

Easter 2023

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you very much, Elliot. Jesus is alive and also very much alive is this cool little photo booth over there. If you haven't been told, that is for anybody. If they wanna take a little family photo after their service, please don't do it during the sermon.

That would be super, super awkward. Those of you who couldn't be with us here today on Easter, we totally miss you. And there are people we know and love for very good reasons couldn't be in the room with us.

We dearly miss you. And just know that we love you so much. And thank you for listening. One of the glories of Easter, from what I could tell, is color has exploded in the room, right?

One of the fun things about Easter is like, you know, for the kids, it's the eggs. Apparently for the adults, especially the ladies, it's wearing white pants and very colorful clothes.

That makes Easter, you know, fun. But we know what the power of Easter means. It means resurrection life, the promise of resurrection life. It's life after death. But not only life after death, it's life after life after death.

[1 : 0 3] And so the promise of Jesus coming one day where our bodies will be made new and glorified and we will rule and reign with him one day forever. But as much as we can be familiar with that concept, man, the familiarity of it can breed contempt.

And if we're honest, most of us are just like a little bit, meh, about Easter as far as the story goes. We're not really sure we want what it offers.

And what I'm not saying is, is I'm not saying it's like, man, you know what, we need to change so that we so look forward to dying, right, and to be with Jesus. I'm not saying that. We should love this life. It's a gift. And we should enjoy being here.

But there's another aspect to this. It's how much do we really want Jesus to come back? And if we're honest, we probably all got good reasons why we would say, Lord, please tarry yet a little longer.

I'm gonna be honest. When I was 18 years old, my reason was I had just learned they were gonna release the Lord of the Rings trilogy. And when I learned about that, I said, oh, please, Lord, please do not return until I got to see all three of those movies.

[2 : 1 1] Anyways, now you know how much of a geek I am. Some of you are thinking, wow, bro, yours was way more PG than mine. But we all have a reason to say, Jesus, don't come back just yet.

But that reveals something significant about our hearts and probably significant about our lack of understanding of Easter. We don't know what we're looking forward to. We don't know what we're missing out on.

And for today's sermon, I wanna focus on an aspect of the resurrection that is probably the least considered and the least understood, the most misunderstood yet is so important.

And I want us to consider what the resurrection means for our bodies. And I'd wager that most of us haven't spent much time thinking about this, and yet we live in a culture that is extremely body conscious.

I would say to the level of obsession. Consider the amount of time, money, research, the amount of ink and paper that has been used to talk about and look at and research, healing the body, shaping the body, enhancing the body, sculpting the body, all that stuff.

[3 : 16] As much as we try to perfect our bodies, we all share this in common. When it comes to our own body, I would reckon to say we all experience a degree of shame with our bodies, and maybe even a little bit of disappointment with it, right?

There are parts of our bodies that we wish, like, gosh, I wish that was a little bit different about me. Now, there is something to be said in all this about being a good steward of the body that we've been given, but we have to admit that our obsession goes way beyond that.

I would wager that our body obsession is caused by how little attention we give to the next life. And yet, I want us to consider this. When Jesus rose from the dead, he spent 40 days after that with his disciples.

And Jesus could have come back in any way. He could have come back as a spirit, but you know what? He came back with a body. And this was, in part, to pull back the curtain and show us what was to come.

His disciples didn't have to wonder because they were looking and touching and seeing the very prototype, right? And God doesn't need to beta test to make some tweaks to get the next versions right.

[4 : 33] What they saw of Jesus, they could say, like, oh, my goodness, this is what we get to look forward to. So let's lean in today and come with honesty with where we are. Some of us, we're dealing with bodies that have chronic pain, serious illness.

We want a different body, but not really sure what we could be looking forward to. Others of us, we don't want what is coming and are doing whatever we can to avoid and stop or at least slow down the aging.

But to get the most out of today, we need more than honesty. We need to have a better imagination. And I'm not, like, saying, hey, let's act like little kids in the backyard playing pretend.

We just need to go beyond the limits of what we can see and know and into the realm of what will be that we can't see. And if the resurrection of Jesus's body really happened, we can go from imagination to believing.

And the resurrection promises a body that isn't just different, it promises a body that is better. And so let's dive into a passage that can help us see this. We're gonna be in 2 Corinthians chapter five, and we're gonna go look at verses one to 10 today.

[5 : 42] There will also be verses up on the screen. For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on, we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body, excuse me, and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. This is God's word.

[6 : 51] So this passage you'll see in verse one, it really doesn't start out with like the feel goods. In verse one, it says our body is like an earthly tent that is gonna be destroyed, right?

Kind of a downer, tough way to start. But even if that's bad news, we all know this is true, right? Our earthly bodies are like aging tents. Back when I was very young, 16 years old, me and my brothers, we decided to go backpacking with my dad and in this place called Onion Valley, it's in the Sierra Nevadas.

The trailhead starts at about 6,000 feet and you end up camping at 9,000 feet. So you're way up there, you know, which just means you're huffing and puffing a lot. And, you know, we thought we're young enough, we got this, we had this old pup tent.

My dad's like, oh, that'll be fine. We'll just throw some sleeping bags, get that pup tent. We get up there, we make camp and this pup tent is like faded, stained, smells a little funny.

It is stretched out in different places, worn thin. There's a little bit of tears here and there. And some of the poles aren't where they're, you know, are gone missing, the pegs aren't there.

[7 : 58] There's just a whole lot of problems, right? It's like the Charlie Brown of tents. It's bad. And so fortunately, we get it set up and it snowed that night while we're sleeping in the tent.

And of course, what that meant is we slept in nice puddles of snow melt, which was super freezing, good times. It wouldn't be wrong to say that that tent let us down, right?

But that is the story of our bodies. That is the story of my body, this tent that I am living in. It is letting me down. I love to play soccer, if you can call it that.

I am constantly, though, when I play, hurting myself, pulling a muscle. The young guys are now running circles around me. I often get picked last.

Now, my brain tells me I'm still 18. I can run around and do all these things. However, my body keeps making these very compelling counter arguments otherwise. Unfortunately, though, this is what I got.

[9 : 00] I can't trade in this tent, all right? That pup tent that we brought up, we could just upgrade and buy a new one, right? Right off the shelf. I don't get to do that. I got to live with the spots and the leaks and the tears and the stretch marks and the whatever else is happening in my body and it's only getting worse.

We are dying and one day we will die. Happy Easter. What I am feeling and what we all feel is that our bodies long to be replaced, not just continually patched up.

They want to be made new. Verse two, it says, for in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling.

Romans eight is another verse that talks about this. It actually speaks of all creation groaning with eager anticipation too. Why? Why is my body growing? Why is all creation groaning?

Because what is coming is far better than what is now. And how much better is this? It says in Romans eight, verse 18, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

[10 : 18] Something's coming that's gonna be revealed that we can anticipate. That is better than what we're dealing with now. But why don't we long for that? Why are we obsessed with this old tent?

Because we have no idea what we're missing. C.S. Lewis speaks in his essay, The Weight of Glory. He kind of gets at this. He says this, we are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition where infinite joy is offered us.

And like an ignorant child, he wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased just like that.

But let's stop being far too easily pleased and consider what this resurrection body will be like. And we have some clues that are given to us in this passage. In the second part of verse one, it says we have a building from God, talking about these new bodies.

A house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And then in verse five, the beginning of verse five, it says he who has prepared us for this very thing is God.

[11 : 29] And so what this is saying is we are promised an eternal body that's prepared by God. We, you know, I think we have a really small and possibly even boring view of what resurrection life will be like, right?

We often kind of get these pictures from far side and these other places where it's like, we just seem to be people sitting around on clouds or by the pearly gates playing harps. That's what we're doing. We don't get to do fun stuff anymore, right?

It's like, what about the surfing and the fishing and the boating and the, man, what about that, you know? Well, how do we know we're not gonna be doing those things anymore? How do we know we won't be able to travel and explore?

Consider this, consider this. Why would God renew the whole earth and all the heavens if all we were going to do in eternity is stay in one little place and do a never-ending worship service?

Seems like a lot of unnecessary space if it's never gonna be used. And I'm not going on beyond the Bible here. There are verses that can help us tease this out and stoke our imaginations of what could be.

[12 : 38] 2 Timothy 2, verses 11 to 12 says this, this saying is trustworthy. For if we have died with him, speaking of Jesus, we will also live with him.

And if we endure, we will also reign with him. And what does that reigning look like? Well, again, in the book of Revelation, John writes about the coming resurrection day when the new Jerusalem, this new heavenly city, is gonna come down from heaven into earth when the earth is renewed.

And look at what it says about this. There's a lot of stuff happening, but in verse 26, he says this, they, people, will bring into it, the new Jerusalem, the glory and honor of the nations.

People are coming in. People are going out. What is described here is a ruling and reigning and exercise of dominion over the earth by God's people in this new heavens and new earth.

And this isn't a stretch because it's similar to the mandate God gave Adam and Eve in the very first chapter of the Bible. The mission of God, he said, was go, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it, right?

[13 : 49] And which is why he made man and woman in his image. Now, I want us to get back to realize there's a really big theological premise, right? We are made in God's image. It was lost because of the fall, but now in Jesus Christ, that image is renewed once again.

Now, here's the thing about what it means to be an image bearer. It is literally to be an idol, to reflect the image of God. God cast us in his image, but we are not stone, metal objects that are not alive.

We are living, breathing, animated things that reflect his glory. And in those days, an image bearer or an idol would be plopped into an area, and that signified a ruler or a king's reign over that specific.

So if you were to travel from one city to another or one area to another, one nation to another, when you came across the borders of this new nation, there would often be the image of that king that would say, you are now entering the place where I am ruling and reigning.

Think about this. We are gonna be in heaven ruling and reigning over the earth as his image bears, which means that everywhere we go, we are saying God is in authority in this place.

[14 : 59] God is ruling and reigning over here. And what was lost because of sin by Adam and Eve and now is being worked out through the history of redemption is gonna be fully realized in the new heavens and the new earth.

It's a beautiful promise and it's a beautiful thing. And so we have a lot of reason to lean into this idea of, you know what, the new heavens and the new earth, these new bodies, we're gonna be doing a lot more with them than just a never-ending worship service.

There will be moving about. There will be exploration. There will be bringing in the glory and tributes of the nations into the temple of God, the city of God. There's gonna be a lot of cool stuff that's gonna be going on in everlasting life.

And we can't fully know the details, but what we do know is that all of this is prepared by God, as it says. This same God who made everything from nothing and he is a God that is good.

He is goodness himself and he gets us. So you can trust that this new place will fit us better than this place. And to that point, our resurrection bodies will fit in that place better.

[16 : 06] As it says at the end of verse one, that resurrection body is going to be eternal in the heavens. Our bodies are gonna be eternal. Which means, think about this, it means we will live like time is never a threat.

And you're like, so what? Well, fuel or fear is fueled by the awareness that time is running out. If you've ever taken the SATs, you understand what that means.

Parents with teenagers, you start to feel how short time is. You start to feel the pressure to make every moment count before they are about to leave the house.

That pressure and anxiety mounts as you feel the need to squeeze the marrow out of the next few years. And we feel the same pressure with our bodies. We got to make the most of them while they're useful and strong and our minds are sharp.

And we say things like, enjoy it while you're young. Or, you know, that's just a part of getting older. We feel the pressure of time not being on our side.

[17 : 13] It's against us in this life. And because of that, it's really easy to live with regret because of this. Constantly wondering if we should have done better or could have done better with the time that we had.

which is a great recipe for becoming neurotic, let me just add. And I'm sure that's contributed to the rise in anxiety and depression these days because we have, as a society, rejected the eternity outright.

Or we've just lost sight of it. But we don't have to. We can reclaim that. And that the victory of the resurrection is this. 1 Corinthians 15, 53 to 55 says this.

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable. This mortal body must put on immortality. And when the perishable puts on the imperishable, the mortal puts on immortality.

Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

[18 : 16] Friends, the body that is coming is very much a real body. It's just not perish. It's not gonna perish. It's gonna last forever.

Time is no longer a factor, which means, amongst other things, everything sad will become untrue. We experience sadness as an emotion when we have lost something significant to us or we are realizing we are losing something significant to us that we have no ability to hold onto.

But in eternity, with imperishable bodies, that won't be a thing. All the sad stuff is gonna be wiped away. Revelation 21, 2 to 4, it says, and I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them as their God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. And this is the good news.

[19 : 31] This is the good news of the resurrection. The former things have passed away, right? What does that mean? It's all the former sad things. God himself is with us as our God, which means we're not gonna be dealing with the idols of our heart, right?

Those idols that always break the hearts of their worshipers. There's gonna be no more pain that defines our lives. And so this is the good news. We know that God will be with us and we won't have pain.

And however, I think we can often just stop there. And that would be too quick because there's so much more. How about the very next part? It says, every tear will be wiped away.

One of the things I love about Christianity is how it speaks to what humanity is really like. We aren't machines. We are integrated beings. We are mind and body and soul.

And God says to us and has promised to us in the resurrection life that is to come, I'm not gonna deal with just the physical pain and wipe it away, but also with the mental pain and the emotional pain.

[20 : 33] I'm gonna heal it all. There's gonna be no more sadness, no more mourning, no more crying. Can you imagine what that would be like? It's kind of hard to.

But man, we gotta do our best to press into that. Remember, we are given glimpses to help us imagine. Because they serve like a postcard to a place that we are about to go to.

In 2 Corinthians 5 verse 4, the first part says, for while we are still in this tent, we groan and we are being burdened. While we live in this tent, we are burdened.

But in the resurrection life with imperishable bodies, we are going to be free from the burdens of life. The burden to make this life count and all the busyness and all the regret and all the stress we carry because of it.

We're gonna be free from it. The burden of self-obsession. All the selfies, all the weighing ourselves, the annual checkups, what clothes we should be wearing so we could feel confident.

[21 : 33] We're gonna be free from it. Peter Kreeft says this about heaven, about the new heavens and the new earth. He says there's gonna be no mirrors there.

We will be totally free from self-obsession and self-hatred. Now, I feel like we've just scratched the surface here, but I want us to quickly consider three implications that Paul then lays out regarding how this revelation of our future body should change us.

And the first one comes from verse 6 and verse 7. It says, so we are always of good courage. We are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith and not by sight.

Implication one for you and me of the resurrection is this changes how we view and treat ourselves. We know, we know that this is an aging tent that we live in.

And that's okay. That's okay. We don't have to fight against it because it will become new and improved one day. Imperishable. And we can look in the mirror today and not be dismayed at another wrinkle or age spot or chin or receding hairline.

[22 : 49] I don't have to feel despair about getting picked last for soccer anymore. We are people of good courage. And this courage comes from the second implication found in verse 8.

Yes, we are of good courage and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. Implication number two, this changes what we're looking forward to.

We don't look back, longing for the good old days when we were younger, stronger, more beautiful. We could remember things. And then we don't look forward with this great fear of our inevitable death.

Why? Because when we die, that means we're gonna be with the Lord. Which implies that what we know and experience of God now isn't close to what it will be like then.

And this knowing changes how we live now. Verse 9, so whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. But what does it mean to please him? Well, it's got to do with others.

[23 : 56] In verses 14 to 16 of the same chapter, it says, for the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this, that one has died for all, therefore all have died.

And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.

The final implication, this changes how we view and treat others. Easter doesn't just change us individually. It has horizontal ramifications.

When it says we no longer regard people according to the flesh, it means we stop analyzing, we stop categorizing, we stop judging people.

But it means a lot more than just being nice. We have a vital job that God gave to us. It says in verse 17, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

[24 : 58] The oldest passed away, behold, the new has come. Okay? All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and then did what? Gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

We are more than just nice people. We are more than people just trying to get along. We are ministers of this message of reconciliation.

That word reconciliation, this is what you need to have in your head. It's an image of divided flesh that was once one.

Okay? And we live in a world where the relational fabric is split and torn and frayed all over the place. And as Christians, we are called here to bring into this world the healing gospel that has the power, this gospel that is, the message of reconciliation that is the power to sew up the relational fabric that is torn and cleft and bleeding all over the place.

[26 : 19] This hope of reconciliation that can take what has been divided and bring it back into oneness. And this gospel has that power because it's about a savior, Jesus Christ, whose body, his flesh was cut and divided and pierced.

His wounds represent the relational reality caused by our sin. But his resurrection means those wounds can be healed by him and through him.

As the band comes up, I want us to consider how to respond. And I want to speak to those of us in the room who are here listening maybe online and just not yet a follower of Jesus.

And I'm glad that you are here and I just want to appeal to you and to make it very clear that the most important relational rift is between you and God.

Sin has rendered a gap between you and him that only Jesus can heal. And he did that by coming and dying on the cross and rising from the dead. There is nothing that you can do to heal that gap and reconcile that relationship.

[27 : 30] No amount of good works, no nobility of life and noble efforts can do that. You can't close that gap. All that God requires is that you hear that message of reconciliation, that Jesus came and died in your place.

And that you listen to that and you believe that and you repent, which means you turn from your sin, you recognize your sin and you turn from your sin and you believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

You turn to him as Lord and Savior and you say, man, I am no longer going to live life on my terms, but I am going to live for his glory, surrendered to him. And if you are feeling prompted in your soul right now and thinking like, man, this is making sense, that's probably God doing something in your heart and we're gonna have a slide coming up to pray a prayer.

And we, I would encourage you to pray that prayer. It's a very simple prayer. It's a prayer of surrender. I'm gonna show that slide right now for the next couple of minutes. And I wanna say to you, if you pray that prayer, man, that's awesome.

And I would say, man, come, please tell somebody, whether it's me or Elliot or Otis who was up there or any of these guys up here, we would love to know that you have given your life to Jesus and we're saved today.

[28 : 47] If you're here and you're already a follower of Jesus, I hope this morning we've increased our longing for the resurrection. Romans 8 uses a powerful metaphor, one of a woman in labor.

And have you ever seen a pregnant woman who just wants to keep on being pregnant? Who just wants to keep on getting bigger and bigger and more uncomfortable? Of course not.

In the same way, we should be growing increasingly uncomfortable. But many of us aren't. We are content in the wrong things and we are uncomfortable about what we should be looking forward to.

Rather than just doing better and trying harder, we're invited to repent and believe the gospel again today. And today we're gonna do that together, doing something a little different if you would stand with me.

And in a moment, there's gonna be a slide up here and we're gonna read that together corporately as a body and this is a prayer of confession of sin. And it's something that we can read with honesty and we can read aloud that is personal to us and is true for us.

[29 : 59] And we're gonna read it together, aloud together, confessing our sin together and afterwards, I'm going to respond with an assurance of pardon. But first, let's read this and if you can just follow my cadence as we do this.

Father, we confess that we have not set our minds and our hopes on things that are above. We place our thoughts and our desires on things of this earth.

We show with our choices that we think world is for our forever home. In doing so, we show we don't really believe that what you are preparing for us is better.

Father, forgive us. Now, hear the truth of God's response to your confession of sin and your plea for the Father's forgiveness. And for those of you who've just become followers of Jesus, what I'm saying is true for you too.

I wanna say to you and just receive, not from me, but from God. For those who place their hope in the death and resurrection of Christ and those who lift their weary eyes and set them on the resurrected King.

[31 : 11] If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, the new has come, and the new is coming. Jesus is coming to wipe away every tear from our eyes and make all things new.

Set your eyes and your hopes on things above where God is seated who will one day bring you home. Amen.