

⁴² So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a physical body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the physical and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, made of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As one of dust, so are those who are of the dust, and as one of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the one of dust, we will also bear the image of the one of heaven.

⁵⁰ What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Look, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When this perishable body puts on imperishability and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God

FIRST READING: Job 19:23-27

"O that my words were written down! O that they were inscribed in a book! ²⁴ O that with an iron pen and with lead they were engraved on a rock forever! ²⁵ For I know that my vindicator lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth; ²⁶ and after my skin has been destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷ whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me! This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God

“I Believe in...the Resurrection of the Body” (The Apostles’ Creed)

What happens to us when we die? It’s a question that we all ask at some point...what happens to us when we die? Now usually, when we ask this question, we’re wondering not what happens to our bodies. We’re aware that they eventually return to the dust from which they came. We are wondering whether our LIVES somehow continue after on we have died? Is there something more? And the Apostles’ Creed, which we have been studying for the last 5 weeks, offers a profound “Yes, yes, yes”.¹ But it also asks us to affirm this phrase, “*I believe in the resurrection of the body*”. So, what does this mean? (*repeat*) Let’s give it some attention today, this final week of study of one our most beautiful and ancient confessions of Faith.

For the longest time, I thought the phrase referred to Jesus’ resurrection. And it made sense to me because we, Christians. believe, as the absolute foundation to our Faith, that Jesus’ resurrection was God’s response to all that holds us captive. Jesus’ resurrection, his coming forth out of the tomb, after having been crucified and after having died, demonstrated for those witnessing it and for all humanity forevermore, that he has triumphed not only over death, but over evil of all kind...hate, sin, fear, injustice. He has triumphed over “*everything that,*” Paul Tillich says, “*subjects us to bondage and servitude*”². And it was his showing of his touchable living body, the wounds in his hands, the piercing in his side, that proved it...it proved that if this promise, life prevails over death, is true then all the others too are true.

- Love is stronger than hate
- Justice will roll down like the waters
- Every tear will be washed away and
- We can know a new life of peace, beginning now, in this flesh, and continuing on with Jesus forever and ever

Yes, it made sense to me to affirm in the Creed, “*I believe in the resurrection of the body*” *Jesus’ body*.

¹ Adam Hamilton. *Creed* (Nashville: Abingdon Press;2008),145-168.

² Paul Tillich. *The Shaking of the Foundations* (London:SCM Press;1949),170. (Quoted in Adam Hamilton, *Creed*)

But, the phrase, friends, refers also to us. For Scripture says, “*For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.*” (Rom 6:5) Jesus came to be with us and for us, to share our flesh and share our lot. He takes on what belongs to us, and he gives us what belongs to him. As Rev. James Smith says, “We’re talking about changing from our physical reality and living into the future hope, moving from the already to the not yet.”³ Paul says, “*we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands*” (2 Cor 5:1). “*The resurrection of the body*” refers to the resurrection of OUR bodies too. It refers to the resurrection of our bodies, not just Jesus’ and not just our souls, but our bodies, too.

Soooo are our bodies somehow magically knit back together again once we die? No. No, and I, for one, am actually pretty glad for this. I’ve enjoyed this body. It has served me well, but it seems to be prone to the need for surgeries, and I’m sort of running out of parts to give up. I’m also now finding skin to be wrinkling, sagging, bones to creak. I can’t seem to keep the lids of my very near-sighted eyes open after about 11pm anymore. No, I’m not, particularly interested in having this body again after I die.

And that’s good because it is not these bodies that we’re told we will have. In the 1st Corinthians text today, Paul explains that ours is “*a physical body when it’s put into the ground, but it’s raised as a spiritual body.*” (1 Cor 15:43) God does not need our mortal bodies to raise us from the dead. When we read about Jesus’ post resurrection appearances, we learn that his closest friends (Mary, the men on the road to Emmaus) did not recognize him at first, and that he also walked through walls. But then also, he was able to eat and drink. His resurrected, glorified body was the same but different! Ours too. Our spiritual, heavenly bodies will not be subject to disease, aches, pains yet like Jesus, they will be able to touch, feel, eat, drink, see, and hear. We will look differently, but somehow those who have known us will know us.

In my time as a pastor, I have come to know that the promise of new, spiritual bodies brings great comfort. There is a wonderful story that *Rev. Dr. Thomas Long* tells about the war hero

³ Jeff Smith. “I Believe in the Resurrection and the Life Everlasting” <https://www.firstpresboone.org/sermon-apostles-creed/> (accessed 7-22-23)

and head of state, Charles de Gaulle, and his wife, Yvonne. They were the parents of Anne, a child with Down's syndrome. Every day, regardless of what was going on in the affairs of state, de Gaulle would come home and play tenderly with his child. Then, he and Yvonne, would put her to bed. Yvonne would often say, "Oh, Charles, why couldn't she have been like the others? I have prayed so often that she could have been like the others." Anne died before reaching full adulthood, and the family had a private graveside mass. When the mass was over, Yvonne was reluctant to leave the grave, reluctant to leave her beloved daughter. Charles rested his hand on Yvonne's arm and said to her, "Come, Yvonne, Now, she is like the others." ⁴

Yes, the promise of new, spiritual bodies can bring great comfort, but also hope. *I recall years and years ago visiting a home at the time of the very faithful matriarch's passing. Mike and I had served as her transportation to church for quite some time because she had come to a point where walking was difficult for her. I recall the family's conversation in their living room. She had died only hours before, but they were already imagining her in heaven, dancing with the angels, ordering them around, kicking up her heels in the process. The laughter got louder and louder as the image of her was further and further embellished. But then suddenly, one son realized that they hadn't secured a place to meet her in heaven once they all arrived too. It caused them some panic for a time, but then they decided, I believe, that they'd all meet at the East gate because morning was her favorite time of the day and certainly, she'd be there watching the sun come up. Her funeral was equally joyful, a celebration of her life, and an affirmation of what we confess in the Creed...the hope of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.*

Brothers and sisters, Jesus' bodily resurrection, and his promise that we too will be raised, is God's answer to the question every human asks about death and the afterlife. Evil doesn't have the final word in our lives. Love wins over hate, life over death, and a new, forgiven, free life is offered us to live with him forever. *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"* And we will be renewed in all beautiful and wonderful ways together. This is the

⁴ Thomas Long. *What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering and the Crisis of Faith.* (Grand Rapids: W. B Eerdmans; 2011), 151.

reason we need affirm our resurrection in our Creed. We need hear our voices say the truth. We need stand on what he came to prove to us. We need show the world not only what we believe, but what we're counting on. Jesus said, "*I am the resurrection and the life....Because I live, you will live also*" (Jn 14:19). Our answer..."*I believe in the resurrection of the body*"!

Let us stand to confess our faith together.