

Paul's point is that every one of us must connect with one of the two men: Adam, in whom we are born and remain unless converted, or Jesus, in whom we receive the image of heaven. That's why Paul urges us, *"Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God"* (Col 3:1-3). Paul is urging us to live in our lives what God in his grace has already made us to be: his dear sons and daughters, who by faith bear the likeness of his Son, Jesus Christ, who Paul calls *"the heavenly man."*

And so, we began today with questions about the body we'll have in heaven. Providing ample evidence, Paul answers, "Your resurrection body, while the same, will be different, spectacularly and gloriously different." And all of this is possible only because of the victory that is ours in Christ Jesus.

2. Paul says, starting with verse 50, *"I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'" And what follows has been called by many the great triumphant song of the resurrection, verses 55 to the end: *"Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."**

There's only one way that death's fatal work can be undone, and that's for the sin that places us sinners under its dominance and control to be nullified. If someone can remove that sin and cancel its guilt by suffering sin's sting in our place and as our substitute, then death can no longer claim us as its victims. Then death has been rendered powerless. That's what Jesus did. That's why Jesus came—to live, suffer, die, and then rise again—that we might be set free from sin and death and look forward to an eternity in heaven. *"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work"* (1 Jn 3:8). God tells us in his Word. How appropriate it is for us, then, to join with Paul and say: *"Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Amen.

1 Corinthians 15:35-57 – Fully Equipped – The Resurrected Body
11/13/16 – St. Paul, Muskego, WI – 729, 219, 728, 215, 213
Pastor David M. Kuehl

Being a preacher, I'd like to introduce you to another one. While he's famous, he's not very popular. He's world-traveled and speaks every human language. He visits the poor and the rich and calls on the young and the old. He preaches to people of every religion and to those who have no religion. His subject matter is always the same, never deviating from one occasion to the next. He preaches with eloquence, often stirring up feelings as no other preacher can, bringing tears to eyes that have trouble crying. No one can refute his arguments or deny that he speaks the truth. Most people hate him and, to one degree or another, everyone fears him.

Do you know this preacher's name? It's DEATH. Every tombstone is his pulpit, every newspaper prints his text, and one day—unless Judgment Day comes first—every one of us will be his sermon.

How true it is that the older we get, the more we know from experience how close this hits to home. As you look over the list of 22 of our Christian brothers and sisters who have gone home to heaven this past year, who of us can say that we didn't know anything about at least one of these Saints Triumphant? We who are pastors sit by hospital beds and watch the bodies of our members waste away. Funeral after funeral we stand in the pulpit overlooking closed caskets containing dead bodies. We plod to one cemetery after another to lay to rest bodies that have given up their spirit. There is no escape from this preacher called DEATH.

But, my friends, there is victory. With hearts of faith and confidence we confess in the words of the Apostles' Creed: *"I believe in the resurrection of the body."* These are not meaningless words. With them we confess that death is not the end of us. These bodies of ours will be raised, and they will be raised in glory. And so today, on this Saints Triumphant Sunday, we look to the Word of our God and learn of the new and glorious bodies that await us in the resurrection. We join with the Apostle Paul and stand in amazement at:

The Resurrection Body

- 1. God promises that it will be different.**
- 2. God's Son has made it possible.**

1. Chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians is the great doctrinal chapter of the book. Unlike the various moral, ethical, sexual, and cultural issues Paul has addressed so far, here he deals with a doctrinal problem. There was considerable doubt—and even a denial of—the bodily resurrection. Because the Corinthian Christians didn't understand the manner of the resurrection, they denied the fact.

As Paul begins to describe the resurrection body, he uses three different illustrations, each one drawing a parallel from nature. His first is this: When you plant a seed, you don't expect the plant that grows to look exactly like the seed you planted. Here's what he says, beginning at verse 37: *"When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body."* A gardener or a farmer knows very well what Paul is here saying. Throw a seed into the ground and it dies, but from it comes a different form of life. There's continuity with the old but, at the same time, there's a remarkable and substantial difference from the old. For example, we look at a kernel of wheat and say, "That's wheat." We look at a field of wheat and say, "That's wheat." But, oh, what a difference between the two! Jesus teaches the same thing. He says, *"Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds"* (Jn 12:24).

Paul's second illustration is this: Look at human beings, animals, birds, and fish. Even they don't have the same kind of body. These are Paul's words in verse 39: *"Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another, and fish another."* If God could form living creatures with all different kinds of bodies and ways of life at creation, he can—and he will—fashion our bodies to be different in the resurrection.

Paul's third illustration is this: Look up into the sky. All the heavenly bodies are different from one another. In fact, each individual star is unique. Here's are Paul's words, beginning at verse 40: *"There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another, and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor."* As God made the heavenly bodies to be different from the earthly bodies in splendor, and as he made the heavenly bodies to be different from each other in splendor, so he can—and he will—make our resurrection bodies different from our earthly bodies in splendor.

Now Paul applies all this by contrasting the body we bury with the body that will be raised. He says in verses 42-44 (and remember that everything he says about the buried body is the result of our sin): *"So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."*

The body we bury is perishable, but it will be raised imperishable. Funeral directors know that from the moment of death the body begins to change. That's why we embalm bodies and dress them up for viewing, lest they decompose before our very eyes. But our resurrection body will be imperishable, incapable of change and decay. It won't break down, but will be a body fit for heaven.

The body we bury is dishonorable, but it will be raised in glory. There's nothing dignified about a dead body. We put it in a box, place flowers around it, and speak eulogies over it, but the body itself is dishonorable. We shy away from dead bodies. In contrast, our resurrection body will be splendid, radiant, and spectacular.

The body we bury is weak, but it will be raised in power. Luther describes the contrast this way: *"The body, weak and devoid of all strength and power as it lies in the grave, will be so strong that with one finger it will be able to carry this church and play with a mountain as children play with a ball. Nothing that it decides to do will be impossible for it."*

And, while we bury a natural body, what will be raised is a spiritual body. What this means is that this body is suited for this world's existence and fit for life in this earthly realm. In a sense, our body controls our spirit. But in the next life the spiritual will dominate the physical. Our body will be a temple fit for the Spirit of God.

With this thought in mind, Paul draws a parallel between two different men, Adam and Jesus, and says, beginning with verse 44b: *"If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man."*