

Last Sunday Of The Church Year

1 Corinthians 15: 20-28

November 23, 2014

My Fellow Redeemed In Christ,

At First Glance It Might Look Like Our Second Reading Is Out Of Place. Here It Is In Late November And We Have A Text That Is Usually Associated More With The Spring And Easter. And Yet, We Know That Every Sunday Is Easter. That's Why The Pastors Greet You Every Sunday By Saying "**The Lord Is Risen!**" And You Respond By Saying "**He Is Risen Indeed!**" Although We Cannot See Him With Our Eyes Every Sunday The Living Lord Jesus Is With Us As He Comes To Us In His Means Of Grace, His Word And Sacraments To Give Us What He Has Won For Us: Forgiveness, Life And Salvation. Jesus Christ Is Alive And Well. What's Would Be The Point Of A Dead Jesus? It Troubles Me Greatly That Some Christians Think That They Have To Make The Christian Message Relevant To Modern People. I'm Sorry...Did I Miss Something? Don't Modern People Die? Yes, They Die.....Just Like All The People Who Lived In The Past...And Just Like All People Who Will Ever Live.....They Die. And The Message Of Jesus Christ Is That He Has Defeated Death. Now What Could Be More Relevant Than That?! "**Ho Hum, Victory Over Death.....Is That All The Church Has To Offer?"** Well, I Guess You Just Can't Please Everyone! My Goodness....Only The Christian Church Can Offer This Wonderful Hope Of Victory Over Death Because "**Jesus Has Been Raised From The Dead"**.

I. According To Common Sense, Common Experience And Science.....Dead Bodies Can't Live Again! That's Impossible. Well This Is True.....If.....If.....There Is No God. But There Is A God. He Is The One Who Made Our Bodies In The First Place. And Since He Made Our Bodies.....He's Not Going To Have Any Difficulty Raising Them From The Dead....For Nothing Is Impossible For God./

A. But There Is Another Reason That We Believe That Dead Bodies Can Live Again....A Very Important Reason: It Has Already Happened Once. I'm Talking About Jesus Christ. On The Third Day After His Death And Burial His Tomb Was Empty And His Body Was Missing. What Happened To It? Ah, That's The Question. Isn't It? What Happened To The Body Of Jesus Christ? Both The Romans And The Jews Had A Vested Interest In Answering That Question. If They Could Have Found The Dead Body Of Jesus Christ.....That Would Have Been The End Of Christianity Before It Even Got Started. Where Was The Body? The Jewish Authorities Didn't Know So They Made Up A Story As We Read At The End Of Matthew's Gospel: "**The Disciples Came By Night And Stole Him Away..." (28: 13, Esv)**. But Wait A Minute...Wasn't A Huge Stone Put In Front Of The Tomb And Sealed? Yes. And Were Not Armed Guards Guarding The Tomb? Yes. Hmmm. No His Body Wasn't Stolen....Exactly.....And That's What Paul Says: "**But In Fact Christ Has Been Raised From The Dead" (V. 20, Esv)**. And Paul Should

Know....He Not Only Talked To People Who Had Seen Jesus, But Paul Himself Had Seen Him As He Writes Just A Few Verses Before Our Text: **"Then He Appeared To James, Then To All The Apostles. Last Of All He Appeared Also Me" (V. 7, Esv).**

B. And Where Is Jesus Now That He Has Been Raised From The Dead? Well, As We Confess In The Creed: **"He Ascended Into Heaven And Sits At The Right Hand Of God The Father Almighty."** I Think That This Is One Of The Least Understood And Appreciated Teachings About Jesus Christ. The Same Man Who Suffered And Died On That Cross For Our Sins Rose From The Dead Has Now Entered Into The Very Presence Of God, Which Is Everywhere, And He Now Rules Over The Entire Universe, Including This Little Planet Earth. That's What Paul Says: **"For God Has Put All Things In Subjection Under His Feet" (V. 27, Esv).** His Resurrection From The Dead Is Easy To Understand Compared To This Teaching! I Cannot Fully Explain This To You Because I Can't Fully Explain It To Myself. All I Can Do I Believe It.....And That's All You Can Do Too. **But I Do Know That This Teaching Gives Us A Wonderful Comfort.** For This Means That The Very Same Man Who Loved Us So Much To Humble Himself To The Point Of Dying On That Cross.....Is Now Ruling All Of Creation.....Everything In This World.....Well, Talk About Having Friends In High Places! The World We Live In Is Full Of Heartaches, Suffering And Death.....There Are So Many Things In Life That We Do Not Understand, That Seem So Senseless.....So Much Violence And So Much Uncertainty. .But One Thing We Know For Sure. God's Love In Jesus Christ Who Rules Over All Things So That Not Even Death Can Separate Us From That Love....For As Paul Says: **"God Has Put All Things Under His Feet" (V. 27, Esv).** Of Course, We Can't See This With Our Eyes And That's Why Many People Refuse To Believe It.

ii. But The Day Is Coming When Every One Will See Jesus As The Ruler Over All Things....The Judgment Day. As **Luther** Says In His **Small Catechism**, **"On The Last Day He Will Raise Me And All The Dead, And Give Eternal Life To Me And All Believers In Christ. This Is Most Certainly True."**

A. The Day Will Final Come That We Will Die Just Like Everyone Dies As Paul Reminds Us Romans: **"The Wages Of Sin Is Death" (Rom. 6: 23, Esv).** But On Our Death Bed We Will Have The Comfort, Joy And Peace Of Knowing That We Will One Day Be Raised From The Dead. And Why Can We Be So Certain? Because Jesus Christ Has Already Been Raised From The Dead. Of Course, If Jesus Had Not Been Raised From The Dead It Would Be Silly For Us To Think That We Would Be Raised From The Dead. Without Jesus' Resurrection From Dead....Our Resurrection From The Dead Would Be Nothing More Than Wishful Thinking. But He Has Been Raised From The Dead As Paul Says: **"For As In Adam All Die, So Also In Christ Shall All Be Made Alive But Each In His Own Order: Christ The First Fruits Then At His Coming Those Who Belong To Christ" (V. 23, Esv).** In The Fall We See The Leaves On Trees Start Changing Color....And We Know Exactly What's Going To Happen. It's Just A Matter Of Time.....The Trees Will Eventually Loose All Of Their Leaves And The Trees Will Be Bare. One Thing

Leads To Another. And So It Is With Christ. Since He Has Been Raised From The Dead It's Just A Matter Of Time Until We Too Will Be Raised From The Dead. And So We Know That Death Is Not As Permanent As It Appears To Be.....We Know That Death Is Only Temporary....Only For A While...More Like Sleeping As Paul Refers To Those Who Have Died As **"...Those Who Have Fallen Asleep" (V.20, Esv).** It Is Then Quite Fitting That We Bury People In Places Called Cemeteries Because This Word Means "A Sleeping Chamber". Yes, Because Of Jesus Christ Death Is Now Just A Long Sleep.....

B. And When Our Lord Jesus Returns He Will Wake Us From The DeadAnd That Day Will Mark The End Of This World As Paul Says: **"Then Comes The End" (V. 24, Esv).** When Jesus Returns This Entire Universe Will Be Destroyed.....As Peter Says In His Second Letter: **"The Heavens Will Disappear With A Roar, The Elements Will Be Destroyed By Fire And The Earth And Everything In It Will Be Laid Bare" (3: 10, Esv).** And Then God Will Create A New Heaven And A New Earth And Sin And Death Will Be No More As Peter Goes On To Write: **"But In Keeping With His Promise We Are Looking Forward To A New Heaven And A New Earth The Home Of Righteousness" (2 Peter 3: 13, Esv).** In This World We Believe By Faith That **"God Has Put All Things In Subjection Under His Feet" (V. 27, Esv).** But When Jesus Returns We Will Finally See With Our Own Eyes What We Already Believe By Faith.....God Rules All Things In And Through His Son Jesus Christ As Paul Says: **"Then Comes The End, When He [Jesus] Delivers The Kingdom To God The Father After Destroying Every Rule And Everything Authority And Power" (V. 24, Esv).** In That New Heaven And New Earth Jesus Will Continue To Rule As King Along With The Father And The Holy Spirit So That As Paul Says, **"God May Be All In All " (V. 28, Esv).**

Conclusion. Can Dead Bodies Live Again? Yes. How Can We Be So Certain? Because Jesus Christ Has Been Raised From The Dead, Never To Die Again, And Now He Rules Over All Things. And When He Comes Again He Will As Again Martin Luther Says In His Small Catechism: **"On The Last Day He Will Raise Me And All The Dead, And Give Eternal Life To Me And All Believers In Christ. This Is Most Certainly True."** And This Is Why At Every Christian Funeral We Take Great Comfort In Knowing That We Do Not Say **"Good Bye"** To The Person Who Has Died...But Rather We Say **"We Will See You Later"**. I Can't Think Of A Better Way Of Ending This Sermon Than Saying, **"The Lord Is Risen!"** [And God's People Say...**"He's Risen Indeed!"** Amen.