

## The Resurrection Of The Dead.

Text: John 5:28-29

Suggested Hymns:

761, 170, 99, 340, 211

- 1) Christ rose from the dead
- 2) Resurrection is a certainty
- 3) Two resurrections, grace and power
- 4) By what will people be judged

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 5:28-29, <sup>28</sup> ***“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice”*** <sup>29</sup> ***“and come forth -- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (NKJV)***

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we are continuing our series on the Nicene Creed. Part 16 focuses on the words, *And I look for the resurrection of the dead.*

We celebrate Easter once a year, but all year long we bask in the after-glow of the light that emanates from the empty tomb in Joseph’s lovely garden. Let us rejoice in the words, *And I look for the resurrection of the dead.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. Christ Rose From The Dead

Christ who died on Good Friday rose triumphantly from the grave on Easter morning. His resurrection ushered in a new era of light, love, and hope for mankind. Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power, by His resurrection from the dead.<sup>1</sup> Although the Roman seal on the sepulchre had been broken, God’s seal of approval rested there on it. The Sent-of-God had thoroughly accomplished His mission. Prisoners of sin could now become ***“prisoners of hope”***<sup>2</sup> and experience a spiritual resurrection that would have its perfect consummation in the *“resurrection of the dead.”*

When the Sadducees were unwilling to accept the prospects of a resurrection, Jesus told them in Matthew 22:29, ***“You are mistaken, not knowing the***

***Scriptures nor the power of God.***” The Sadducees had forgotten or simply ignored the Old Testament accounts of people who had risen from the dead.

There was the widow’s son at Zarephath raised in answer to Elijah’s prayer.<sup>3</sup> There was also the son of the Shunammite woman who was raised in response to Elisha’s prayer.<sup>4</sup> Remember also when a dead man was let down into Elisha’s sepulchre and his body came into contact with Elisha’s bones, the man revived and stood up on his feet.<sup>5</sup> And finally we have the vision of the valley of dry bones recorded in Ezekiel 37:1-10.

There are also a number of instances recorded in the New Testament. Jesus raised the widow’s son at Nain as we heard in the Gospel reading,<sup>6</sup> the daughter of Jairus,<sup>7</sup> and Lazarus of Bethany.<sup>8</sup>

Then there was Tabitha, also called Dorcas, who was raised by Peter.<sup>9</sup> Especially noteworthy is the account given in Matthew 27:52-53, that when Jesus died on the cross ***“the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; <sup>53</sup> and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”***

Christ’s own resurrection demonstrates that at His second coming on the Last Day, Christ has the power to accomplish *“the raising of all the dead, whose souls will then be reunited with the same bodies from which they were separated in temporal death, but which will be adapted to a future state, those of the wicked to a state of everlasting shame and torment, those of the righteous to an everlasting state of celestial glory.”*<sup>10</sup>

The faith of the Christian church in this area is expressed in these words of the Nicene Creed: *“And I look for the resurrection of the dead.”*

## **2. Resurrection Is A Certainty**

Truly, we *“look for”* it. We had better. No other choice is ours. *“The hour is coming.”* That is a certainty.

We have no such certainty in our earthly existence. Will racial harmony be long in coming, or will racial segregation gain ground? Who knows? Will the war on poverty ever succeed? Who can tell? Can the hard-core unemployed be imbued with sufficient motivation to seek, train for, and hold on to a job? No one knows!

Will the pendulum ever swing from situational ethics and relative morality to an acceptance of God's Will as expressed in the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount? Who can say? But we can be sure that the *"hour is coming"* when all the dead shall come forth from their hiding places of fading memories.

*"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice<sup>29</sup> and come forth"* Jesus told His contemporaries as we read in John 5:28. Little did they realise the almighty power given to His human nature, that He, the God-Man, *by whom all things were made and without whom was not anything made that was made*,<sup>11</sup> could send forth His almighty command and call together from mountaintop and ocean depths, from desert sands and green plains all who had died.

*All who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth -- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.* Your blessed dead will not be overlooked or forgotten either.

That hour shall be the greatest in the history of man, incomparably greater than any so-called "great age" on earth. Historians may disagree as to the number of great eras preceding the present one, or they may differ in their opinions as to which these might be.

Conceivably, however, they could agree on these five: the Golden Age of Greece, the dawn of Christianity, the Reformation-Renaissance period, the Elizabethan era, and the current atomic-electronic-computerised age, with its daring exploration of outer and inner space.

But the greatest event will be the resurrection of the dead. Never such startling happenings, never such a concourse of people, never such a decisive consummation.

It will be the culmination of man's redemption. The Only-Begotten of the Father, Second Person of the blessed Trinity, Son of God and God the Son, made His way from outer space to live on our planetary island.

By His perfect life He welded together the broken fragments of the Law, and by His innocent suffering and death He became the Saviour of the world. When

love's labour was done, He returned to His heavenly home. He sent forth His Holy Spirit that the members of His mystical body might be inspirited to tell others of Jesus and His love.

Now, when our Lord returns for judgment, all the dead shall be raised up and gathered before Him, and He shall judge them in righteousness and truth. *“Those in whom the righteousness of faith ripened into righteousness of life, that proved their faith in good works, will come forth out of their graves unto the resurrection of life. They will receive, as a reward of grace, the full, eternal enjoyment of life, in an everlasting resurrection.*

*But the others, that have given evidence of their total lack of faith by evil deeds, by acts not in conformity with the will of God, will come forth from their graves, but only in a resurrection unto damnation, from temporal death to eternal death, a damnation which is essentially a casting away from the face of God, and which will continue throughout eternity.”<sup>12</sup>*

### **3. Two Resurrections Grace and Power**

Believers in Christ look forward to that great and awesome day. It will be their second resurrection experience.

Here on earth they heard the voice of Jesus spoken in love and tender compassion. And accepting His invitation by the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit, they *“passed from death into life,”* in accordance with what Jesus says in John 5:24, <sup>24</sup> *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”* A miracle of grace was performed.

But on the Last Day a miracle of power will be performed. The same voice that originally called the world into being, that regenerated the hearts of people, will command all the dead rise from their vaults, and simultaneously that voice will change those who are alive until that hour.

It is the voice of the Stronger than the strong, the many-diademed, who Himself conquered death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, *“the firstfruits of them that slept.”<sup>13</sup>*

There will be a only two possible results: either to life or to the second death. Sinners may on earth clog their ears to the voice of the Gospel, but their ears will be unstopped when the trumpet sounds and the voice of judgment speaks.

There will be a judgment of all people as surely as a resurrection of all people. Those who in demonstration of their faith in the Lord Christ walked before God in all manner pleasing to Him shall be graciously assigned to life everlasting. But those who evidenced their unbelief through spiritual indifference, disrespect, or evil works shall experience the righteous judgment of God. For them the resurrection will be to condemnation.

#### **4. By What Will People Be Judged?<sup>14</sup>**

A human judge finds sentence according to the laws of the state. If Christ were to judge people according to the law of the Ten Commandments, no one would be saved. The psalmist writes, ***“If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”<sup>15</sup>***

Those who understand their sins will not appeal for judgment to the Law and God’s justice. Instead, they will flee and cling to Jesus, who bore the world’s sin in His body<sup>16</sup> and became a curse for us.<sup>17</sup>

Christ says, ***“The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”<sup>18</sup>*** This word is the Gospel, which people receive in faith or reject in unbelief. Jesus judges individuals according to their personal attitude toward this Gospel — in other words, whether each person receives it in faith or rejects it in unbelief. For this reason Christ says, ***“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”<sup>19</sup>***

The eternal destiny of a person depends upon this one thing alone: whether he believes that Jesus alone is his Saviour.

Believers deserve the sentence of condemnation under the Law because of their sins. However, that sentence of damnation is suspended and changed to a sentence of pardon and justification for Christ’s sake, which faith receives. The sins of believers are not investigated and published. They are not even mentioned. Jesus the judge does not look at the rags of their sins.

He sees only the perfect garment of His righteousness, which He won for them at Calvary and bestowed on them in the Gospel received by faith. Faith always clings to Jesus now — and especially on Judgment Day. Jesus Himself says, ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”***<sup>20</sup>

Good works are mentioned,<sup>21</sup> and the counsel of the heart will be made manifest.<sup>22</sup> But these are not the reason for the sentence of innocent that is pronounced.<sup>23</sup> They give evidence of faith, a faith that trusted in Jesus and listened to His voice. Good works are the visible fruit of an invisible faith.<sup>24</sup>

With respect to those on the left of the Judge, note that their individual sins are not investigated and published. Instead, the Judge calls attention to their lack of good works,<sup>25</sup> which proves their lack of faith.

Where there are no Christian works in the life of a person, there is no Christian faith in the heart.<sup>26</sup> Having no faith, these people lack the righteousness of Christ that alone avails in the judgment of God. Their sins were atoned for and were forgiven,<sup>27</sup> but they rejected the counsel of God against themselves and brought upon themselves swift destruction.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore ***“he who does not believe will be condemned.”*** Unbelief is a sin just as faith is a good work. But as faith does not save us because it is a good work, so unbelief does not damn because it is a sin.

The saving power lies in the grace of God and in the merits of Christ that the believer receives and the unbeliever rejects. Unbelievers are lost because they choose not to wear the protective garment of Christ’s righteousness.

With unbelievers the curse of the Law takes its course. Having rejected the grace of God in Christ Jesus, bestowed freely in the Gospel, the wrath of God that they provoked by their sins abides on them.<sup>29</sup> Because they would not believe in Christ for the remission of their sins, they will now die in their sins.<sup>30</sup>

Judgment Day is not an investigation to ascertain who is and who is not a believer. After all, ***“Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe.”***<sup>31</sup> In addition, He also knows those who believe, as Paul says, ***“The Lord knows those who are His.”***<sup>32</sup>

Therefore at the beginning of the judgment the sheep are separated from the goats. We know where we will stand on the Last Day. Jesus died for us. We trust in Him. The question of eternal life and eternal death is not decided in the final judgment.

Jesus has achieved salvation in His death on the cross. ***“It is finished!”*** He said.<sup>33</sup> The Scriptures exhort us to believe this and to remain steadfast in this faith until the end.<sup>34</sup> The person who dies believing in Jesus will stand on the right of the Judge and will be saved. The person who dies in unbelief will stand on the left side and will be lost.

This judgment will pronounce the sentence. This sentence is definitely fixed in each individual case when a person dies.<sup>35</sup> It is carried out immediately as far as it concerns the soul.<sup>36</sup> However, it is formally and publicly pronounced, solemnly declared, extended, and applied also to the body on Judgment Day.

All of this shows us the importance of preparing. Many are the crises, little and great, we have to face in life, but the greatest crisis is still before us as our text says, ***For the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice***<sup>29</sup> ***“and come forth -- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.***

You see, there is an inseparable connection between the now and the then. ***“Our future is in our present, and our present will be reproduced in the future.”*** If we hear and obey the voice of the Son of God in time, we shall be glad to hear that voice again when the Advocate returns as Judge.

What will the resurrection be for you? I pray that it will be a resurrection to life.

May we all always seek and treasure our baptismal grace, and all the promised mercies, pardon, peace, and power through the atoning blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Holy Spirit make us alive here on earth to spiritual life that we may be made alive to life everlasting in heaven. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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- <sup>1</sup> Romans 1:4
  - <sup>2</sup> Zechariah 9:12
  - <sup>3</sup> 1 Kings 17:17-23
  - <sup>4</sup> 2 Kings 4:32-37
  - <sup>5</sup> 2 Kings 13:21
  - <sup>6</sup> Luke 7:12-15
  - <sup>7</sup> Matt. 9:25
  - <sup>8</sup> John 11: 43-44
  - <sup>9</sup> Acts 9:36-41
  - <sup>10</sup> A. L. Graebner, *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology* [CPH, 1910], p. 233
  - <sup>11</sup> John 1:3
  - <sup>12</sup> P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary*
  - <sup>13</sup> 1 Cor. 15:20
  - <sup>14</sup> Adapted from, "A Summary of Christian Doctrine, Koehler, CPH, 2006, p412 -414
  - <sup>15</sup> Psalm 130:3
  - <sup>16</sup> John 1:29
  - <sup>17</sup> Galatians 3:13
  - <sup>18</sup> John 12:48
  - <sup>19</sup> Mark 16:16
  - <sup>20</sup> John 5:24
  - <sup>21</sup> Matthew 25:35-40
  - <sup>22</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:5
  - <sup>23</sup> Matthew 25:34
  - <sup>24</sup> John 15:5; Galatians 5:6
  - <sup>25</sup> Matthew 25:41-45
  - <sup>26</sup> James 2:20
  - <sup>27</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19
  - <sup>28</sup> Luke 7:30; 2 Peter 2:1
  - <sup>29</sup> Ephesians 5:5-6
  - <sup>30</sup> John 3:18
  - <sup>31</sup> John 6:64
  - <sup>32</sup> 2 Timothy 2:19
  - <sup>33</sup> John 19:30
  - <sup>34</sup> Luke 23:43; Revelation 14:13; John 3:16
  - <sup>35</sup> Proverbs 11:7; Revelation 2:10
  - <sup>36</sup> Luke 23:43