

The Man Christ Jesus

1 Corinthians 15:21-26

If this were a classroom or an academic setting and I were giving you a test, I would give you extra credit if you remember what I preached on Easter Sunday last year. As is my typical custom, today I'll interrupt our regular expositional series of sermons from a particular book in order to emphasize what is so often emphasized on this day we call Easter, namely Jesus' resurrection. Certainly, when we gather together on the first day of the week every week it is a celebration of the resurrection, as our New Testament Christian sabbath day is now that day of the week when Jesus rose from the dead. But on the day identified each year with a correlation to the Old Testament celebration of passover, it is well worth making this particular emphasis upon the resurrection.

So...I have in years' past preached from the resurrection accounts in the gospels of Matthew, Luke and John. I have preached from Job's great declaration of his faith in the resurrection, as well as the benediction of Hebrews 13:20-22 and from Paul's great prayer for the church in Ephesians 1:18-21. But the last two years I have preached from 1 Corinthians 15, two different passages. Two years ago I focused upon the centrality of the resurrection in the great declaration of the gospel at the beginning of that chapter,

1 Cor. 15:1 "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."

Then last year, I proclaimed upon the great declaration and certainty of that resurrection which is promised to us who believe,

1 Cor. 15:19 "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. 20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."

So I declare to you the gospel again today, as I do each and every week in one form or another. This is that gospel in its most basic form, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day." And I declare to you what that means for you who believe and trust in Jesus, that he is the firstfruits which guarantees our resurrection as well.

Picking up there this morning with verse 21 in 1 Corinthians, my focus today is upon Jesus' humanity, the importance of his human nature. And the point is that his death and resurrection are accomplishments of that human nature. In other words, Jesus as God didn't die. His deity or divine nature didn't die. But his real and true human nature did. In his human flesh, he died. He really died. He breathed out his last. His human heart stopped beating. His brain activity ended. His body became a corpse. And, according to this gospel which I proclaim to you, that same human body was resurrected from the dead.

The usual phrase is to identify his bodily resurrection, but I'm using the phrase human resurrection today not because I mean anything different, but that the focus of his death is upon his human nature, to which his body belonged. With all of that introduction, I want to begin today by identifying,

I. THE NECESSITY OF JESUS' HUMAN RESURRECTION.

The necessity of it. More precisely for my point today, why did

he have to be human? Usually we ask that question in terms of, “Why did he have to die?” And that’s a good question. But today I want to start with the question, “Why did he have to be a man?” What was that necessary? What was his humanity necessary? That is a very good question of doctrine and theology, and however technical your answer might be, it is a fundamental question to answer. Why did Jesus have to be a man?

Some people in history, of course, deny that he was really and truly a man. They believe that he just appeared as a man, that he just seemed to be a man, that he just took the outward form and appearance of a man, but in his essence, was not truly nor fully human. But he was, and he had to be. It was necessary. In the plan and purpose of God to save a people for himself, in order to forgive them their sins and receive them as righteous and acceptable in his sight, Jesus had to be a man. Why?

Let me try to answer that question just as simply and as straightforward as I can. Jesus had to be a man because, just as death came to mankind through a man, the only corresponding source of life must also come through a man. Let me unpack and explain the just a bit. Beginning with this crucial point, that,

A. Human death came to all mankind through one man, Adam.

Adam was our representative. He was our head, as the Bible uses that word. Our covenant head. He represented all of us, all his descendants. So what he did, the actions he took, define us as well. And the unmistakable starting point for his whole discussion is found in verse 21, “by man came death.”

Here is what happened. Adam, our covenant representative, lived in perfect fellowship with God in the Garden of Eden, without sin as he was created. But God gave him a warning, a

prohibition. The covenant relationship between God and Adam, and thus the relationship between God and all mankind, was defined by this duty and obligation,

Gen. 2:5 “Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

You know how well that went. Adam did eat. And immediately, he died. He became alienated from God, subject to God’s condemnation and curse, the curse of death. He was then separated from God and banished from God’s presence. His body immediately bore the mark of death, namely corruption and mortality. And every human being descended from him by ordinary generation inherited from Adam the condemnation of death.

This is how the Apostle Paul would explain all of that, Rom. 5:12 “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

Paul also writes this, Rom. 5:15 “...by the one man’s offense many died.” Rom. 5:16 “For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation...”

Rom. 5:17 “For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one...”

Rom. 5:18 “Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation.”

Rom. 5:19 “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.”

So that is why Jesus had to be a man, because it was a man who represented us all in original sin. It was a man who was our representative, our covenant head, whose sin was charged to our account because we are identified with him. "...by the one man's offense death reigned through the one."

Jesus had to be a man because Adam was a man. That's the answer to the question of the day. Jesus had to be a man because Adam was a man. Jesus had to be man since human death came through a man, and, therefore, the restoration of life would also have to come through a man. In other words, since the sin of a man brought about human death, there had to be a human resurrection to removed that condemnation and to restore the blessings of life! Thus we can understand Paul's point here in our text today,

B. Human life comes to all mankind through one man, Jesus.

v.21 "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead."

The first man, Adam, brought death. Thus the second man would be needed to bring life. The Bible calls that man the "last Adam."

v.45 "And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit."

Beloved, this isn't just some vague theological debate or argument. This is a matter of life and death! If you are represented before God by Adam, then you remain under the curse and condemnation of Adam's death. The only escape from that condemnation is by faith in Jesus, the man Jesus, the human being Jesus. Only he, as a man, can replace Adam as your covenant head and representative. Only he, as a man, can serve

as a mediator for other men. Only he, as a man, can represent you before God on the basis of what he has done by the sacrifice of his own human body for your sins. So we read this,

1 Tim. 2:5 "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

You have but one Mediator, only one, and he is Jesus. And Paul makes sure to emphasize, that one Mediator is "the Man Christ Jesus."

v.22 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."

So, what, then, did this man accomplish? What is,

II. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF JESUS' HUMAN RESURRECTION.

Well, I just identified that accomplishment in it most basic form,

v.22 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."

So we are made alive, through faith in him. How does that happen? What does that mean? I believe the clearest way to answer that question is to say this,

A. Jesus replaces Adam as our covenant representative and head.

"In Adam," that phrase refers to this covenant representative. "In Adam" refers to our natural descent from Adam, our natural humanity, descended generation by generation all the way back to Adam and Eve. "In Adam" means that we would still stand before God in the same position and with the same status as did Adam, to whom God had said, "in the day that you eat of [that tree of the knowledge of good and evil] you shall surely die."

“In Adam” means to be dead “in Adam.” It means to be subject to the condemnation of death as Adam was. It means to be separated from God, because of sin. First, Adam’s sin, and then, also your own. So this is Paul who would describe all mankind descended from Adam as those,

Eph. 2:1 “...who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

By nature, children of wrath—that’s what it means to be in Adam. Yet, when Jesus rose from the dead, he did so as the representative, covenant head of all those who would trust and believe in him. So we who believe in Jesus have a new representative. We are no longer in Adam, but we are now in Christ. Jesus replaces Adam as our covenant head. And, therefore, the accomplishment of Jesus is, as our new representative, to give us the hope and promise of life.

So that’s what Jesus accomplished when his human body was raised from the dead. He was made alive, and we who are joined together with him by faith are made alive as well. And that means freed from the condemnation of God’s judgment upon Adam for the guilt of his sin. That’s why Paul writes,

Rom. 4:24 “It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”

He was raised for the purpose of our justification. He was raised from the dead for the purpose of freeing us from

condemnation, in other words, for our justification. He was raised from the dead so that his life, as a human, could be credited, imputed to us. So, if you don’t believe in the resurrection, you don’t have life! If you don’t believe that Jesus rose from the dead, you are still dead in your sins and separated from God, in Adam!

v.17 “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”

v.20 “But now Christ is risen from the dead.”

That is the gospel I preach to you, week in and week out, book by book, chapter by chapter, from Genesis to Revelation. Thus,

B. Jesus becomes the first fruits, the guarantee, of our eternal inheritance.

In other words, we are made alive. That’s how Paul began that passage in,

Eph. 2:1 “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...”

And in our text today,

v.22 “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”

That life is nothing less than eternal life, everlasting life, life in the eternal kingdom of God. So we read,

v.23-24

So Jesus is the firstfruits of our life. He is the guarantee of our inheritance, such that death, physical death, is now the entrance for us into the glory of an eternal inheritance. And that is the language of our salvation, an inheritance. And inheritance that is guaranteed, because of what Jesus has done.

1 Peter 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us

again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

There is an inheritance waiting for those who believe in Jesus, and what Jesus accomplished with his resurrection was to provide the guarantee of that inheritance. It is “incorruptible and undefiled.” It is “reserved in heaven for you.”

Why is that so important? Well, just look around you. In God’s providence, this particular season of life for us as a church is one full of very serious matters of life and death. We have had people deal with the presence of cancer. We have some who don’t know whether they do or not. We have seen the devastation that disease can bring to mental capacity, and to the neurological system. In our own midst, we have seen the effects of heart failure and the kidney failure. Even the threat of blindness. To say nothing of the various infections and viruses that plague the human body year after year. I don’t say all of that to be depressing, but quite the opposite. I mention all of that because that awareness of mortality puts into the proper perspective just what it is that Jesus has accomplished, namely, the guarantee of our eternal inheritance.

So this great chapter continues,

1 Cor. 15:42 “So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. 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 natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 45 And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”

Maybe I’ll preach from those verses next year on Easter, but for today let me go back to,

v.25 “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”

There is the promise of,

III. THE TRIUMPH OF JESUS’ HUMAN RESURRECTION.

Clearly Jesus is reigning now, already, according to verse 25. And he will reign as king, he will continue to reign, until “He has put all things under His feet.” So that is our encouragement, our strength, our confidence, not matter what the outward circumstances of our lives might be.

A. Jesus reigns as king.

Consider the great and glorious words of,

Ps. 8:1 “O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens! 2 Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, Because of Your enemies, That You may silence the enemy and the avenger. 3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, 4 What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? 5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 All sheep and oxen—Even the beasts of the field, 8 The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea That pass through the paths of the seas. 9 O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth!”

That is the one whom we worship today, the one who has risen from the dead, the one whom God “crowned him with glory and honor.” God has “made him to have dominion over the works

of [His] hands; [God has] put all things under his feet, which is exactly what Paul writes in,

v.27 “For “He has put all things under His feet.”

That is the triumph of Jesus’ resurrection, that God has enthroned him as king. And, therefore,

B. Jesus guarantees a complete end to death itself.

v.25 “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”

That’s why the human resurrection of Jesus is the central focus of the whole gospel, because it is that resurrection that guarantees for you that death will be destroyed. Actually, with the resurrection of Jesus, the power of death is already destroyed.

So this is the gospel I preach to you, the gospel we must all preach to the world in which we live,

Rom. 10:9 “...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

So who is your representative? Is it still Adam, in whom there is death? Or do you “believe in your heart that God has raised [Jesus] from the dead.” Are you dead in Adam, separated from God because of sin? Or are you alive in Jesus, the one who was raised from the dead? That is the ultimate question.

1 Tim. 2:5 “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”