I Believe In The Resurrection Of The Body

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[0:00] My main purpose in speaking from the Apostles' Creed, we spoke a fortnight ago about the forgiveness of sins, and we mentioned that that describes our present existence, our present life.

And we're now going to be speaking on the resurrection of the body. The forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body, and life everlasting are the elements of the Creed that directly concern our life and our future.
As I say, my main goal here is I hope that these sermons, based on the Apostles' Creed, will be a comfort and an encouragement and an inspiration to all of us.
Our theme this evening is the resurrection of the body, and I'm going to be looking at four things.
One, resurrection of the body as an object of faith.
Two, faith's reasons for believing in the resurrection of the body. Three, the resurrected body and its pneumatic or spiritual humanity.
[1:20] And finally, the resurrection body and the resurrection body itself. Now, before I explore those four parts of the sermon with you, I just want to bring three introductory comments.

The first introductory comment regards the origin of the Apostles' Creed. And most people, I believe, reckon that the Apostles' Creed probably originated with people coming forward for baptism.
And there were asked questions such as, do you believe in God the Father Almighty? Do you believe in Jesus Christ as only Son our Lord? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?
Do you believe in God the Father?
Everlasting life. Third comment by way of introduction. The Apostles' Creed presents death as overcome. It does not even mention death, our death.
[2:53] It doesn't mention it at all. Carol Barth puts it this way. It introduces death into the movement of God's victory in the statements concerning Jesus Christ.

Okay, let's turn now to our first point. The resurrection of the body as an object of faith.
Do remember that all of these statements in the Apostles' Creed are objects of our faith. And I want to stress that, of our faith.
The New Testament has this tremendous line and sentence in it. We walk by faith, not by sight.
I'll repeat that again. I believe it's very important for our understanding of our whole Christianity. We walk or live by faith, not by sight.
[3:58] Sometimes I feel that we don't take this principle seriously enough, this truth seriously enough. And sometimes I think we even get to a stage where we think that we're walking by sight.

This faith in the resurrection of the body dares to declare itself in the face of the unrelenting specter of death all around us and throughout the entirety of history.
My own involvement with those who have lost loved ones is considerable. In my first year as a minister in Loch Inver, I had 26 funerals.
When I worked for five years in the children's hospice Robin House, there were on average 21 deaths of children every year.
And my colleague and I took most of those funerals. So I do not speak about this subject from a theoretical perspective, but I speak of it from a perspective of being involved with this great specter of death.
[5:18] Our present experiential existence as Christians is in many ways summed up in one word, contradiction. There is the contradiction of flesh and spirit, of Satan and Savior, of God's reign and chaos, of good and evil, of life and death, darkness and light, faith and unbelief.

Until our death, until Christ returns, this fault line of contradiction will be how we make or navigate our way as pilgrims in this life.

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This faith of ours in the resurrection of the body is part of this great contradiction. Every time we know about the death of someone, that's what I mean when I say that.
That's why the scripture says it's our faith that overcomes the world. Our faith stands in defiance of death, defiance of the coffin, defiance of the grave, with its seeming apparent victory.
And it dares to believe in the resurrection of that body which death has silenced. I'm old enough to remember Scottish television programmes that consisted of several parts.
[6:51] And when the first part of the programme finished, the words went up, end of part one. And then when the whole programme went up, the words went up, end of part one.

The wonderful thing for the Christian who sleeps in Jesus in death is it's not the end. It may well be the end in some sense of part one, but it's not the end.
The poet, John Dunn, the metaphysical poet, brings this out well in his famous poem, Death Be Not Proud.
And I'm just going to read a couple of lines of that poem. Death, be not proud, though some have called thee mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so.
For those whom thou thinkest thou dost overthrow, die not. Poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
[7:56] One short sleep past, we wake eternally. And death shall be no more. Death, thou shalt die.

And of course, paradoxically, it was a death that conquered death. The death of Jesus Christ. And so resurrection of the body, like every other part of our Christianity, is an object of faith.
That brings me to my second point. Faith's reasons for believing in the resurrection of the body.
Now, I'm not going to draw my comments from the gospels or the empty tomb or the appearances of Jesus or the evidence in the Bible and in history and all the rest of it.
And in bringing the second point, faith's reasons for believing in the resurrection of the body, I'm sticking with the Apostles' Creed because the reasons are right there in the creed.
Look at the beginning of that creed. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
[9:13] This God is not only our God. He is not only our Father, but he's the Father Almighty. And he's the creator of the universe.

Surely such a God cannot be overcome by even death of human beings. And then, of course, Jesus Christ.
Let me just say to you that everything is inextricably linked with Jesus Christ.
And that is particularly true of the resurrection of the body. Paul explores that, doesn't he, in chapter 15. And he tells us that if Jesus Christ has not risen, neither is there any resurrection for us.
We will only have hope in this life, he says, and we are of all people most miserable. But Jesus Christ has risen. Praise God and thank God for that.
[10:22] That creed reminds us that he was crucified, died, buried, descended. And some forms of the creed put it this way, to the dead.

Among the dead, where the dead are. But on the third day, he was raised again. So, the resurrection of Christ is critical to this object of faith.
I believe in the resurrection of the body, as is the union of Christ. But I will not explore that any further. The third reason from the creed for believing in the resurrection of the body is not only God, the Father Almighty, and Jesus Christ, his only Son and our Lord, but the Holy Spirit.
Because, you see, the Holy Spirit, no person can be a Christian who is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
And the Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And it's the hope of glory within us. And that Spirit that sinners is the pledge of everlasting life and resurrection life.
[11:41] Let me put it this way to you. If you're a Christian, there's a real seed of real new life within you through the Holy Spirit. What about each one of us tonight?

Do we have this wonderful seed of eternal life, of resurrection life, through the Holy Spirit being within us?
That brings me to my third point. Firstly, I've been saying that faith, sorry, resurrection of the body is an object of faith, like every other part of our Christianity.
Secondly, I've been saying that even within the creed itself, we can see valid reasons for our faith in believing in the resurrection of the body.

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But thirdly, I want to talk about the resurrection body and its pneumatic, if you like, hyphen humanity, or its spiritual hyphen humanity.
[12:51] First thing I want you to note is that the human body was part of the original purpose of God in creation. Let's remember when God said, let us make human beings in our image.

He wove and formed human beings from the dust of the ground. And he said when he had made the finished product of a human being with an embodied soul that it was good.
So the first thing I want you to notice is that the original purpose of God in creation was to have embodied human beings.
So that a human being by definition as created by God is not something that is disembodied.
We are not created as angels or rational spirits, but as embodied creatures in the image of God.
Second, that I want to say about this point is this.
[14:00] The humanity of Christ is critical to our hope of this belief in the resurrection body.
Because you see, if Jesus' body is not fully human, if it's not the real thing, then it's not a human body that rose from the dead.

If the risen body of Jesus isn't continuous in some way with that dead body of his that lay in the tomb, that would impact our hope in the resurrection of the body greatly.
Secondly, if Jesus did not have a real body, then that affects our hope in the resurrection body.
And furthermore, if the risen body of Jesus has no continuity with the dead body that lay in the tomb, then that also has great implications for our hope and belief in the resurrection of the body.
Karl Barth puts it this way, perhaps quite provocatively, but not wrongly in my view, you will find human life in eternity.
[15:28] Of course, our very saviour has gone into glory with that body with which he ate food, with that body that he asked people to touch him, like Thomas.

And with that body that he said, spirit doesn't have flesh and bones as you see me have. So this resurrected body is indeed going to still be a body, albeit a pneumatic and spiritual body, which leads me to my final point.
I want to say something about the resurrection body itself. Classical terminology used to try to get its head around the resurrection body with these two concepts, substance and quality.
When they used the word substance, they were referring to permanence. The part of something or entity that does not change.
And when they used quality, they were referring to change. When Paul talks about these changes from perishable to imperishable, from natural to spiritual, from weak to powerful, from dishonourable to glorious.
[16:56] And that classic language is talking of the qualitative changes. And the twinkling of an eye and a flash of light, says Paul, we will all be changed.

That's the common thing to whether we're alive when Christ returns or whether we're in the grave or wherever we are. We will all be changed.
And so that there is both continuity and discontinuity in the resurrected body. Continuity in the terms of identity.
It's that body that is dead that is going to be quickened and transformed. Discontinuity in the sense that it's going to be imperishable, powerful, glorious and spiritual.
Paul also adds, and is this not an amazing statement, that these resurrected bodies will be like his glorious body.
[18:09] You can read that in Philippians 3.1. And even it goes further. He says that these resurrected bodies will bear the image of his son.

You can read that in the second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 3, verse 18. In other words, the template for our resurrected bodies is the risen body of our saviour, Jesus Christ.
It follows then that our future life in the kingdom of God and the new heavens and the new earth will include a transformed spiritual or pneumatic bodily existence.
And that has implications that I don't want to take time. I don't have time to explore. But it has implications for the kind of service that we may be find when we are in the new heavens and the new earth and in glory.
Finally, I'm nearly finished. What are the lessons from this statement of the Apostles' Creed? I believe in the resurrection of the body.

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[19:20] One, our true destiny and happiness lie beyond this life. I'm not saying it's wrong to look for happiness in this life.

I'm not saying that you won't even find. I'm not saying you can't find happiness in this life. Of course you can. Of course you can. But our true destiny and our ultimate happiness lie beyond this life. And let me just say this as well. They lie beyond justification and forgiveness. By the way, both of which are intimately related. These are not ends, justification and forgiveness in themselves. They are not the telos. They are not the end goal of our redemption. The end goal of our redemption is Jesus prays that we will be with him in glory and that we will share his glory in those resurrected bodies.
Second lesson, our present identity is hidden under a veil. What is that veil? It's that contradiction, that fault line of contradiction that I was referring to.
[20:41] And, you know, at the veil, the resurrection, at the resurrection, the veil will be lifted. And we shall see through the glass clearly.

And we shall see our Savior as he truly is. This is our great hope. And sometimes, perhaps, maybe there is a degree of fear at the thought of coming before our judge, Jesus.
But let me close this sermon by reading directly from Calvin on this issue. I quote, Well, there it is. I believe in the resurrection of the body. I've tried to explore a little the resurrection of the body as an object of our faith.
I've tried to point to the even faith reasons within the tree for our belief. And thirdly, I've looked at the fact that the resurrected body will indeed be a body, albeit a pneumatic and spiritual body.
[22:45] And fourthly, we've looked at the glorious change and the glorious future that we as Christians have. Well, there it is.

I believe in the resurrection of the body. Is this your creed, your hope and your happiness and your goal?
May it be so. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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