

Christ the firstfruits (All-Age Talk)

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Preacher: Chris Lowe

[0 : 00] But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive, but each in turn. Christ the firstfruits, then when he comes, those who belong to him.

Tyler, thank you, I'd love us to keep 1 Corinthians 15 open just as we look at this over the next 10 minutes or so. And what I want to speak about is not just the fact of Jesus rising from the dead, which we've looked at already, but what it means for us today in the 21st century.

And the verse I want to focus on is verse 20 here, which says, Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who've fallen asleep.

Let me just read on a bit. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive, but each in turn.

[1 : 12] Christ the firstfruits, then when he comes, those who belong to him. Did you see in those verses how Christ is described, what he's described as?

Says here in the Bible that Jesus Christ is the firstfruits. He's the firstfruits. And I guess you know what that is.

The firstfruits. Say you own an orchard of apple trees, like you do. Honeycrisp or Macintosh or garlic or whatever the variety is, which I looked on the internet this morning.

They're just apples really to me. And say it's the second week of September and you're in the evening sun and the branches are heavy and loaded with fruit. And you go up to your tree in the orchard and you cup one of the apples in the palm of your hand and you twist gently and it comes away.

The first apple. And you bite easily into the firm flesh and you feel the crunch and the juice. And with that first apple in your hand, you know that the apple harvest is here.

[2 : 18] And so you go back indoors with your one half eaten apple and you say, look, it's the firstfruits, it's the firstfruits. And the firstfruit in your hands, you know what that means, right? The firstfruit means that there is more to come.

There's many more to come. It's guaranteed because the harvest is ready. In fact, basketfuls and basketfuls, if you like, of ripe apples are on their way.

There is a bumper harvest coming just like this one. And Paul says here in verse 20, Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

So as you look back to the resurrection of Jesus, what you're meant to understand is that from among the dead, from among those who have fallen asleep, if you like, Christ is the first one to rise bodily.

And 2000 years ago in history, the first apple not fell from the tree, but came up from the ground.

[3 : 28] And it says in the Bible so very clearly, this is the claim that as the firstfruit, like the first ripe apple from the tree, his resurrection from the dead, it guarantees that there are more and more to come.

If you can see this, here's Christ. And because he was raised from the dead and he's the firstfruits, there is a bumper harvest that will come. A bumper harvest, in fact, not of apples, but of other human beings like you and like me.

Who the Bible says will rise bodily from the dead just like him? Because Jesus Christ is the firstfruits.

Here's the verse on the screen, Christ has been raised from the dead, fact, he is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. So that's the New Testament image, the truth that the Bible wants to

get under our skin.

I don't know what you think of that. It's actually an enormous thing to say. And I guess you could sit here this morning and say, I think I know what you're saying. It's a lovely picture. It's a nice illustration.

[4 : 42] This whole apple-y firstfruits harvest thing. But does it have anything to do with reality? Because it can't be true, can it? Surely.

That one man's supposed rising from the dead can actually do anything for us when we die, can it? Like, can the resurrection of Jesus really be bound up with something for us, like this?

Well, you get the picture, right, with the firstfruits. What happens for the firstfruit apple will happen for the rest because they're all apples together from the same tree. It cannot really be, can it?

That what happened for Christ will happen for the rest of the dead because we're somehow together with him. Can it? And Paul says in these verses, it's exactly like that.

It is exactly like that. And that is verses 21 and 22. If you've got that open in front of you, take a deep breath because this is deep and serious.

[5 : 48] Look at this, verses 21 and 22. For because since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man.

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. Okay, you've got to take a deep breath. This is something I want you to think about that for a moment.

Think firstly, with this verse, about death. How come death comes to us all? And the Bible answer is not, hey, death just happens, it's natural, there's nothing you can do about it.

Death for human beings like us comes through and from a man, Adam. The Bible calls him the first man.

So in the Garden of Eden in Genesis chapter 3, Adam turned away from God and sinned against him. And because of that, God said to him, you will die.

[6 : 54] Dust you are and to dust you will return. And death came to Adam, the first man, because he had sinned. But death did not just come to him.

Death, verse 21, do you see, came through him. Forgive me for putting it like this, but over here is going to be the table of death. And it says that death came through one man.

And it says in the next verse, do you see, that in Adam all die.

So this is the reality for the human race, for people like you and me, picturing these silly little people with their costumes on.

This is the reality of life for us, that like an infection, death has spread to us. Because we as a human race, we are, we're kind of bound up in a bundle with the first man, Adam.

[8 : 04] We're born as one of Adam's descendants. We sin like Adam. We die like Adam. That is how death works in God's world, through one man.

Like it or not, you and I are born into a human race that is by nature bound up with the first man.

And what happened to him happens to us. In Adam all die, this verse says.

I don't need to tell you on Easter Sunday morning that death is awful. It's awful. I mean, verse 26, Paul will call death the last enemy.

It is a fierce and powerful enemy against whom we have no defence. I will die. And you will die. And the people whom we love will die. And it should not be like that.

And death is a scary enemy too. It's why we desperately try to look young and dress young and put the cream on and obsess about our health.

[9 : 05] Desperate to try to hold it at bay under the surface. Or we give up in despair and say, let us just eat and drink and have as much fun as we can. Because tomorrow we die.

How awful that death comes to us through one man in Adam. But actually in these verses, Paul's point is wonderfully positive.

Because this is the point. Just as death comes through one man, so it can be and so it is with resurrection and life.

Look at this, verse 21. Since death came through a man, in the same way the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

The resurrection of the dead. You say, what is that? I don't know if you know this, but the Christian hope is not heaven. It's not kind of wispy, cloudy nothingness.

[10 : 08] It is not. The Old Testament hope in the Bible is resurrection from the dead. Now look at these verses on the screen from years and years before Jesus came.

Isaiah 26, I haven't got it written down. But your dead will live, Lord. Their bodies will rise. Let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning. The earth will give birth to her dead. Or Daniel chapter 12. The hope, the promise of God, is that those who are in the dust, when you're cremated or buried and you've returned to them, the great hope is that we will awake and arise.

C.S. Lewis puts it like this. We will be human beings who will come not as floating spirits, but as solid men who cast shadows in the sunlight and make a noise when we tramp the floors.

C.S. Lewis puts it like this. That's the Bible promise. That having died, we can one day be made alive again, even more real and solid than we are right now.

[11 : 25] I think, imagine being a part of that, personally. Imagine you, your body, rising from the dust of death. And you wake up and shout for joy and your heart beats in a new, restored, physical body as you stand with the ground beneath your feet.

And it's not just you, but it's multitudes, millions. The resurrection from the dead, promised and a stunning future. C.S. Lewis, I'd fear death less, surely.

I wouldn't need to obsess about my health. I wouldn't need to desperately try to live longer now in this brief crack of light. I wouldn't need to enjoy myself to the max before the nothingness.

I could actually live without fear and serve my God till my dying day with solid hope for this life and the next. Here's Paul's point.

Just come back to the verse. Since death came through a man, in the same way the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

[12 : 36] Ask which man? The man is Jesus. The one through whom the resurrection of the dead comes. That is 2,000 years ago, they saw it, Christ rose in history.

He rose from the dead. He rose from the dust. Just one man. And the Bible says that through this one man comes the resurrection of the dead.

The resurrection of the dead. What was promised in Isaiah, what was promised in Daniel, the resurrection of the dead, it took place.

It began when Christ was raised from the dead. So that, verse 22, as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

Do you see this this morning? In Adam all die. But in Christ all will be made alive.

[13 : 45] That is to say it's possible for us now, we who by nature are bound up in death with the first man, it is possible now in your life to be bound up in a bundle with this second man, with Christ.

And when you are no longer in Adam, but in Christ, verse 22 says that in Christ all will be made alive.

You become one of the fruit of which Christ is the first fruits. Because that is how resurrection and life works in God's world.

It comes to you through one man. We can be bound up with this second man, Jesus Christ, so that what happened for him in the past bodily, will certainly happen for us in the future, our bodily resurrection, the resurrection of the dead.

But each in turn, Christ, the first fruits, 2,000 years ago, and then when he comes, those who belong to him.

[14 : 56] Just as the first apples begin and guarantee a bumper harvest, so Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, begins and guarantees the resurrection of the dead, your resurrection, if you belong to him.

See, the good news of this resurrection gospel is that Jesus Christ has undone and overturned death itself, so that people like you and me, who deserve to die for all eternity, can instead be raised from the dead and made alive for all eternity.

And the day is coming when Jesus Christ comes again in glory, and on that day, we will be made alive, we who belong to him. I'm just saying one thing this morning, really, from verse 20.

Verse 20, Christ has been raised from the dead, and he is the first fruits. of those who belong to him. And so here is the key question today for every living person around the world and all through history, do you belong to him?

Do you belong to this risen, death-destroying saviour? Are you bound up in a bundle now with Christ? See, in Adam, all die, all of us, by nature.

[16 : 23] We who've turned from the living God, we deserve to, we will die and return to the dust and die eternally. But Jesus came into the world and he lived and he died and he rose to offer us

life.

And the simple gospel call to every living human being is repent and believe. recognizing that death is coming to you, turn away from an independent life and turn to Jesus.

Come to him, run to him, put your faith in him. Jesus, you are my Lord and my saviour. I will trust and follow you. Put your faith in Jesus Christ.

Christ. And the Bible says you will find yourself in him. You'll find yourself belonging to him. You'll find yourself part of his, all through history and all around the world, family, you'll be one of his. And if today you are in Christ, then forgiveness and life and resurrection life is yours. If you are in Christ today, then you need not fear your death.

[17 : 30] You need not obsess desperately about your health. You need not enjoy myself now or else. You can live freely and serve your God gladly and without fear.

And you can do that until you fall asleep in death. And you can know with absolute total certainty that when your saviour comes on resurrection day, you will rise.

You will wake up and you will shout for joy. and clothed in a new resurrection body that's free from sin and shame and weakness and death.

You will be absolutely alive, more alive than you've ever been because you will be made alive through Christ for all eternity. Another wonderful Easter hope to people in a dying world.

Christ has been raised from the dead and he is the first fruits. He's just the first fruits. He is the first fruits of those who fall asleep.

[18 : 33] I'm going to lead us in a prayer and then we are going to sing together. Almighty God, what a glory and a grace that the resurrection of the dead has come through one man.

We would hardly believe it were it not to have happened and people saw him and spoke of him. We thank you for Jesus who in his life has overturned Adam and death.

Thank you for his conquering of that which we fear so much. And we praise and thank you that in Christ all shall be made alive.

Would you please make us, men and women, boys and girls, those who turn to and trust in your life-giving saviour that we might live with joy and without fear until the day of resurrection.

And we pray that in Jesus' name. Amen.