



The Apostles' Creed (Part 6) – He Descended to Hell, the Third Day he Rose Again from the Dead

Matt Chandler – September 27, 2015

[Video]

Male: I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth...

Female: And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord...

Male: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary...

Male: Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

Male: He descended to hell.

Female: The third day he rose again from the dead.

Male: He ascended to heaven...

Female: And sits on the right hand of the Father Almighty...

Female: From whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

Male: I believe in the Holy Spirit...

Female: The holy catholic church...

Male: The communion of saints...

Male: The forgiveness of sins...

Male: The resurrection of the body...

Male: And the life everlasting.

Male: Amen.

[End of video]

If you have your Bibles, why don't you go ahead and grab those. If you don't have a Bible, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. We'll be in Matthew 27. We'll read a good chunk of Matthew 27 into Matthew 28 in our time together. Again, I always want to get your eyes on the Scriptures and not on anything I'm thinking in particular.

This is week six of our 12-week series on the Apostles' Creed. Just as a quick refresher before we dive into the text... First, we're not preaching the creed. We're preaching the Bible, and the creed just helps us with some things that shape us and serve us in four particular ways that we'll talk about here in a second. As a note, what we want to do is look at what the Bible has to say.

A good way to think about this is that the Bible is the sun. It has all the heat. It has all the power. It has all the weight. The creed is kind of like the moon. It's a reflection of what is authoritative, of what is true, of the very Word of God, but it has no authority in and of itself. If it doesn't line up with Scripture, then it is false. We're not really preaching the creed; we're preaching the Bible.

We're just using the creed as a jumping off point because we believe that by diving into the creed, it will help us, as Christians, create a better symmetry. It will make us think about aspects of the nature and character of God that maybe we're not prone to think of right away. It will also help with clarity. It will help us recognize where we're thinking falsely about the triune God of the universe.

It will help us understand the community God has invited us into. Lastly, it will help us counsel both ourselves and those around us. That's why we've been in the creed. It's not magic. Reciting it doesn't make you a Christian. We're not witches. There are not incantations in the Christian faith. It is a good, right thing to join in with a long line of Christians. We are a historic people, right? This isn't a new thing that has just started.

When we read the creed, when we say the creed, especially when we read it together publicly, we're doing two things. One, we're rejecting kind of the popular stories of our day. We're saying we don't agree with these popular narratives, these ways the world is trying to disciple us and shape us and mold us. Instead, we're putting all of our chips over here. We're saying we reject that, and we believe earnestly this.

When we stand and read the creed together here in a moment, here's what we're doing. Every week, I've tried to introduce a couple of *isms* to you that we're rejecting as Christians. We're saying we don't believe that. The two *isms* for this week are... We as Christians fundamentally reject *postmodernism*. We do not believe that truth is relative, that your truth is your truth, and my truth is my truth. We believe there is *a* truth for all men everywhere across all time.

We believe that. It's not narrow-minded; it's true. It's far more narrow-minded, far more arrogant to think that you possess what is true for you. Surely, in your own life with you, you know you can't be trusted, right? We would also reject *emotionalism*. We would reject the idea that our emotions tell us what is true. Rather, we would reject those things, and we would say, "We're not putting chips on that side of the table."

We're pushing all of our chips over to this God of the Bible, this triune God, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, three in one, Creator of the universe. We believe that. We put our hope in that. With that said, would you stand with me as we once again read the creed together? If you're not a Christian and don't want to do that, that's fine. You can stay seated. You'll find this to be a very safe place for you. Let's read.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen." Why don't you have a seat.

Last week, we covered at length that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. We said, "Those are the facts of the crucifixion of Christ." What we wanted to do was get underneath the facts to the truths that lay underneath them. We said those two truths... There were

a bunch of them, but we kind of distilled it down to two truths, namely that the cross of Jesus Christ reconciles us to God, and the cross of Jesus Christ creates a people, a covenant people that is both universal and global and worked out locally. That's where we spent our time last week.

Now we get into one of the more confusing aspects of the creed, this next phrase, "He descended into hell. The third day he rose..." Now, when I started rolling out to our elders and staff, "Hey, I kind of want to preach the Apostles' Creed," the way we work here is I'll throw out, and they'll push on it and go, "Okay, why? What about this? At the end of the creed, what do you hope people know and understand?" There's a lot of robust dialogue that goes into what we end up preaching on the weekends.

I'm like, "I want to do the creed." This phrase "descended into hell" was added in the fifth century and wasn't even read a lot until the sixth or seventh century. Even to this day, there are large swaths of evangelicals who read the creed but leave out "descended into hell" because we don't believe he actually went to the place of hell and did that. Right? The Bible certainly doesn't teach that.

You've got this question of, "Why in the world would I include this phrase when I didn't have to?" It certainly was true of Kids' Village who came in and said, "Please don't add "descended into hell." If you add "descended into hell," that creates some real issues for us, pastor." I reminded them of the big bucks they make and to figure it out. Why would we keep the phrase "descended into hell"? I'm glad you asked because I'm going to preach on that a little bit today.

Here's my outline for you type A people. I want to solve this "descended into hell" and why we would leave it in the reading of the creed, and then I want to do two truths on the resurrection, namely that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a physical, bodily resurrection, and that physical, bodily resurrection is objective evidence that all of our sin has been accounted for and forgiven in the death and resurrection of Christ.

That's the outline. With that said, let's dive into Matthew 27. We're going to start in verse 32. We'll read quite a bit of the Bible together today. That's a good thing. We're in church. Let's get going. Matthew 27, starting in verse 32. At this point (we already covered last week), Jesus has been savagely and brutally beaten.

They have pulled the beard out of his face. They have punched him. They have flayed his back, ripped the skin off his back. He would have been disfigured and bloodied to a place that is so grotesque that it's hard to get the mind around. Broken and shattered and bloodied, spit and blood dripping off of his face, unrecognizable to those who knew him.

I said last week, and I'll remind you again, that it is important for all of us not to turn our heads from the ravaged body of Jesus Christ. It is important for us to not turn our eyes away from the suffering of Jesus Christ under Pontius Pilate. In the brutality of the cross, we see God's seriousness about sin. In the brutality of the cross, we see there is no such thing as little sin, and all sin carries with it a seriousness of God.

In fact, if you doubt the seriousness of God, of sin, you need only to look to the cross and the reality of hell, and you get how weighty, how deplorable, how rebellious all sin is before a holy God. At this point, Jesus is severely beaten, almost unrecognizable, bits of skin hanging off of him, blood everywhere. We pick it up in verse 32.

"As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his [Jesus'] cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. Then they sat down and kept watch over him there.

And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided [mocked] him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.'

So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, "I am the Son of God."' And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled [mocked] him in the same way. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour."

I want to stop there. Keep your place in verse 46. We'll come back to it. One of the more compelling historical aspects to the crucifixion of Christ is around the time that Jesus is being crucified, there was an anomaly on earth that is written about all over the world, down into Africa, over into Asia. During the time of a full moon, there was a complete and utter eclipse in the middle of the day.

From non-biblical, first century, non-Christian historians, there is this moment of terror globally that, "We just had an eclipse when it's impossible to have an eclipse because we have a full moon." That's outside the testimony of Scripture. Yet, it lines up. A moment in human history that reveals that what we're reading here actually happened, rooted in history. Look at verse 46.

"And about the ninth hour [when all this darkness is there] Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, 'This man is calling Elijah.' And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.' And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit."

In John's testimony of the crucifixion, before he yields up his spirit, he says, "It is finished." Verse 51:

"And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many."

When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!' There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the

entrance of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.

But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.'

So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.'"

I want to start coming out of this text, and I think we see it in this text. What is going on in the phrase "descended into hell" and why we would keep it in the creed as we read it? What we know to be true in the Scriptures is that on the cross of Christ, Jesus is absorbing all of the sins of all of those who would believe upon the name of Jesus throughout history.

He is on the cross, absorbing God's wrath toward King David's adultery and murder and toward your sinfulness and toward your children's sinfulness, your parents' sinfulness, all of the sins of all of those who would believe upon the name of Jesus being absorbed by Christ on the cross, so much so that the Scriptures use this kind of language, that Jesus, on the cross, took on all of our transgressions, again, across all time, across all people who would believe upon the name of Jesus Christ.

Jesus takes on those transgressions. He dies according to our sins. He himself bears the weight of our sins, and the apostle Paul, to the church at Galatia, said he became a curse for us. The perfect one becomes the cursed one, that he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

In some way, by some means, in the secrets of divine sovereignty and omnipotence... I've grown more comfortable with mystery as I've gotten older. I don't think God is okay with confusion, but he is okay with mystery. Somewhere in the middle, somewhere in the midst of this divine sovereignty and divine omnipotence, somehow for the first time in the history of the universe, there is this separation between Jesus Christ, God the Son, and God the Father.

There is a type of turning the back of the Father on the Son for the first time ever. The only place in the Scriptures we see Jesus not call God "Father" is in this text when he says, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The agony of separation from the Father settles into the Son, and for the first time ever, he feels what we're not supposed to feel, separation from God.

That's the hell Christ experiences. When he says, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" two things are happening. First, he's pointing back to Psalm 22 where this phrase, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" is listed in a psalm about a suffering King...listen to this...whose hands and feet are pierced, whose side is pierced, who is mocked and belittled while people gamble away his garments. Does that sound familiar? It should because we just read it.

Except that one is written about in Psalm 22. On the cross, Jesus is still extending mercy. Earlier in the narrative, we see him pray for those crucifying him, "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do." Now, as he hangs on the cross, being belittled and mocked by those he has come to save, Jesus tries to waken them up from their hard-heartedness by quoting the psalm.

It doesn't work, of course. I mean, they immediately don't acknowledge what he said. "Oh, I think maybe he just called for Elijah." What? "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" "I think he just called for Elijah." They're not the sharpest knives in the drawer, which should make us feel hope for ourselves, right? Then they get a reed and put sour wine.

Quick question, just as we talk about the agony of Christ on the cross. What would vinegary wine feel like in your busted up face? What would it feel like to have your hands spread open, to be naked in front of a mob who is mocking you as you seek to save them eternally, and have vinegary wine wiped all over the open wounds all over your face?

He's trying to extend mercy in the midst of torture, and for the first time, in some divine, mysterious way, he feels separation from God. Listen to me. Everything good and perfect, everything, whether

you're a Christian or not, is a gift of common grace brought about by the presence of God. Hell is the absence of the presence of God to bless and is simply the presence of God to judge.

The reason that's important is because this metaphorical descending into hell isn't that Jesus goes to an actual place of hell but that Jesus experiences in this moment in a very mysterious way the presence of God to bless, and he feels for the first time the presence of God to judge. He senses and feels the reality of hell. This is why we have an empathetic High Priest. That's what the book of Hebrews calls Jesus. He knows what it's like to be us. He suffers as we have suffered. He has experienced what we experience, except he has not sinned in it.

This phrase "descended into hell" is I think important so we can feel the weight of our sinfulness. Brothers, sisters, it would have been our voices in that crowd mocking him. Don't, in your imagination, wish you could go back in the day and could be like, "Guys, listen. Stop." That's not what you would have been doing. I know in your imagination, that's how awesome you are, but that's not the way this would have played out.

It is our sin that held him there. It is our rebellion that held him there. We are not without guilt in this. It was not just those who crucified him who he has forgiven. It is all of us who have been forgiven in this singular act. In that, Christ metaphorically descends into hell. Now when it comes to the resurrection of Christ, here are the two things I think we have to really get into our hearts and guys so we can thrive in a real way.

The evidence of Jesus' resurrection, the circumstantial evidence around the resurrection of Christ, is so compelling that those who don't want to believe in it have been forced to create alternate stories to try to combat the fact that something clearly happened there historically. Easily the most popular theory is called the swoon theory, that Jesus didn't actually die.

He was just so savagely wounded that when he checked his pulse (by the way, after they drove a spear up under his rib cage, through his lungs and into his heart, and pulled it back out), he was so weak and depleted of blood that they checked his pulse. He didn't have a pulse. They declared him dead, and they wrapped him up and buried him.

The reason others saw him after his crucifixion is not because he died and came back from the grave. Rather, he didn't die and somehow crawled his way out of this tomb. Now, people who would

use that as an excuse not to look at the facts of the resurrection will point to legitimate, real stories of human feats that boggle the mind, just blow the imagination.

People who have crashed their plane in the middle of a jungle and broke both of their legs and lost a hand, yet for six months, they just scooped themselves along with one forearm, eating dirt and roots along the way, only to come out emaciated and near death six months later only ultimately to be saved. It's like you're saying, "Hey, see. That happened, so why couldn't Jesus have survived this beating and then just been..."

Okay, well here's why, if we're just using kind of common sense. The disciples are a gaggle of cowards. They do nothing but run and hide when it hits the fan. This is who they are. Peter was so terrified to be linked to Jesus that he's denying him in front of his face, despite the fact that Jesus had just told him a few hours ago, "You're going to do this," and he was like, "Even if I must die, I will not do it." It's like a few hours later. "I don't know the man." This is the disciples.

Let me ask a question. The apostle Peter is about to stand up in front of all Jerusalem and herald the good news of Jesus Christ. These 12 cowards are about to all be put to death in the most gruesome, horrific ways imaginable. If torn up, beat up, slaughtered Jesus somehow figured a way out of this tomb and showed himself to the men, busted all up, is that going to instill confidence? Is that going to make the disciples go, "I'm in"? No. Wouldn't that drive you all the more away?

No, they become emboldened. James, the half-brother of Jesus, becomes a Christian and a pastor and says that he thinks his brother was the Son of God. What do you have to do to convince your family that you're God? Come back from the dead. That's all you have to do. Be dead for three days and come back. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a bodily, physical resurrection. He died. He went in the ground, and he came back.

What we see... In John 20, we see him eating fish. He's having a meal. The resurrected Jesus is having a meal, bodily, physically having a meal. They're eating fish. The Bible says in John 20 that he had scars, that you could touch his scars. He could be touched. We even read that the women touched his feet. He had feet. Jesus had feet. How simple and awesome is that?

That Bible says in Acts 1:8 that it is his physical body that ascends. In 1 Thessalonians, it is his physical body that returns. Don't let fantasy take from you the physicality of Jesus Christ. He is alive.

He *was* alive. He *is* alive. He'll *be* alive in a resurrected body that does not perish, does not get weak, cannot die. He physically rose from the grave.

Let me tell you why I think this is so huge. First, I think we have a tendency to divorce physicality from our faith. We have a tendency to make everything ethereal and spiritual and more in the realm of idea and less in the idea of presence. That stuff is compounded with the reality that we live an extremely voyeuristic society. What I mean by that is we have a tendency to watch people from afar, to talk about people from afar, and not ever know them, so they become less than what they actually are. Are you tracking with me on that?

The reason our culture is so apt at tearing other people down, building them up only to burn them to the ground, is because we don't recognize that they're real human people. We don't recognize that they've been made in the image of God. They're there as a commodity. *People* magazine, *US Weekly*, Facebook stalking, all of that... By the way, it always makes me nervous that you chuckle at Facebook stalking. I'm guessing there's a lot more of that going on than I think.

Ultimately, what ends up happening is people become a commodity to be used, somebody to entertain you, but they don't really have a soul. They don't really matter. They're just there for your good pleasure. I think because we live in this type of society and because we have a tendency to make spiritual things kind of ethereal, we miss out in the reality that Jesus is alive physically right now.

I'm not travelling much anymore. That has been on purpose. That has afforded me some opportunities. I'm getting to coach my son's flag football team, which has been a lot of fun for me. We're 2-0, but I don't want to talk about it. I've had a blast just helping coach the team. I know I'm not *the* coach. I just get to help.

On Friday, Tony Romo came out to the boys' practice, arm in a sling, and it was... Look, man. It was awesome. Tony came out. Here's what happened. I don't know who was more geeked out about it, the boys or the parents, but this man who we see on TV, who we talk good and bad about, who is an idea if we're honest... We kind of know he's a guy, but really he's just kind of the quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys. We're not hanging out with him. He's just this idea.

When he plays well, we talk about how he plays well. When he plays poorly, we talk about how he should have seen this and what we would have done. "Man, when I was in high school... You could

easily read the safety. What was he thinking?" Just so ignorant. He's an idea, but he's not really a person. All of a sudden, in the middle of a group of fourth grade boys, there he was. He goofed around with them, and he played with them, and he confused them.

He started talking about running cover four, two deep. They're just fourth grade boys. This sounds silly, but they got to touch him, and he was just there. I want you to hear me say this to you. We are 40 minutes closer to Jesus just being *there*, and we'll be able to touch him, and he'll be able to touch us, not ethereal, not some ghostly, spiritual reality, a bodily, physical resurrection that Jesus is alive physically, bodily right now.

It was his physical body that ascended. He's not an X-Man. He didn't sprout wings. He's not an angel. That's not what he is. His physical body ascended. His physical body will return. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, God in the flesh. Since the resurrection of Christ was physical and bodily, what that means for those of us who are in Christ is that our confidence that all of our sin has been paid for, our debt has been paid in full, is sound.

If Jesus is still dead, then our confidence in his perfection, in his righteousness and his holiness, imputed to us, must be radically shaken. If the cost of sin is death and death has not been defeated, then we have some questions about whether or not our bill has been paid in full. Maybe he just paid it half off. He couldn't have paid it all off because he's still dead, but because Christ is *not* dead, because the resurrection *did* occur, our confidence is that all of our sin has been forgiven, all of it, because all of our sin was future sin when Christ died on the cross.

He knew it, and he died, and he resurrected, which means it has been taken care of. The bill has been paid in full. It means I don't owe. You don't owe. Sin has been taken care of forever. What that means is that as people who have had our debt paid for, we are both risen and will rise. We are both risen and will rise.

Here's what I mean by that. In Ephesians 2, starting in verse 1, here's what the Bible says. I'll put it on the screen for you. **"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience..."**

Verse 3 should always make us a people who walk in great humility. **"...among whom we..."** What's the word? **"...all..."** You look that up in the Greek, and it means everyone. It means all. That's why

they translated it like that, right? "**...among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature [our birth] children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.**"

Then two of the most beautiful words ever written. "**But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places...**" That's next week's sermon. "**...so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**"

We experience, as Christians, a spiritual resurrection. We are dead in our trespasses and sins, and we are made alive in the resurrection of Christ. We were dead, and now we're not. That means we are no longer slaves to sin. That's amazing news. I don't have to sin anymore. Am I going to? You should say, "Yes," faster than that. "Is he?" Yes, probably by the end of this sermon. Right? I've been set free into the sweetness of conviction.

Conviction is a good thing. Guilt is not. Shame is not a good thing. Conviction is a sweet thing. It's a wooing force that draws us into the life as God designed it to be lived. Don't avoid conviction. Do you know what I'm talking about? If you follow the Lord for a while, let me unpack it for you. You know you're not doing really well. You have some secrets. You've stumbled in some areas. You don't really want anyone to know that, but you definitely don't want to put yourself in spaces where you might be confronted with your sin because you're kind of enjoying it for a little bit.

You kind of avoid those who are really serious about Christ. You kind of avoid the gathering. You stop coming to church for a while. You'll get better. Once you start living a little bit better, then you'll kind of reenter. That fundamentally shows you don't understand the gospel. We move toward him in our screw-ups. That's the gospel. Right? We don't avoid conviction. It's a sweet gift of Jesus in the Holy Spirit to woo us, to pull us, and to move us toward righteousness.

We have the power to say no to sin in a way we did not have before we were spiritually resurrected. Those dead in trespasses don't know they're dead because they're dead, but when you've been made alive, you can smell the decay of sin and turn from it. You can't do that when you're not a Christian. Not only though will we have a spiritual resurrection that is possible now, is a reality for those who are in Christ now and is an invitation to those who would come to Jesus Christ, but then on top of that, there will be a physical resurrection from the dead.

Look at 1 Corinthians 15, starting in verse 42. Again, we'll read quite a bit of this. **"So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; 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."**

Notice he did not say "...raised a spirit." We're not raised as ghosts. **"...raised a spiritual body."** A new kind of body. **"Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual."** In all this conversation of the spiritual, don't divorce the spiritual from the physical. He's talking about a physical, spiritual resurrected body, one that can be touched. One that moves.

It has a nose. It has ears. It has physical traits, right? Verse 47: **"The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man [that's Jesus] is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust [that's you and me], and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven [that's all who are believers in Christ]. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven."**

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?'"

My hope is not just for today being resurrected spiritually. My hope is also in 10,000 years from now, when I will rule and reign alongside of Christ in an imperishable body. The Bible is being very honest about your physical future. Right? This thing we have on has not been built for eternity. It's perishing. I'm 41. I know I've already started the descent. I will never be any more athletic. I will never be any faster. I will never be much stronger than I am right now.

I'm not even cruising altitude at 41. I think 27 is when you start cruising altitude. Everything from here is just a bit of a descent. Some of us already are learning this. For me, it's dangerous to sleep. I could get hurt. I could tweak my neck. I could throw out my back. I can't sleep for eight hours. That's dangerous. I could need a doctor if I sleep for eight hours. I have six and get up or the back just collapses on itself. That didn't happen to me when I was a kid.

This is perishing. We can feel it even now perishing. It's dying. Gravity wins. Be a good steward of your physical body, but when all is said and done, it will betray you. It will fall apart. It is going to get sick. It is going to grow weaker. It is not going to do what you want it to do. It's perishing. When it perishes, it will be sown, will go into the ground with dishonor. Nobody dies pretty. Death is an ugly, ugly thing. The first thing you lose in this process is your dignity, but it's not how we'll be raised.

See, this is perishable, but what I'll be resurrected with is imperishable. I'll be sown in dishonor, but I'll be raised in honor. I'll die in weakness because what is death but ultimate weakness? I will be raised in strength. Augustine, who was the bishop of Hippo, North Africa, said in his book *The City of God*, which talks a lot about the consummation of all things, that all the bodily processes that exist now to defend and protect and filter and keep us alive will no longer need to do that in the resurrected body but rather will contribute to the praise of Jesus.

The liver won't need to filter our blood in the resurrected body. It joins in. Its energy, its vitality goes into praising God. The skin no longer needs to block disease. The systems that are meant to protect us no longer need to protect us, so they join in with greater vitality in the worship of Jesus Christ. The physical, bodily resurrection of the saints is a reality. We hope for today, but we also hope for tomorrow.

Now, if we take this and plug it into the grid that we've said the Apostles' Creed helps us with, if we take this idea and look at it, what does this do for symmetry? If we're looking at being well-rounded Christians, let me talk a little bit about symmetry. Some of you really need to meditate, think, receive, and wrestle through the idea that you have been risen and that you don't need to be a slave to sin.

If you're struggling, if you're walking in secrets, if you have real issues that seem insurmountable, the spiritual resurrection you've experienced, being sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, invites you

into the freedom that is reserved for the children of God. To enjoy that, friends, you must get over your pride and feeling like you have to look like something you're not.

You might take advantage of the ongoing ethics of the children of God, confession and repentance, that you might get help and ask for help where you need it. See, it's a strange thing that you have this guarantee of victory over sin and death in your life, that you've been pulled away from the stench of death and been put into the aroma of life. Yet, so many of us will neglect that for pride and just run back to that stench of death and give ourselves back over to slavery when we have the power inside of us not to do that because of the Holy Spirit.

It's our pride that makes us want to pretend to be more than we are. It's a terrible thing that so many Christians bow down at this weak, faulty altar of wanting to look like they're further along, look like they're godly, look like they're enjoying Jesus, look like they get it, and they're rejoicing and dancing in the pleasure of God Almighty. If that's not where you are, that's okay. Just don't pretend that you're there.

"I don't want to bring everybody down." No, no, no. You won't bring everybody down. You'll help yourself come up. See, how can the saints serve you, how can they encourage you, how can they speak life into you if you're pretending you need none of that? In your pretending, I'm guessing at some level, you've justified yourself to yourself.

Nobody lies to you as effectively as you do. No one. No one is as good at lying to you as you. You should even give yourself props. You're awesome at lying to yourself. I'll give you that. Listen, you're awesome at lying to yourself. To step out from under that weight and say, "Gosh, I'm in trouble here. I'm really wrestling with sin, and it's gross, and it's embarrassing, but I need help. I can't beat it on my own. Someone help me." You're risen. You don't have to give yourself to it.

The second thing... Maybe that's not it, but on symmetry, maybe you need to get your eyes toward the reality that we will be raised. I'm trying to introduce (this is why I'm saying it a lot) some language into the life of our fellowship around the idea of considering things 10,000 years from now. Quick poll. I know we're running out of time, but how many of you look back on things that seemed like such a big deal a decade ago and are now kind of embarrassed that you thought they were huge deals? Is that universal? Look around. Keep your hands up. Don't be quick about it.

I don't know if you're doing it at Plano. There are quite a bit of us here in Flo Mo. If a decade later, we're looking back on that and going, "Gosh, I sure was silly," what's it going to seem like 10,000 years from now? Because 10,000 years from now, I'm going to be in my imperishable body, golden, six-pack abs... I just made that up. I don't know if that's what it'll look like at all. I hope not. I think that's kind of gross.

Ultimately, I'll have this imperishable body. I'll be ruling and reigning alongside of Christ forever in glad worship of him and serving with him. I just believe that if I can remember that, that the very true, real difficulties of today will lose some of their punch. Maybe what you need to consider is not that you have been raised but that there will be a day that you're actually physically resurrected, and 10,000 years from now, the troubles of today will not seem as weighty and overwhelming as they do now.

When we talk about clarity, it's funny that this piece of clarity continues to be said week in and week out. If Christ has raised from the dead, your sins are forgiven. It doesn't matter what they are. Quick question. It's not a trick. How many of your sins were future sins when Christ died on the cross? All of them, 100 percent. Yet, Christ freely went to the cross. That's why I tell you Christ knew what he was buying on the cross.

You just haven't surprised him. He's not wanting a mulligan. He knew it was there before he ever went to the cross, so your self-hate has no basis to think, "Oh, there's just no way I can be a part of this people. There's no way Christ could love me. I get this. I want this. There's no way this can be true." I'm trying to lean into you and say, "He already knew, and he went." You have to stop this beating up of yourself. It has been paid for. You don't owe anything.

The altar is closed. You have no sacrifice to lay down, nothing, because it has been paid for. It has been paid for. That's the clarity that so many of us need. Then on counsel... I became a Christian right before my eighteenth birthday via the testimony of a friend who brought me to a historic First Baptist Church. The First Baptist Church I went to is probably like most First Baptist Churches, if you've ever been to one.

They have a specific liturgy, a flow of the service. We would sing hymns. You would pick up the hymnal, and the guy would tell you what page to turn to. We certainly would do any of what my grandma calls "wall singing." We wouldn't do any of this wall singing. We would get a hymnal. The guy would give you a page number. "Turn to page 287. We're going to do verses one and three."

Then we would sing, and then there would be a special. It would be one of the better singers in the church. They would come out with a mic and would be like, "This song has really been ministering to me. It has been special to me, and I hope it is special to you." When they put their second hand on the mic, that was cue for the sound guy to start the track.

Then the track would start, and they would sing the song. Then they would pass the offertory plates while that song was being sung. They would be done, and the preacher would come up to preach, right? That was kind of the liturgy. There was a hymn we used to sing all the time. It was like... Radio today is like the same seven songs on repeat. It was like that there too.

One my favorites that I really miss is the hymn "Because He Lives." "Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Because he lives, all fear is gone. Because I know-ow-ow he holds the future, life is worth the living just because he lives." I loved that song. Our counsel to ourselves is right along with that chorus. If you're here in Flower Mound, we're going to get to sing that together here in a minute. Some of the other campuses, I don't think so. We're going to get to sing it here in just a moment.

This is how we counsel ourselves. Because Christ is alive, I can face tomorrow. I don't know what your tomorrow looks like. I don't know what's looming on the horizon for you. But because Jesus is alive, our fear about what is on that horizon should dissipate. Why? Because he has us. He's alive. We have no enemy. Death is dead. Sin is vanquished. We've won. The beach has been secured. It's over now, excepting holding fast to him until it's consummated.

Since we know he holds our future, there is a rest, a peace. This is how we counsel ourselves. This is how we talk to ourselves. This is how we preach to ourselves. In Revelation 3, the physically resurrected Jesus, in his body, not in some sort of ethereal, spiritual form, says this to John in Patmos. **"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."**

The resurrected, bodily Jesus continues to extend the invitation. "Open the door, and I will come in, not with a list of things you need to get better at. Open the door, and I will come in, not with a critique of how you've lived life so far. Open the door, and I will come in, not with you-should-have's and you-shouldn't-have's, but I will come in and dine with you. I will come down and sit and eat."

I believe that you being here today has put you in the way of that knocking. You've heard the truth of the gospel today. You've heard that Christ has died for your sins. You've heard that in his resurrection, all of your sins can be forgiven. You have heard that there is no sin with more power than the cross of Christ. You have heard that Christ has come into the world for this purpose, to save sinners.

We see even in Revelation 3 not the God of judgment but the God of mercy extending to you an opportunity to sit down where your soul was created to sit, not outside of fellowship, but inside of fellowship. Wouldn't it be a sweet thing to surrender to that knocking and just open the door, to leave not as dead men and women but alive? Surely your heart wants that, to understand that you're no longer a slave to sin, but you have have been set free to rejoice and to run in the pleasure of our God.

That's ultimately how our community has been shaped, right? Our clarity is forgiveness. Our community is shaped by this. We are loved and forgiven by God. We live powerfully in the present with our hope on the glory of the future. We know that God loves us, that he is for us, that he delights in us, and that sets us free to play and to run and to work and to love and to serve under the banner of God's pleasure in us.

Think about it. If you've ever seen children whose daddies love them and dote on them and delight in them, they love life. They rejoice in it. They're climbing trees and throwing balls and are excited. They're well-shaped and well-formed. This is the people of God working, playing, serving under the banner of the delight of their God. He stands at the door and knocks. Gosh, aren't you tired enough yet? It doesn't have to be the way it is.

Unbeliever, you have not out-sinned his grace. Christian, he's making us more and more and more like Jesus. Don't fear the ongoing ethics of the Christian walk of confession, of repentance, of honesty, even the embarrassing kind of honesty because we're not as far along as we hoped we would be. He stands at the door and knocks, physically, bodily, and if anyone would hear and open, he would come in and dine with them, and them with him. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for the opportunity today to again consider who you are, what you've done, how you redeem and rescue and ransom us, how you heal and shape and mold us. I pray for my brothers and sisters this morning who are not walking in the resurrection power that you've put in their hearts. I pray for a willingness to let go of pride and a glad-hearted pursuit of holiness.

I pray for those who have come in maybe skeptical, not believers. I just pray that as the Word of God has gone out, your Word has gone out, you would now do the work of illumination, Holy Spirit, that you would help them see and understand what the death and resurrection of a guy 2,000 years ago has to do with them. Father, for the first time, that they might have eyes to see. Help us. We need you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

© 2015 The Village Church