

All Will Be Made Alive  
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**1 Corinthians 15:19-26**

<sup>19</sup>If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

<sup>21</sup>For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; <sup>22</sup>for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. <sup>23</sup>But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

<sup>24</sup>Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup>For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup>The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

**Luke 24:1-12**

<sup>1</sup> But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. <sup>2</sup>They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup>but when they went in, they did not find the body. <sup>4</sup>While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. <sup>5</sup>The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. <sup>6</sup>Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup>that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.’ <sup>8</sup>Then they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup>and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup>Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. <sup>11</sup>But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup>But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

“For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.” There are many layers to this phrase from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. In part, we can read this and be reminded that, because of Adam’s behavior in the garden, *adam*, the human, made from *adamah*, the earth, all humans know death – because Adam acted separately from God, we became separated from God. We die because Adam died. Christ died and rose again to new life and now we who are also human are no longer separated from God. We celebrate this promised life eternal with God today, this Easter Sunday.

We can also understand “For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ” to point us toward what we celebrate every Sunday. In separating from God, the human focuses on threats and worries, seeking self-sufficiency, forgetting to rely on God, sometimes even “will”fully choosing not to rely on God. When we follow the way of the human we get wrapped up in all that can go wrong, we get wrapped up in the legacy we want to leave, we get wrapped up in the threat of death. These are the wrappings of our burial clothes.

When we follow the way of Jesus, we rely on God. We remember that we have no need to fear because God provides homes for the birds of the air and finery for the lilies of the field. We follow Jesus in loving others and caring for others and forgiving others and we are unbound from the wrappings and freed from our tombs. Professor Christopher R. Hutson describes this freedom through the effects of the cross, saying, “In the end time, every rule, authority, and power is destroyed...The reign of God is not about defeating sinful people, who are mere symptoms; rather, it is about defeating death itself, the root motivation for sin.”<sup>1</sup> When we follow the way of Jesus, we are able to live not our wills but God’s.<sup>2</sup>

The human’s way, fearing death, causes us to focus on survival instead of service. This is true of individuals and of churches. Death clings to us, its cold grip running icy fingers on our most tender places. Where do you feel death and decay, feel fear and the draining of life instead of life-giving warmth, like that of a sunny day? What death, what loss, scares us, prompts us to hold on even more tightly? Control? Anger? Health or relationship or life in general, as we once knew it?

We hold on tightly, hands closed against receiving surprising newness, like the women carrying their spices to the tomb. As his followers did throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus’ disciples seemed always caught off guard when he did something new – they seemed to be expecting the “same old, same old” yet that was never what Jesus had to offer. The “same old, same old” were the human ways, the ways of death. Jesus brought a new way, a way of

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<sup>1</sup> *Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 1*, p. 355.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 22:42.

life. And yet despite example after example, the women thought his death would be like all others, and so they came to tend to his human body as they had for family and friends for generations. What they found was Jesus surprising them yet again, with his ways of life. And so the men said to these women, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.”

Easter is a repeated clarion call to leave the old, human ways behind for a better way, for the way of God as shown through the surprising Christ. We are called every Sunday to this, to worry ourselves with service instead of survival. We hear this today and every Sunday because it is not easy for us to let go - to let go of control, to let go of anger, to let go of the way it used to be, to let go of Adam’s ways - in favor of rest and renewal in Christ. Our work is for a lifetime. Noted author “Marcus Borg writes that ‘death and resurrection became a metaphor for the internal spiritual process that lies at the heart of the Christian path.’”<sup>3</sup> Professor Jerry Irish adds, “That process entails the death of our self-seeking ego...With that death comes a resurrection, a gift of new life empowered by God’s gracious love.”<sup>4</sup> A new life of service, not survival.

God’s views of dead and alive are not equal to the human views, which are limited to the body. Within this very life, we can be dead to the way in which God created us or we can be alive. Each time we celebrate Christ’s resurrection with the loud proclamations that Christ is risen we are opening our hands, even if only a little bit, to receive the newness God wishes to give, the newness God is always extending in offering. Every time we turn ourselves outward, focusing on the lives of others instead of focusing on our own deaths, we celebrate Christ’s resurrection. In Adam we die; in Christ we are made alive.

While they believed that death had taken Christ, the women at the tomb bowed to the very earth from which they came. Once they remembered all he had said, they recognized that his rising was not actually a surprise, they realized he had come to new life through rising, and they arose. Friends, arise, for you need not remain dead – Christ is making you alive. Thanks be to God!

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<sup>3</sup> *Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 1*, p. 354.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Let us pray: O Lord, we give thanks that in seeing Christ risen, we understand that we, too, can taste new life. End our schemes for survival and send us out in service, we pray. Amen.