

Victory Is Ours!

A Sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

Year B - Easter

1 - April - 2018

JJ¹

Hey! Look! I've got to show you something!!! We say things like that all the time. When you bring home a good grade on the big project you were working so hard on you can't wait to show your parents, "Look mom! See dad!" Ladies, when you came home or back to the dorms with something sparkling on your ring finger you couldn't help yourself, "I've got to show you something! Look at this!" When you received good news from the doctor you couldn't keep it to yourself, you had to let others know. When we have good news we just have to tell others. It's what we do.

Today Paul has the best news in all the world to share with us. Today he proclaims **VICTORY IS OURS!**

With the first word of our text Paul grabs our attention. He says, "Look!" or better yet, "Behold!" It's the word an artist might use when he is unveiling his newest work of art. People may not be paying attention, but then he says, "Behold!" and immediately he has their attention as he unveils his masterpiece.

The angel did much the same thing when he appeared to the women at the tomb. He had amazing news to share! And it certainly was news to them because they came expecting something entirely

different. They came expecting to find Jesus' dead body just as they had seen it left in the tomb three days earlier. They came only with death on their minds and so they were filled with sorrow and grief. They had come to finish preparing Jesus' body to remain in the grave for the rest of time.

To them, death was victorious, and they certainly felt its sting. And we can easily relate to it. And maybe at first, Paul's words sound insensitive and foolish to you: "Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory?" You might wonder, "Where is it? It's victory is right there in the casket at every funeral I attend! It's sting is ravaging my heart!"

Yes, we see first hand the power of sin. Yes, our experience tells us death wins in the end. Yes, the sting can feel like a fire burning in our hearts. And that is all we would have left if Jesus' had remained in the tomb and turned to dust. But you see, everyone who appeared to have won on Good Friday—Jesus' enemies, this sinful world and the devil—now lie in ruins, vanquished, smashed, broken and defeated because our Savior Jesus is victorious and alive!

Because of Christ, we don't drown in the tears of sorrow, doubt and despair. Why? Because "Death is swallowed up in victory" and "God gives us [that] victory

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

through our Lord Jesus Christ!" That victory belongs to all those whom Jesus called by name and died believing in Him. That person is now safe in Jesus' arms for all eternity and all their tears of pain and sorrow have been dried with the sight of Jesus. Yes, we cry because we will miss them and their love, but we also rejoice in their victory in Christ. We also rejoice in knowing that their victory is our victory too. We look forward to that blessed day when our Lord Jesus will also call us home and wipe our own tears away. That day when we too will stand before the throne of the Lamb who was slain for us and rose again to live forever and ever. This, friends, is our victory in Christ! But today Paul tells us that there is even more to this amazing victory.

"Look, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the resurrection isn't just for Jesus! It's for us too! Victory over death is ours! Because he lives again in his body we too will live again in our own bodies! But when will this happen? Paul tells us that

it will happen when the last trumpet sounds. Paul is talking about the day when Christ will return. He's talking about the Last Day. And when he comes things are going to be very different. He tells us that in an instant we will all be changed. He says, "this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality."

Our bodies as they are right now are able to get hurt, get sick and die because our

bodies are still plagued with sin. A body like this cannot live in God's perfect and holy heaven and so Christ "will transform our humble bodies to be like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21b). When Jesus rose from the dead sin could no longer affect his body. He could no longer be injured. He could no longer get sick. He could never grow weak or tired or get hungry or thirsty. And most importantly, he

could no longer die.

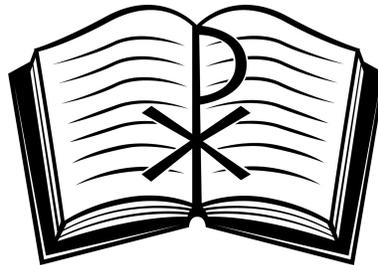
Paul tells us that this will be true of our bodies as well. When Jesus returns on the Last Day our bodies will be raised and they will be raised to perfection so that we can live with the Lord forever in the perfection of heaven, body and soul. When this happens then that which God spoke long ago through the prophet Isaiah will at last be fulfilled in fullest



measure: "Death is swallowed up in victory!"

Yes, unless the Lord returns first, we will have to face death one day. But death for the Christian is not death forever. In fact, for the Christian death is not final at all! At every Christian funeral we can shout out in joy, "Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory?" We can sing out that death can not hold us in the grave just as it could not hold Christ. And the only reason why it will not be able hold us is because of Christ. Because his grave is empty, so ours will be one day too!

And this is our comfort when we bury our loved ones who died clinging to their Savior. This is why Jesus only calls physical death a sleep for his children. It will not last! It cannot last! God has decreed it! "Death is swallowed up in victory!!!!" Christ's victory over death is your victory too! No one can take this comfort and hope from you. People will try. They will try by calling you a fool. They will shake their heads at you, they will even get angry with you and hate you. But my friends, don't worry. They cannot rob you of your comfort. They cannot steal away your hope. Not even the devil himself can do this because he and his power that is



found in sin and death is destroyed! Christ lives and **VICTORY IS OURS!**

Your Savior has already clothed you in his own righteousness and holiness through faith. When he takes you home to heaven, he will also clothe you with immortality! When he comes he will proclaim from his throne in a loud voice: "Look! God's dwelling is with people. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, because the former things have passed away...Look, I am making everything new!" (Rev. 21:3-5).

Just in that one simple word, "Behold," Paul expresses his great joy and wonder at the message he gets to proclaim. I share that joy as I get to proclaim God's resurrection comfort to you this day that is the most blessed day of days—the day the Lord has made! My friends, leave this place knowing that you too have the best news there is to tell. Yes, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

Artwork by Ian M. Welch—Copyright 2013 Ian M. Welch. All Rights Reserved. paramentics.com

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture is taken from: The Holy Bible, Evangelical Heritage Version™ (EHV™) copyright © 2016 The Wartburg Project. All rights reserved. www.wartburgproject.org