

Receiving Comfort at Funerals?

In John 14, Jesus says "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Me;*" that scripture is often read at funerals, also the part where Jesus says He's gone to prepare a place for us in heaven. This passage is both comforting and a promise, because it addresses one of mankind's most profound fears - what happens after death.

There are many in our world today that are confused and troubled about what happens after death. As part of our Christian witness we should be prepared to help them answer their questions and lead them to a right understanding of God's grace through Christ. This is not just left up to the pastor to do. What would **you** say in such a situation? First point them to Christ's death and what happened after that. It's a wonderful gift that in Christ we can actually say that the Son of God died on the cross. And when God dies for us, amazing, wonderful things can happen.

According to God's holy Word, Christ is God in the flesh. So, when Christ died on the cross, paying the full price for all of humanity's sins, we can say that God, the Son of God in the flesh, died literally for the whole world. So, not only is Christ God in the flesh, but it took Christ being both God and Man to take our place so that we might have eternal life based on His work in our place.

Be assured! ... It wasn't just that He died for us; He was also raised again to life for us. The good, comforting news of the Bible is that the crucified God/Man is no longer dead; He is risen and He lives and reigns for all eternity. What He accomplished through His life and death is now confirmed through His resurrection; and that offers real hope to all who believe in Him, because that's the good news concerning what happens to us when we die. The Apostle Paul said that if Christ rose from the dead, so will you.

Folks wonder what that will be like? Will we have bodies? And, if so, what kind of body would it be? In short, yes, we will have a body. And it will be the same; yet different ... Our bodies in the resurrection will be the same in that they will still be our bodies. They will be the same in that sense that a body casts a shadow in the sunlight and makes noise when moving. But our bodies will also be different. They will be immortal - not able to die. They will be glorious and strong. Maybe the best figure that we have is Christ, Christ and His resurrected Body, Who ate fish on the beach with His disciples. That Body was the same in that it was recognizable. Yet, it was different, gloriously different, as will be ours.

In 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, St. Paul refers to that resurrected body as a 'spiritual' body. That word 'spiritual' may cause some confusion. Today when we think of something spiritual, we often think of something with no "fleshly or bodily" substance. But, that's not how Paul is using it. Notice his grammar. He calls the resurrected body a 'spiritual' body. 'Spiritual' is the modifier while 'body' is the noun. So, the reason Paul refers to the resurrected body as a spiritual body is to show us that the resurrected body is not one that is both good and bad, but one that is altogether good. Right now our bodies are good and bad, sanctified and fleshly. But, a body with fleshly lusts and sins cannot enter heaven. But, a Spirit-filled body can. It will still be a body, but one that is altogether good - one that is minus limitations like mortality, fatigue, hunger, thirst, and so on. So, that's how our resurrected bodies can be the same and yet different. We will have a body in the resurrection. It will be the same, yet different. It will be spiritual - altogether good. But, it will be a body (our body) none the less. We'll finally be the human beings that God intended for us to be when He created us. We'll finally get a chance to live as human beings, created and redeemed by God, loving each other the way that God, in Christ, loves us!

So, through faith in Christ, then, we can look forward to that real life 'in the body' for all eternity at the Day of Resurrection as God intended us to be and as Christ redeemed us to be. When we or our loved ones die in the Christian faith, we don't need to comfort ourselves with **speculation** about where they are

now ... the Bible doesn't address death that way. We **comfort** ourselves in the fact that the souls of us believers will rest in peace with Christ while the body is asleep in the grave. Then we will rise to eternal life at the resurrection to live forever in the body with Christ in heaven. The comfort that the Bible communicates to us goes from death to the promise of the Resurrection. The Bible really doesn't deal with the interim. Sadly, we so often hear among Christians today and even some pastors, that when we die we then go to heaven. That's not quite accurate. Heaven comes to those whose souls are resting in Jesus and then on the last day, the day of the resurrection of our body, we enter heaven.

So-called "Celebrations of Life", which are so popular today, do a disservice to the mourners for they deny or euphemize death. The gift of life cannot fully be embraced if we disregard the reality of death, along with sin, its ultimate cause. Death is our enemy, not our friend. Whatever the apparent reason for my death may be—a sickness, accident, or old age—the real reason is because I was conceived and born in sin, and I continued to build on top of that sinful nature a mountain of actual sins. The only person's life to celebrate at a funeral is the Savior conceived of the Virgin Mary, who became our sin on the cursed tree that we might become His righteousness in the blessed font of Holy Baptism, who buried sin and death in the empty tomb He left behind on Easter morning.
That's the View from Here

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