

Reflections on the Resurrection Body

Circuit Service on Sunday 21 June by Rev Leonora Wassell

<https://youtu.be/2DorNUsi5LE> You raise me up

When I am down, and, oh, my soul, so weary
When troubles come, and my heart burdened be
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence
Until you come and sit awhile with me

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas
I am strong when I am on your shoulders
You raise me up to more than I can be

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Living God, as you have spoken to us through the ages, identifying yourself with humanity in Jesus Christ, and dwelling in us through your Holy Spirit you bring your presence alive. Accept now our worship and use us for your kingdom.

Having come to us we answer your call to come to you, knowing that we find rest for our souls in Christ and that through him our spiritual hunger can be satisfied and that from him we shall receive life in all its fullness.

Help us to come to you not only as an outward gesture, a matter of routine but with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. Help us to make space for you and still our frantic minds and business so that we may live in you and you in us. We ask through the precious name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1 Corinthians 15:35-58 New International Version (NIV)

The Resurrection Body

But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.⁸ But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh,

animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendour of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendour of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendour.

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 dishonour, 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.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"^[a]; 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^[b] bear the image of the heavenly man. 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."

"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"^[d]

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.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

Meditation

I love a good mystery and have been binge watching many a film and box set from sci-fi to crime, from documentaries to life stories. I love trying to figure out who did it and how and of course why. The stories I struggle with are open ended ones where I have to make up my own mind, ones where you are left wondering what the outcome is. For many of us we like certainty. The question in today's reading is a natural curiosity of how we get to heaven and what will we be like when we get there. It echoes the rich young man who asked Jesus "How do I inherit the kingdom of God". The biggest mystery to face us all. Paul's answer attempts to clarify our understanding in a passage which if I'm honest takes many readings to grasp.

Like Jesus, Paul, speaks about how we live our lives. He speaks of transformation. Just as our bodies will change after death so our lives need to change in life. Our lives need to be spiritual lives transformed from our old ways of greed, envy, animosity, jealousy, to ones of love, justice and reconciliation. If we are filled with the Holy Spirit there is a noticeable change in our behaviour. We see the world through God's eyes and act accordingly to the state of what is going on around us. We seek to change that world by our words and actions. All our actions must be measured against the yardstick of Christ and his actions. He emptied himself of all but love which rendered him sinless. That is the spiritual life we are to emulate.

We are called to bring about God's kingdom on earth. Jesus' teaches us that the kingdom is within, so our spiritual bodies embody God. We start to change the world by changing ourselves. We are to take seriously our spiritual health and seek ways to nourish it. It is our responsibility to do that and no one else's. As a Circuit we have been looking at Transformation in terms of individual lives as well as in terms of mission. What we need to put into place to transform our congregations and communities and what resources we need have been occupying our minds and our meetings for some months now. However, this is an issue we all need to think about. What difference can I make?

You may think this is all arbitrary as we sit at home under lockdown, but I believe this is a God given opportunity for us all to learn, to seek to understand and to possibly change our perceptions. Methodism was born not only in song but out of social justice. This pandemic has altered the way we meet, do business and socialise so we can no longer say that this is the way we have always done it. We are changing whether we like it or not. There are serious social issues facing us with inequality, discrimination and abuse and the way we respond is critical. As James tells us in his letter "Faith without action is dead". Just as it is our responsibility to educate ourselves about spiritual matters it is also our responsibility to educate ourselves

about the issues surrounding social injustice. It is not the responsibility of the marginalised to educate us. We are called to seek out the lost, the least and the lonely and stand with them.

Spiritual nourishment leads to social justice and social justice leads to a fairer and just world. A world where “God wipes away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things have passed away.” (Rev 21:4)

So back to our original question of how are our bodies raised and what kind of body will it be. We can only conjecture for the only one who knows for certain is Christ who was raised from the dead. When we look at all the resurrection stories we find that he was not immediately recognised. It was by his actions and spoken word by which his disciples recognised him. So, when we do meet God will he say “Welcome home faithful servant” or will he say “Who are you, I do not recognise you”

<https://youtu.be/2DorNUsi5LE>

Go peaceful in gentleness
through the violence of these days.
Give freely.
Show tenderness in all your ways.
Through darkness, in troubled times
let holiness be your aim.
Seek wisdom.
Let faithfulness burn like a flame.
God speed you!
God lead you,
and keep you wrapped around His heart!
May you be known by love.
Be righteous.
Speak truthfully in a world of greed and lies.
Show kindness.
See everyone
through heaven’s eyes.
God hold you,
enfold you,
and keep you wrapped around His heart.
May you be known by love.

Paul Field

If you must be heard, let it be like the babbling brook,
laughing over the rocks.
If you must be seen, let it be like sunlight
giving warmth and comfort to all.
If you must be acknowledged, let it be as the eyes
behold the skies in all their glory.
If you must lead, let it be like the wind and all its unshackled direction.
If you must learn, let it be like breathing,
the natural flow of in and out,
and done without thinking.
If you must teach, let it be like the water,
deep and flowing,
for your words are like pebbles in a pond,
the ripples they cause spread out in all directions,
and what you give out eventually returns.
If you must know, let it be flowing and growing.
And above all, if you must:
shine!

Kerry Hillcoat

Gracious God, forgive us the times when we are stubborn, wilful and disobedient, repeatedly rejecting your guidance, time and again betraying your love.

Forgive us the times we are divided, allowing petty disputes, anger, bitterness, envy and resentment to come between us.

Forgive for the times we mar your image in us, finding it hard to love, difficult to forgive and almost impossible to let go of self.

Forgive us the times we turn our backs on those who cry out for help, closing our minds to their plight and ignoring the call to act.

Forgive us for deluding ourselves that we are close to you when we stray from your side, oblivious to your presence and unconcerned about the gulf between us.

Forgive us for everything that holds us back from knowing you, that prevents us from seeking you and staying true to you. Help us to respond joyfully and spontaneously to your love.

<https://youtu.be/-t66l03XmQI> And Can it Be

1. And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
 - *Refrain:*
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
2. 'Tis myst'ry all: th' Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.
3. He left His Father's throne above—
So free, so infinite His grace—
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!
4. Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
5. No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th' eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
wherever He may send you.

May He guide you through the wilderness,
protect you through the storm.

May He bring you home rejoicing
at the wonders He has shown you.

May He bring you home rejoicing
once again into our doors.