

A Sure and Certain Hope: Cosmic Implications

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[0:00] Someone say no, they can't hear me. Yes. Thumbs up in the back. Yes. Thank you. Before I go into the sermon this morning, I just, we have reasons to give thanks to God.

If you haven't heard the news yet, I'll say more during the announcement, but we, the bishops have elected the third archbishop for our province.

The right reverend Stephen Wood was elected yesterday to be the next archbishop of ACNA. Let's pray for him and his family and continue to pray for our beloved province that the gospel of God will continue to advance and God will continue to guide and lead his church.

So before we, we will spend more time to pray for him during the prayers of the people. But let's go into God's word this morning. I invite you to open your Bible to 1 Corinthians 15. We're going to be looking at verse 20 to 34.

It's on page 1142 of your pew Bible. If you will grab your pew Bible, if you didn't bring a Bible of your own and open up so you can follow along. The prophet Isaiah says, He will swallow up death forever.

[1:25] And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all spaces. And the reproach of his people, he will take away from all the earth. For the Lord has spoken.

Let us pray. Blessed Lord, who has caused all these scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may hear, read, learn, and inwardly digest them.

That through the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast to the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen. So, last week, if you remember, we paused at verse 19. And I asked us this question last week.

If you believe in the resurrection of the dead, what then are you living for? What is your horizon?

[2:25] Because our future should shape how we live in the present. Our destination will undoubtedly be shaped, our destination will undoubtedly shape our journey.

For example, if you want to drive to Philadelphia, and you act towards Buffalo, that's the wrong way. You're going to end up in the wrong destination.

So, it is with the resurrection of the dead. So, it is with the resurrection of the dead. If the resurrection of the dead is a sure and certain reality for us, if it is your true north, then it will affect how you live in this present world.

Paul then invites us in the next verses to make decisions on how we are to live. He does that in verse 29 to 34.

But before we get to those verses, the first nine verses of the verses we're looking at this morning, verse 20 to 28, Paul gives us an outline of the cosmic implications of the resurrection of Jesus.

[3:45] And that's not an acerbole. The cosmic implications of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of the dead. And so, it gives us the implications.

By way of reminder, I just want to remind you that I want you to note, again, that the real issue that's going on here with the Corinthians, and perhaps with us as well, is the resurrection of the dead.

Not the resurrection of Jesus in particular, but our resurrection. That's what is being sort of in view, and being emphasized by Apostle Paul.

And Paul's argument so far, is that if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, out then can anyone say there is no resurrection of the dead.

And if there is no resurrection of the dead, from the dead, then Christians, you and I, are the sorriest people to have ever lived.

[4:46] That's what, I'm just paraphrasing what Paul says in verse 19. We're the sorriest people to ever live, if there is no resurrection from the dead. Of course, we're not sorry people.

We're not, because, in fact, we are most fortunate of all people, because as Paul continues in verse 20, in fact, Christ has been risen from the dead.

It is a fact. The first fruit of those who are falling asleep. Now, the word, the first fruit, is an agricultural term.

If you know anything at all about farming, and I'm not an expert about farming, by the way, but I know this much. If you know that, if you know anything about farming, you know that the first yield of the harvest is indicative of what?

The quality of the later harvest to come. And so Paul is saying here, that Christ is the first fruit, as it were, the first yield of the harvest, of those who are being raised to new life.

[5 : 59] He's the first fruit of the resurrection. Therefore, His rising from the dead, in victory, is the assurance that we will also be raised to resurrection life.

In other words, the resurrection of Jesus Christ has ushered in the beginning of the resurrection age. We live, brothers and sisters, in the resurrection age.

The Holy Spirit, which raised Christ from the dead, dwells in every believer. If you believe in Jesus Christ, the spirit that raised Christ from the dead, dwells in you.

This resurrection power, has transformed you, from death, into life, spiritually. That's happened, if you've come to know Jesus.

Jesus. And, that work of transformation, will be made complete, on that day, when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable.

[7 : 04] We'll look more further into that, next week. The good news is this. The good news is that, this resurrection life, this eternal life, is available, to all who hear, and believe, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I want to repeat that. The resurrection life, the resurrection power, is available, to whom? All, who hear, and believe, the gospel of Jesus.

That's the good news. Paul continues in verse 21, when he emphasized, the resurrection, and the reign of Christ. He says, For as by a man, came death, by a man, has come also, the resurrection of the dead.

Well, we've said this before. There are only two kinds of people, in the world. There are only two kinds of people, in the world. Those in Adam, and those in Christ.

those who are in the man, through whom death came, and those who are in the man, through whom the resurrection, of the dead, comes.

[8 : 22] We've seen that, the resurrection of the dead, came through Jesus. But, it is through Adam, that death came, isn't it? By his fall. Paul tells us in verse 22, For in Adam, all die.

So also in Christ, shall all be made alive. Now, just remember again, that Paul is speaking here, to Christians. Those who have come to faith, in Jesus Christ. So when he says all here, he's talking about Christians.

All, who are believers in Christ, have died in Adam, but have now been made alive, in Jesus Christ. Adam, is our representative, before God.

And we've all sinned in Adam. Not just because of Adam's sin, but also our sin, has condemned us. But in Christ, we have been counted righteous, through whose effort, through whose merit.

Not ours, but through the work, and marriage, of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have been counted righteous, because Jesus, is our perfect representative, before God.

[9 : 29] In Adam, we were dead. We were condemned, by the law. We're condemned to die. But in Christ, we have been made, a new humanity.

So, if the resurrection age, is here, then why are Christians, why do Christians, who have died, already, in faith, why have they not been raised?

I just said, we live in the resurrection age. For that matter, why are we, still in this body, of sin and decay? Don't you just wish, sometimes, that you would just, get that resurrection body, already?

Yes, I do as well. So, Paul answers, Paul answers that question, in verse 23 and 24, by showing us, that there is a timeline, in God's plan, of God's salvation plan, as he has ordered it, because God, is a God of order.

We saw that, in chapter 14. So, Paul says, in verse 23, but each, so, Christ is the first fruits, of the resurrection, from the dead, but, each, in his own order, in verse 23, Christ the first fruits, then, at his coming, those who belong, to Christ.

[10:52] Christ, then, verse 24, comes the end, when he delivers, the kingdom to God, the Father, after destroying, every rule, and every authority, and power.

The resurrection of Christ, signifies, his victory, over the grave. We know this, at his resurrection, sin and death, were defeated.

The order is that, Christ has risen. Not only risen, he's risen and ascended, to heaven. He sits, at the right hand, of the Father, interceding for his church, praying for you and me, preparing a place, as he promised, in his Father's house, for us, that he will come, and take us to, forever.

And, at his second coming, he comes, not as a baby, in a manger, he comes, as a reigning king, as a conquering ruler, having all authority, and power, including the power, over death, and the grave. And, at his word, all who are dead, in Christ, shall rise, to everlasting life. Death, who has already been defeated, remember, death has been defeated, at the death, and resurrection, of Jesus.

[12:16] Death, who has already been defeated, will be commanded, at that time, to give up the body, of the deceased. Those in Adam, will also rise, but they will be, they will be, they will rise, to damnation.

While those in Christ, will rise, those in Christ, who is the true Adam, will rise, and will be raised, in glory. I want you to read, read ahead, this week, verse 35 on, of 1 Corinthians 15, and see what Paul, talks about, how he talks about, the resurrected, the resurrected body, that we will have.

Do that, do that homework, and read ahead. It's lovely reading, it's comforting, joyous reading. And so that was, that's what's going to happen, when he comes.

All those who receive, the gospel unto salvation, are under, Christ's lordship, and under his reign. And so, by the way, that doesn't mean, he's not king, now, he is king, now, but on that day, his reign, reign, will be seen, and known, and will be undeniable, even those who don't have faith in him, it will be undeniable to them.

Believer, and unbeliever alike, they will know, and they will see, that he is lord of all. Every rule, Paul tells us, every competing authority, and power of this world, and that means, every single one of them, will be under, his, conqueror's feet.

[13:52] And having succeeded, where Adam failed, in having dominion, and authority, over all of God's creation, as the true Adam, Jesus Christ, will deliver it all, to his father.

That's what Paul goes on, in 27 and 28. For God has put all things, in subjection, under his feet. But when it says, all things are put in subjection, it is plain, that he is accepted, will put all things, in subjection, under him.

When all things, are subjected to him, then the son himself, that is Jesus Christ himself, will also be subjected, to him, who put all things, in subjection, under him. That God may be whole, in all.

So, having succeeded, that is, Jesus having succeeded, in restoring, what sin had destroyed, having redeemed the world, and reconciled man, back to God, having placed, all powers, in heaven and on earth, under his feet, Jesus Christ, will then deliver, it all, to his father.

Even though, there is, equality of dignity, between the Godhead, equality of dignity, and equality of power, between the father, and the son, and the Holy Spirit, even between, the trinity, there is an order, as it pertains, to their action, in the world.

[15:06] And this is what, Paul is alluding to, the father sends, the son goes, and accomplishes, the work, in perfect obedience, and submission, to his father's will. The spirit comes, to empower, and to give life.

So, what Paul has in view, in verse 27, and 28, is the incarnate son, having fulfilled, all that he is sent to do, he will now place, all things, under the father's feet, in completeness, all things, will have been accomplished, so that God, will be all in all.

But let's go back, to verse 25, briefly. Because, Paul says, here in verse 25, that he must reign, until he has put, all his enemies, under his feet.

The last enemy, to be destroyed, is, what? Death. You know, the messianic, reign of Christ, began, really, in, in, in full power, at his resurrection.

Which is why, the early church, confessed, that Christ is Lord. It was the resurrection, that confirmed, and affirmed, that Christ, is indeed, who he claimed to be.

[16:28] It is why, James, who was a skeptic, believed. It is why, Paul, who was an enemy, of the church, believed. The church, confessed, Christ is Lord, and not Caesar.

And they were killed, for that confession. Many Christians, are even killed, even today, on the basis, of the same confession. That Christ, is Lord. Christ, is King.

He is, because, he is, he is, death has been, done, a death, a death blow, by our Lord himself.

That's a tongue twister. Death, has been done, a death blow, by Christ himself.

Death, has been defamed. It's sting, it's gone. Does, does anyone know, what happens to a bee, when it stings you? It dies.

I actually, didn't know that, until I was, preparing for this. When, when a bee, stings you, it loses its finger. And if it does, it will die.

[17 : 36] Not immediately, it probably will fly away, but death, is imminent, for the bee. That's what's happened, with death, when it encounters, Jesus Christ.

Death, add an encounter, with the Lord of life. But in the exchange, only, Christ's heel, was bruised, as promised, but death's head, was crushed.

C.S. Lewis, perfectly allegorized this, in his, in his, in his book, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. If you remember that, remember, Aslan, sacrificed, stood in the place of, Edmund, the traitor, and, was sacrificed.

But, but there's, there's a, but then it arose. But there's a, there's a line in that book, that says this, If an innocent victim, willingly offered his own life, in place of a traitor's, the deeper magic, would reverse death itself, and restore them to life.

Well, Mr. Lewis, didn't embed that line, or that notion really. He got it from the great story. The great story of God's plan, to defeat evil, and save a people for himself.

[18 : 56] That's where Lewis got it from. There is only one, who can innocently, innocently, stand before God. The man, Jesus Christ. And he asked, he's the only innocent one, and he has freely, offered himself, he's freely offered himself, as an atoning sacrifice, for us.

We were the traitors. We were the traitors. He died on the cross. Bore upon himself, your guilt and your shame.

Paid all the penalty, you owe. But only his heel, was bruised. That's the good news. There is a deeper magic still, as Lewis says.

A deeper truth, that what this world, than what this world, will have you believe. This is nothing more, than the words of promise. This is nothing more, than the gospel, of our salvation.

The gospel, that spoke, of a suffering servant, who will come, and die, and bear the guilt, and also speak, that this suffering servant, will also be what?

[20 : 09] A conquering king, who has come, to set us free, and make all things new. This is what has happened, in the death, and resurrection, of Jesus Christ.

The promise, has been fulfilled. But we do know, don't we, that death, still stalks, about. We feel it, in our bones. Death stalking about.

It stalks about, for those in, but here's the truth. Even though, death still stalks about, for those, who are in Christ, death, is defeated.

It's lost, it's sting, what will later tell us. Because, Christ's victory, is ours. Because, Christ's resurrection, is yours.

There is, then you have, victory over death, as well. There is, dead humanity, in Adam, and there's a living, humanity, in Christ.

[21 : 09] These are the only, two options, brothers and sisters. You can either be, in one or the other. There are only, two kinds of humans. Those in Adam, and those in Christ. Those who hope, in this world, that is, perishing.

And those who hope, in Christ, and the new world, that he brings. And this is the story, for all of human beings, regardless of your status, or your achievements, or your place of birth.

So again, the question is this. What is your horizon? How will you set the course, of your life, given the reality, of the resurrection, from the dead?

Well, Paul goes on, in verse 29 to 34, and I, I think it, it gives us, three things, that we ought to do, if this is true. If the resurrection, of the dead is true, how do you set, the course of your life?

Well, the first thing is, you follow Jesus. The second is, that you die, to yourself. And the third is, that you live, for the future. Let's look at each one. Follow Jesus.

[22 : 14] There is only one guarantee. Only one, arc of safety, from the coming judgment. And that is, faith in Jesus Christ.

There is no other way. His resurrection, guarantees, your resurrection. And it guarantees, your victory over death. You know, the book of common prayer, in the order for the burial, of the dead, it goes, something like this.

In the midst of life, we are in death. Job agrees. Job says, in Job 14, verse 1 and 2, Man who is born, of a woman, is few of days, and full of trouble.

He comes out, like a flower, and withers. He flees, like a shadow, and continues not. That is life. If you are breeding, you are dying.

That is the nature, of this life. The question then follows, of whom may we seek, for rescue, but of thee, O Lord.

[23 : 31] So as we come to verse 29, think about this. I want you to keep that question, in mind. Of whom shall we go, for help, in the midst of death? Of whom shall we go?

To whom shall we run? Verse 29 says, Otherwise, what do people mean, by being baptized, on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized, on their behalf?

Well, regarding the phrase, being baptized, on behalf of the dead, I must confess, that, as I looked at this, every, every, theologian, every commentary says, we don't actually know, exactly what Paul means, by, being baptized, on behalf of the dead.

It's not really, awkward what you would like to hear, but, but it's, they pretty much agree, on the fact that, they don't really know, what he means by that. But it's clear, in the context, and they, they agreed on that too, that, the first Corinthians, knew what he meant.

Because, in the context, in which he says it to them, it's something, that he stated, as a matter of, common knowledge, between the two of them. But there are, there are some good, options out there, about what, what he might mean.

[24 : 44] And I want to suggest, one to you. We know, that the, baptism, as we think of that phrase, we know that baptism, is, depicts the binary nature, of the human destiny.

When, when you come, to be baptized, you're, you're actually, admitting, that there are, two primary destiny, as we've said earlier. You're either in Adam, or you're in Christ.

And so, when you come to baptism, you're coming, and you're confessing, to be in Christ. The sacrament of baptism, is a visible sign, of an invisible, reality, of grace.

So, what happens to us, when we come to baptism? Or when we bring our children, to baptism?

The New Testament, describe it as, a symbolic act, of death, and resurrection.

We die, when we come. We are buried with Christ, in the waters of baptism. And then, we are raised, to the new resurrected life, with Him.

[25 : 52] That's what's going on. That's what's prefigured, in baptism. So, we can say with Paul, I have been crucified, with Christ. It is no longer, I will live, but Christ, who lives in me.

This is how, the early church fathers, actually understood, this verse, verse 29. You are being baptized, on behalf of, your dead body. You are acknowledging, that you are then, dead, to the world.

And your life, now belongs to whom? Jesus Christ. ends the invitation, that Paul gives, to follow Jesus, in this present world.

Your life is His. He has ransomed you, with the price, of His shed blood. So you now belong to Him. So when we say, to one another, remember your baptism.

We're saying, remember, that you have died with Him, and you've been raised with Him, in resurrection power. Remember, that what is true of Him, in His resurrected body, that is your destiny as well.

[26 : 59] Remember, your baptism. And I, and the manner in which, you do that remembrance, and the manner in which, you live it out, is by dying, to yourself.

You know, the rest of the apostles, were, were perfect examples, of this. Paul goes on, and he describes, his own life, and his fellow apostles, in verse 30 to 32. He says, why are we, the we there, is himself, and his fellow apostles.

Why are we in danger, every hour? I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus, our Lord, I die every day.

What he's saying is, I caught, I danced with death, every day, in my ministry. What do I gain, if humanly speaking, I fought with beasts, at Ephesus, if the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

That is a, that's a Greek phrase. That is a phrase, that he's quoting, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Those who have no hope, of life after death, say that.

[28 : 10] And Paul says, if there is no resurrection, of the dead, I will say it along with them. But, Paul believes, in the resurrection, of the dead. So he lived his life, constantly, at the brink of death,

because he knew what?

He knew that the resurrection, is true, and he knew that, is, and that is what he has in mind, as he lived his life. He knew that the things, of this world, are passing away.

The things, that man glories in. The degree. The letters, after your name. Or maybe it's before your name.

The honorifics. The house. Even those relationships. If they are not anchored, in Christ.

Those relationships, do not endure this age, that is destined, for destruction. So, Paul says, where are you building, brothers and sisters?

[29:15] Are you investing, in the things, that will last? Like Paul, are we willing, to die every day?

Are we willing, to follow Jesus, and die to ourselves, and to the world? Paul says, if the dead are not raised, let us eat, and drink for tomorrow, we die. But he says, in verse 33, do not be deceived.

Bad company, ruins good morals. You know, that verse is often quoted. My parents told me, that verse a lot, growing up. Bad company, ruins good morals.

But it's, that's not, the context at all, that Paul has in view. Well yeah, that is true, you know, if you lie with dogs, you will, what's the phrase? You get, you catch fleas, or something like that, right?

That's kind of, that's kind of, what, but that's not really what, that's not really what, Paul has in mind. He has in mind, the two kinds of human beings. Are you in Christ?

[30:16] Are you in Adam? If you're in Christ, don't join, the bad company, of those who are perishing. That's the dynamics, that's the context in which Paul says this.

Do not be deceived, brothers and sisters. It's not saying, only hang out with respectable people. It's not saying, only hang out with people who are in your economic practice.

prophets. It's saying, do not associate yourself with the world that is perishing. He says in verse 34, wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning, for some have no knowledge of God.

I say this to your shame. So, this is Paul's last invitation for us. Live, now, for the future.

Live for the future. And by this, Paul is encouraging us to devote ourselves to godly living. He reviewed the Corinthians, who were too busy living for this world.

[31:22] That's what's been the problem in the Corinthian church. They were living for this world that is perishing. And I feel the weight of Paul's rebuke in these verses. I hope you feel it too.

Don't be worldly minded, but rather, be heavenly minded. You are not of this world, brothers and sisters. You are not of this world any longer, if you are in Christ.

You belong to that eternal city, the heavenly Jerusalem. You belong to her, and you belong to her king, Jesus Christ.

Christ. So why are you living for this decaying world instead of living for Christ? Beloved, let us heed the loving words of the apostle.

Wake up from your drunken stupor as is right, and do not go on sinning. And let us go to him in prayer as we do so.

[32:24] Let's go to him in prayer and ask for his grace to help us in living for him. O gracious God, we do confess that in the midst of life we are in death.

Who else can we seek for rescue for you, O Lord, who is justly displeased for our sins. Yet, O Lord God, most holy, O Lord, most mighty, O holy and most merciful Savior, deliver us.

Deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death. You know, O Lord, the secrets of our hearts. Do not shut your merciful ears to our prayer.

Spare us, most holy Lord. O holy and merciful Savior, you are the most worthy. You are the judge eternal. Sustain us in this world by your Holy Spirit.

And suffer us not at our last hour for any pains of death to fall away from you. In Christ's most holy name we pray.

[33:42] Amen.