while and you haven't even told anybody about it. And so I just want to let you know that even though we're going to talk about some things here, and I acknowledge that I don't know your situation, and it might be hard to hear about death.

Maybe you've had the death of a loved one just recently, and you're here this morning or you're watching online. And some of this might be very difficult to think about and hear. But one of the things that we at Church of the Messiah are trying to do is that we're trying to learn more and more to trust the Bible and to trust Jesus and to walk towards those difficult things that he raises with us, rather than walking away from them or sticking our head in sand like an ostrich, to try to walk towards it with him and to get wisdom from it.

And if you are here today or online and you have had some very, very bad news, I mean, this is the best place to be able to share it.

[2 : 54] And if you're online and you have no one you can share it with, contact us and we'll see what we can do to try to help. But Jesus wants you to know his presence and power in the midst of the very hardest times in your life.

I personally take great comfort in the words of the 23rd Psalm. That go ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. And we have a good shepherd who walks with us in those hard times, even to the very point of death and beyond. But it was an odd text. It was a text about death. We're looking at the gospel.

Let's see what Jesus has to say about this. It's Mark chapter 12, verses 18 and following. Mark 12, 18 and following. If you're using one of these, it's on page 74.

And the Bible text is going to say something which is also, I mean, not only is it a bit hard because it talks about death, it's hard because he blows up the way that the average Canadian talks about death.

[4 : 03] So what happens? Let's see. Verse 18, And Sadducees came to him. Now just Sadducees, by the way, were one of the sort of groups or denominations, if you want to call it, that existed in Judaism at the time of Jesus.

This isn't an anthropology lecture or archaeology lecture, so I'm not going to bore you with all of the things that they believed and didn't believe. The two main things, one of them is that Mark himself lets you know the important piece of information, that they didn't believe there was life after death. They believed that when you died, you died. That was it. The other piece which isn't in here, which we know from ancient sources, is that most, if not all, priests at that time were Sadducees. And that's going to become relevant towards the end of the sermon. So I'll read it again. And Sadducees came to Jesus. They're the ones who say that there is no resurrection. In other words, you die and you die. You die and that's it. Nothing else. And they asked Jesus a question, saying, Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow, in other words, his brother's widow, and raise up offspring for his brother.

[5 : 25] In other words, Mary entered into a type of marital relationship with her to get her pregnant, so that she can have a child. And this is while he's also potentially married to his own wife.

Now, just sort of pause here again. For many of us, there's a yuck factor to this. And for some of you, there's a bit of a, that is really weird. George, is that really in the Bible?

Yes, it is in the Bible. It's in the book of Deuteronomy. And the other thing, in case some of you are wondering, does that mean Christians are supposed to be keeping this law today? And the answer, very briefly, is no, they're not.

But here I have a bit of a decision. I could talk about this law, as found in the book of Deuteronomy, or we could go on with the argument as Jesus develops it, and we're not going to talk about Deuteronomy.

When we preach through Deuteronomy someday, we'll talk about this for now. Now, actually, what you need to really get from this, the Sadducees, in a sense, were the typical Canadian atheists.

[6 : 35] They're just the same. I mean, obviously, they're different. I mean, the average Canadian atheist wouldn't be a priest. Well, maybe in some denominations, but we're not going to talk about that. But so just to make it in terms of where Canada is, in a sense, what the Sadducees are is they're the modern Canadian atheists.

And the Jewish people at the time, believe it or not, actually had similar views to most contemporary Canadians. And so that's the point. The Sadducees are the gadflies here in this case, and they're trying to puncture the common belief of the average Jewish person.

And so just listen to the rest of this, and then I'm going to show you how this is actually a very, very Canadian question. Like, it's... Don't get sidetracked with this odd law in Deuteronomy.

Just if you listen to the rest of it, you'll realize this is as if Christopher Hitchens was among us. This is as if a group of Canadians were to get...

have a full-blown discussion about issues that Canadians all have opinions on. So verse 20, here's how the argument goes, right?

[7 : 45] So in verse 19, you know, man's brother dies, leaves no child, so the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Verse 20, there were seven brothers.

The first took a wife, and when he died, he left no offspring. And the second took her and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring.

Last of all, the woman also died. So all seven of them had been married to the woman. Here's the question. In the resurrection, ha, ha, ha, they think, when they rise again, whose wife will she be for the seven had her as wife?

Now, how is this a very Canadian thing? Well, I've gone to lots of funerals. And I've led some funerals, obviously, quite a few over the years.

The average Canadian, what does the average Canadian believe? When you die, you go to a better place. That's what the average Canadian says. I've been to piles of funerals where they say, not only do you go to a better place, what else do they say?

[8 : 50] They'll say, mom is now reunited with dad or with the brother or the sister in a better place. It's a very, very Canadian thing, isn't it?

In fact, average Canadians sort of believe very similar to Jewish people. It's sort of, I'll not really define what that better place is, but fundamentally, it's sort of like earth, only maybe, I guess, a bit

better.

And you're not going to die again. And that's sort of what happens when you die. You go to a better place, which is better than here. You're not going to die again. And, well, the husband, the novel I'm reading right now, a constant refrain, as the guy is, the hero is thinking he might die, but it's not going to be a bad thing because he will be reunited with his wife, who's dead, and his daughter, who's died.

And that's a very Canadian thing. So, think about it then. We now have these, in a sense, ancient atheists who believe that when you die, you die. That's it.

And they now are talking to the average Canadian, and they're doing something that in Canadian culture is considered to be rude and ill-mannered. And so, maybe only stand-up comedians would talk about it, or me on this particular Sunday morning.

[10:01] And only because it's what the Bible says. So, what happens if you have a woman, and she's married to a man, and the man dies of a heart attack, and then she marries another man, and he dies of cancer, and then she marries another man, and he dies of a stroke.

She has very bad luck, obviously. And then finally, she dies. Well, at the funeral, when they say she goes to a better place, what's she going to do?

Is she going to have three husbands? It's not going to be a better place for the husbands, and if only she picks one of them, sucks to be the other two.

How's that a better place? Now, let's just sort of press into this argument a little bit, since we've opened the door of rudeness in Canadian culture. Imagine that there's a man and woman, and they're married.

They have a couple of kids. The woman, the husband, in very, very typical manner, after the kids have gotten a bit older, he finds a younger, prettier model, in quotation marks, and he divorces his first wife and marries his second wife.

[11:07] And then, three years later, or five years later, the man and his new wife, they die in a car accident out in the west end of the city, and the wife, she dies of some other reason in the east end of the city, and there's separate funerals.

And at the funeral, at the first wife's funeral, the priest or the minister or the officiant says she's gone to a better place. At the other funeral, of the man with his second wife, they say she's gone to a better place.

They've both gone to a better place. Well, how is it exactly a better place for the woman in the east end because she hates the guy's guts and despises the trophy wife? How is that a better place? How is that a better place? You can multiply. As you can see, there's profound problems with the average Canadian view. Now, just as an aside, obviously this is going beyond the text, but this is how I think the Sadducees would argue or the average Canadian atheist.

Many Canadians would say, okay, well, the better place isn't a physical place. It's sort of more of a spiritual place. In fact, that's actually how most people, many Canadians would think about it.

[12:17] It's like a spiritual place. You go to a, you're just like a spirit now. Well, some of you are big hockey fans and you know that you've heard of Boreas Salming, who was a famous defenseman for the Toronto Maple Leafs for many years.

I think he's in the Hall of Fame. And he just recently had a very emotional time in Toronto. He has Lou Gehrig's disease, very, very far advanced.

He's only 71 years old. There was a very emotional ceremony at Maple Leaf Gardens when he was wheeled out onto the ice with some of his former teammates. And a long ovation, he went back to Sweden and he just died a couple of days ago.

And Chris Selle, a columnist for the National Post, he's written, interestingly enough, he wrote a column yesterday in the paper arguing for medically assisted dying, as they have in Canada.

And here's how he begins his column. There probably isn't any good way to die from ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease. The cruel motor neuron disease that gradually renders its victims unable to speak, eat, move, and even breathe independently.

[13:38] It's among the most chilling diagnoses, surely. The idea of losing one's physical functions while one's mental functions remain mostly intact is the stuff of nightmares.

And we would all agree. All agree. But he's also just described heaven if it's spiritual with nothing physical. The average Canadian envisions a life that's like having ALS for all eternity.

A soul or a spirit with no physical connection. I guess some average Canadians would go, okay, but the other very typical way, and we'll move into the text to see what Jesus has to say about everything.

It's a very, very common thing to hear at funerals and in movies at funerals. People say something like, don't grieve for me when I die. I am in the wind.

I am in the flowers. I am in the sunshine. I am in the mountains. And they go a range of very, very beautiful things that they're going to be into.

[14:56] So don't grieve because that's where they've gone. To which the Sadducees would say this, really? You don't have the power to keep yourself alive and you have the power to do all that?

Like, how does that work? You don't even have the power to keep yourself alive, but you think you have the power to go in all the wind and all the flowers and all the sunshine? In fact, all that is is, sorry if I'm offending, it's a type of deep pride.

Unmoored from thinking. So the Sadducees are probably giving each other high fives because they think that Jesus has the average Canadian view of the afterlife and that as such, he'll have no answer to their question.

Now just sort of a pause here. One of the things that this text has really helped me to remember is, and it's an important thing for us, many of you will notice if you've come to the church before that I often don't use just the word God.

I mean, sometimes I say the word God, obviously. I mean, it's a church service. But increasingly, I try to use the word triune God. And that's because we need to remember that the average Canadian doesn't believe in the same God that the Christian believes in.

[16:26] That we as Christians have a fundamentally different view of what God is or who God is than most Canadians. I try to remember when people say they have problems with the idea of God or they don't see why it matters whether God exists, I try to remember to ask them, well, who or what do you think God is?

And if I remember to do that and then they try to describe it and then I tell them, well, I don't believe that God exists either, they're very surprised. Because the average Canadian thinks that I'm going to agree with them, that we're going to agree with them.

And the mistake that the Pharisees make is they think that Jesus has the average view of resurrection as he just has that average view.

But Jesus is going to show them that he doesn't. Look how Jesus now answers this particular issue. And what he does, he's going to sort of give three different fundamental images.

They're all very briefly written. They need to be unpacked a little bit. But what they are is an outline of reason, an outline of hope, and an outline of grace.

[17:35] They open a door to something which is both fully reasonable, but is also fully grounded in a good reason to have hope and an understanding of God's grace.

So let's see what happens. Verse 24. So Jesus said to them, Is this not the reason you are wrong? That's how he begins.

And as we're going to see in a moment, he's not only saying that they're wrong, but he's saying that in a sense the average Jewish belief is wrong as well. He's saying both are wrong.

Is this not the reason you are wrong? Because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. So he set before them that they're wrong. Second thing then is that the next thing is he gives the first of these three key sort of insights that we could meditate upon for a moment.

The first one is this, verse 25. For when they rise, that is when people rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage. But are like angels in heaven.

[18:39] Now just pause here for a second. It's a very, very short phrase. It's a very powerful and deep phrase. But it's easy to misunderstand it. He is not saying that when I die, I become an angel.

Or that when you die, you become an angel. He's not saying that at all. He's saying something different. He's saying... Well, here is...

Hear about it for a second. If you think about it, basically what he's saying is what happens after death is going to involve a world where our categories have next to no ability to comprehend it.

I'll explain a little bit in a moment. So we know a few things about angels for devout Christians. We know they exist. We know they're pure spirit. We know that God can send them and that they can do some things in this physical world.

And they can somehow or another communicate with human beings. But beyond that, do we know if they have friends? Do we know if they have anything corresponding to what we understand as sex or gender?

[19 : 52] Do we know how they communicate? Do we know what life is like for them? We don't know anything about them, really.

We just know they exist. And the fact of the matter is is that God couldn't even communicate to us, really, anything about angelic existence because it's in a completely different category.

Like, we don't have any categories for creatures that are pure spirit. Like, we just don't. I mean, that's just using our reason.

And so Jesus is saying that whatever is going to be in the new heaven and the new earth, and there is going to be a new heaven and new earth, there's going to be a resurrection. You have to understand that it's going into a realm where we don't have the categories to comprehend it.

I'll give you another example, which is a biblical example, not the one that Jesus uses. And I'm going to circle back, I think, as to why Jesus doesn't use this one. If you...

[20 : 50] I got this one from Sam Albury. A carrot seed doesn't look anything like a carrot. And an acorn doesn't look anything like an oak tree.

And if you imagine a world of, you know, somehow vaguely sentient, like carrot seeds it could think, and maybe they get some rumors from some divine being that there's something called carrots.

Well, they wouldn't have anything at all, they wouldn't have any way at all of understanding how when they die, they don't just become like a bigger seed, they become a carrot. Carrot. Like, carrots like water.

Seeds don't, because it'll kill them, right? Like, they don't have the categories for that. It's just completely different. Acorns and oak trees are so different, and an acorn can be carried around. They think, okay, that must mean oaks are better, so they get easier to carry around. No, no, no, no, you can't carry oak trees. No, no, that just doesn't make, they have no place to understand it. And so that's what Jesus is saying, that human beings do not have the categories to comprehend what the resurrected life is going to be like.

[21 : 59] Now, here's the second piece, because he doesn't just say this, he says this thing, and this is a very puzzling piece, and so you need to take a step back, and then you'll see how wonderful it is. Look at what he says next in verse 26.

So, by the way, back there, he doesn't say, the first thing that he's saying doesn't mean that there's no connections between husbands and wives, or kids and children, or parents. He's just saying, whatever's going to be there, there's no category in our experience for what that means.

That's what he's just saying. I can't answer it. Verse 26, and as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

Now, how does this prove anything at all? Well, it's a very subtle type of argument that he's making, that you only really understand if you understand all of the book of Genesis, and Exodus, and all those first five books, and it's this.

We use a human analogy. Imagine for a moment that your dad lives in another country, actually, and you've been promising, or just lives very far away, and you've been promising for a long time that you're going to return to that country to visit your father, or you're going to go to return to visit your mother, and then, I mean, apart from COVID, you're busy with jobs, you're busy with your kids, there's some financial crunches, you always mean very well, and you continually promise that you're going to come back, and you're going to see your parent, but then the parent dies, and you didn't keep your promise, right?

[23 : 43] For some people, it can be very, very hard. It doesn't even have to be another country. It could be something as simple as your grandfather, or some other loved one, really wants to return to the cottage that they grew up in, and experience just one more time, maybe, being able to be up there and have a campfire, or just enjoy the cottage, and you keep promising them you're going to take them, you're going to take them, you're going to take them, you're going to take them, and you just never get around to taking them, and then they die, and everybody would say, and you yourself would feel that you did not keep your promise, and it's the stuff of books and movies about how people wrestle with the guilt of not keeping their promise.

Now, when we were reading through the book of Genesis, the story of Abraham, earlier on in this year, one of the things, if you notice, and if you don't remember, you can go back and you can read, that God made a series of promises to Abraham, but at the end of the book, many of those promises weren't kept, or were they?

If they weren't kept, does that mean that God didn't keep his promise? Does God, the triune God, have regret that he didn't get to keep his word to Abraham? Well, the answer is, if Abraham is still alive, if Isaac is still alive, if Jacob is still alive, then you can't see that God didn't keep his promise. And that's what's significant about the quote. And here's the thing which is very important for us. And this is maybe part of the reason why Jesus uses the example of angels rather than seeds. See, the problem with the seed analogy is that we human beings might think, well, seeds turning, a carrot seed turning into a carrot is just a natural process. If you plant the carrot seed, unless the dogs dig it up, and so there's no, it doesn't grow, or unless a bunny rabbit comes as the green leaves are coming up and eats it and kills the carrot, that it's just a natural process.

[25 : 54] And we human beings might think it's just a natural process. In fact, that's what the average Canadian thinks, that it's just a natural process. You live, you die, and then you live in this new type of resurrected life, although you don't know how to answer the questions of the Sadducees, of the Canadian atheists.

And Jesus is saying it's not a natural process. People are kept alive after death because of the promise of God. You and I are dependent on the promise of God.

It's not natural. It's dependent on his promise. It's his promise that gives you life.

See, this actually is going to talk about another thing which is undergirding the average way that we Canadians think about things like this.

We tend to think of it in terms of either I defeat death and live or death defeats me and I die.

[27 : 01] I defeat death or death defeats me and Jesus is saying there's a that's not the right way to think about it.

It's not whether you defeat you're not going to defeat death you're just not going to defeat death. It is going to win. But there's another option that there can be a promise from God that you can share in the defeat of death of Jesus.

But to do that requires humbling yourself and letting go of your proud determination that unless you defeat death you want death to win and Jesus says no, no, no, no, no, no.

What you really need is the promise of God. And then the final piece of the puzzle is the third thing that he says that's verse 27.

He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You are quite wrong. And note here how he says wrong at the beginning and wrong at the end. And why is this interesting? This is a very powerful emotional not only is it an intellectual statement but it's an imaginative statement and an emotional statement.

[28 : 18] And we all intuitively understand that. That there's a radical difference between the God of the dead and the God of the living. They're radically different images of God. Those of you who like movies and books about drug cartels out of Mexico you'll know that there's a apparently if the books are accurate there's sort of a cult of a worship of a particular type of sort of Mexican type of goddess.

I think she's called Santeria and she's the goddess of death. And you go there and there's skulls and there's and it inspires them to kill and to rape and to loot and to do complete and other atrocities.

And you all would understand that if you were to go to a temple devoted to the God of death it would look very different than going to the temple devoted to the God of life. That they're emotionally intellectually completely and utterly different images.

And what Jesus is saying is the God the triune God who does exist is not the God of death he is the God of life. He is living alive the God of life.

And our entering into a life after death a resurrected life that we have no categories for in our mind is dependent not upon anything that you have done but upon the promise of God.

[29 : 39] It is based on the promise of God. And then of course in a couple of days see what I didn't tell you and some of you do know is that this incident in this story happens a couple of days before Jesus dies on a cross and happens then a day or two before Jesus will rise from the dead.

He will physically literally rise from the dead. He will enter into death taste all there is to taste of death and he will emerge on the far side of death having defeated the sin the rebellion against God which causes death and have defeated death itself.

And the good news and see by the way that's the power of God. Earlier on when Jesus says you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God he's not talking about the fact that God is omnipotent.

He doesn't say you do not know the scriptures you know neither the scriptures nor divine omnipotence. In the Bible the power of God is the death and resurrection of Jesus which is available for you to receive by faith.

I am not ashamed of the gospel. Why? For it is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. That's the message of the Bible. The message of the Bible is the power of God is the gospel the good news that Jesus lived the life you could not live.

[31 : 15] He died the death that you deserve. He takes upon himself the doom you deserve. He is your substitute. There's an active exchange and when you put your faith and trust in Jesus that which keeps you far from God that which means that death will triumph over you justly that Jesus takes all of that and he emerges on the far side of death and he speaks to you and me today on the far side of death saying come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly of heart and you will find rest for your souls. That is the constant message of the gospel the promise of God that if you put your faith and trust in Jesus you are united with Christ in his death and resurrection and you get to share in his resurrection.

salvation. Just a couple of things in closing. First of all one of the things which is really interesting about this text you see Jesus in a sense says that both the Sadducees and the average Jewish belief are wrong but at the same time he fulfills them in a surprising way in a far deeper way than they could ever have possibly imagined.

In Acts chapter 6 verse 7 there is a very small little verse which says that many priests came to believe in Jesus after his resurrection. In other words what he is saying is that many Sadducees came to believe in Jesus after his resurrection.

I mean he physically literally proved that resurrection was true. He physically literally proved. See the Sadducees wanted to emphasize reason and the average Canadian what they want to emphasize is intuition.

[33 : 07] And for Canadians there is no way to reconcile reason and intuition. Reason tells you that all die. Intuition tells you that death can't win.

And so we have these two different desires and there is no way to reconcile them within the categories of Canadian thought but in the gospel. Jesus says there's good historical reasons to believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

And reason itself points to the reasonableness of how Jesus has described what this new life, the resurrected life will look like. And to Canadians he's saying your intuitions are true.

They don't come from anywhere. I'm telling you your intuitions ultimately come from me. Love is stronger than death. I defeat death for you.

This text is also telling us that your body matters. In the resurrection I will have a body and so will you. See a human being, there's two ways to look at a human being.

[34 : 21] I mean every human being is made in the image of God and every human being is on one hand looked at from one angle. I am an embodied soul. And looked at from another way I am an ensouled, sorry, looked at from one way I am an embodied soul, looked at from another way I am an ensouled body.

We are meant to be soul and body, mind, heart, will, and body in a unity. That's how we were meant to be. That's how God designed us to be in his image.

And what this text is telling us is that the body matters. We in our day and age we tend to think that what really matters is that the mind matters or that the feelings matter or our desires matter.

As if somehow or another I am a set of desires trapped in a body, sometimes not the body that I want or I'm a mind trapped in a body. But the Bible says no, no, no.

God made you to be body and soul. You're to live now as a body and soul. You are to be redeemed as a body and soul and you will live forever as a body and soul, as an ensouled body and embodied soul.

