

Well done, good and faithful ones!
Give yourselves a round of applause!
You made it through all the way to the end of I
Corinthians with me. Of course in worship we had to
skip quite a bit to cover the whole book in 7 weeks, but
here we are on the last Sunday. I really hope the Daily
Bible Study Guide has helped you read the whole book
for yourself and get some insight for your life. There is
one last study for this week in your bulletin - as well as
some notes on this particular sermon today.

The topic for today is "Resurrection- Jesus' &
Ours". We're gonna get some insights today that I
know will help you, just as they helped me as I put this
sermon together. Today is not a day to put our thinking
brains on rest mode. Today I'm going to ask you to
keep your thinking cap for another day.

The last two chapters of I Corinthians - 15 &
16 - are about Jesus' resurrection and our own
resurrection. It's a tough subject to teach about and
think about for several reasons. I think the main reason
that comes to mind for me, is that as we live our lives,
we are so far from resurrection as any part of our
present reality that it's really hard to get our minds
around.

And I'm wondering - don't answer this out
loud - but for yourself, would you say you believe
Jesus' bodily resurrection is a pivotal part of your
beliefs as a follower of Jesus?

In 2018, the British Broadcast Corporation
commissioned a survey of 2,010 British adults for a
Palm Sunday story, so these were not all Christians.
The survey found that exactly half of all the people did
not believe in the resurrection of Jesus at all. 46% of
people said they believed in some form of life after
death, but 46% said they did not. And a quarter of
those surveyed who described themselves as Christian
did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus. For me,
having a 21 year old son, raised in the church who says
he believes there isn't anything after death tells me this
belief about the resurrection of Jesus and life after
death is still a topic needing to be addressed in life
today.

Let's remind ourselves again that in the city of
Corinth in 55 AD, those who were followers of Christ
would not have grown up Christian, probably they
were not even Jewish. Most likely their homes would
have been pagan - worshipping the various gods and

idols, which were popular in Greece at the time.
Greeks, as a people, did not believe in the resurrection
of the dead, that's why in Acts 17 there's a reference to
people in nearby Athens laughing at Paul when he
preached about the resurrection in that place. Also, the
general belief was that a separation between the body
and the spirit was important, because the body was evil
or bad. So some Corinthian Christians might have
believed in resurrection of the soul, but not the
physical body. So that's something to think about too -
when you consider the idea of resurrection - do you
think only about the soul or also about the body?

Also - very importantly - and this is on your
insert - there was one prominent group of Jewish
people called the Sadducees who specifically DID
NOT believe in any life after death at all. And a
different prominent group of Jews, the Pharisees, that
DID believe in resurrection. The easy way some
people remember the difference between the
Sadducees and Pharisees is to say, "It's sad you see -
get it, Sadducees - that they don't believe in life after
death."

Some of the Christians in Corinth were
converts from Judaism - specifically the Sadducee
group - so they would not have originally believed in
resurrection and would have had a really hard time
with it as a Christian Convert. All this to say, the idea
of resurrection of soul AND BODY after death was an
uphill battle not only for Paul to teach in those days,
but is still difficult for us today.

I refer to John 11:25 (read).

Jesus himself assured us that this world is not
all there is. That even though our earthly bodies will
die, we will yet live - soul AND BODY at the second
coming of Christ. I Corinthians 15 has been called the
early church's statement of faith.

Looking at verses 5-8, Paul cites six people, or
groups of people, as having witnessed in person Jesus
as a resurrected, human being:

1-Cephas (Peter)

2 -12 Disciples

3 -500 people

4 -James, the brother of Jesus

5 -All the apostles - since the 12 Disciples are already
mentioned, Paul must have had a different group of
apostles in mind. It could have meant the 70 disciples

Jesus commissioned in Luke 10:1 to go ahead of him into every town and place Jesus was going to go.
6 - and then Paul himself

When you think about it, that's a LOT of people. Before studying 1 Corinthians more closely in my last congregation, I hadn't really considered how many people actually witnessed seeing Jesus. And I didn't remember that we had this scriptural reference actually listing who and how many people.

To believe in the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead has never required blind, evidence free, faith. When Paul wrote these words in 55 AD, just about 20 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, evidence from other living people would have also been easy to encounter. Notice - which agrees with Paul's character as the author of 1 Corinthians - no women are specifically mentioned, though Mary Magdalene is reported in each of the four Gospels as the first to see Jesus in bodily form after he had died and been resurrected.

Of all these people/groups, which stands out to you today and why? (just think to yourself)

For me it was the 500 people. I looked up the scriptural reference - it could be referencing Matthew 28:10 when Jesus told Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who encountered Jesus at the tomb to tell everyone to go to Galilee and there they would see Him. So in Galilee, later, Jesus appeared to all those who went there to wait for Him. Though we don't have a specific scriptural account of 500 people seeing the resurrected Jesus.

Some scholars point out that some people in that very Corinthian church receiving and reading this letter might have been present personally in Galilee and they might have seen Jesus themselves or might have known someone who was there and reported it. They might have been one of the 500 people.

For Paul, the link between Jesus being raised from the dead and that believers in Him likewise will be raised is undeniable. A few verses later in 1 Corinthians 15:24 Paul calls Jesus the "first fruits" of the whole resurrection harvest and his whole argument builds from that hinge: If Christ was raised, then believers will also be raised in due time.

I don't know about you, but thinking concretely about my physical resurrection after my death brings a lot more questions than I've even begun

to mention today. Which gives me the opportunity to say again - that as we move in the calendar toward All Saints Day on Nov. 1 - originally known in Middle English as All Hallowmas (so that Oct. 31 was All Hallows Eve or Halloween) - as we move toward Nov. 1 and celebrate All Saints Day in worship on November 7, I'm offering a four part sermon series leading up to that about the United Methodist perspective on Death and Resurrection. So we'll have a chance to think more about this topic, as decorations go up soon for Halloween and the country faces this topic of the other worldly.

So one parting story - thinking about the "other worldly". There was a family with two young children who lived close to a local cemetery. When the parents drove by the cemetery, the older boy would say to the younger girl, "That's where the dead people are." Being only about four years old, the idea of death was confusing to the younger girl. The older brother explained that the cemetery was where they buried people's bodies after they died, but their spirits would go back to God.

When Memorial day came around, the family went for a bike ride in the neighborhood, the little girl sitting in a bike trailer so she could look around. They were all enjoying the fresh air and sunshine and watched all the people gathering together in the cemetery or kneeling at a headstone to commemorate the day. From behind them, the little girl exclaimed - "They're alive! They're alive! Daddy, they're all alive!" It may have been Memorial Day, for the little girl it was Easter, which, if we believe the Bible, was not only Jesus' experience, but will be ours as well.