**St Martins C3 – April 9, 2023**

**The Victor – The Victor Over Death**

**Sermon Summary:**

If there is a day of the year to be grateful for the life that God has given us and make a fresh choice to live that life, today is that day. Today is resurrection Sunday. The day that Jesus was victorious over death and in gaining that victory, released God’s new life to us. The day that Christ achieved a decisive blow to Satan and the catalyst for a new creation to form.

**Read: Colossians 3:1-4**

The first thing Paul is seeking to do here is to establish a strong link in our thinking between what Christ achieved in His resurrection and the life that Christ’s resurrection guarantees us. As we have seen in this series, with Christ we can overcome Satan, sin, and the chaos Satan generated in our world. With Christ now being victorious over death, we also can be victorious over death.

Spiritual and physical death had to be overcome by Christ, otherwise, we would not be able to receive the spiritual and physical life that God has for us. (1 Corinthians 15:20-26).

Because we have put our trust in Christ, God will do for us what He did for Jesus. Just as Jesus overcame death, we will overcome death. Just as Jesus received God’s life, we will receive God’s life. Just as Jesus was physically raised from death and is with God in Heaven, so we will be raised from physical death and be physically present with God in Heaven. Just as Christ was given a new body that prepared Him for Heaven, we will be given a new body that will prepare us for Heaven.

Paul’s second point in this passage is, if Christ has proven that He is stronger than Satan, why would we go back to living under Satan’s control? If you have received God’s life, why would you go back and live the way of death? Let us live a life where we reinforce the victory that Christ has won for us.

Finally, Paul encourages the Colossians to live for Heaven. Heaven is the life that Christ guaranteed for us in His resurrection. Therefore, let us allow the priorities and values of the Heaven we will experience in the future to shape the way we live our lives in the present.

The last line in this passage is significant: “*When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”* We don’t have any life with God, outside of that which Christ achieved for us in His resurrection. That life is so glorious, it is beyond what we can imagine. When Christ returns and brings the fullness of that life to creation, we will reign with Him in His Kingdom. Are we ready for that? Are we ready to reign with Him?

We will overcome death and reign with Christ in the future, so let that shape how we think, what we value and how we behave in the present. Let us not fall back into our old ways of sin that lead to death, but live God’s new Kingdom life in the present, in preparation for all that He has for us in the future.

**Suggested Connect Group Discussion Questions:**

*Why did Jesus have to overcome death to defeat Satan?*

*What victory did Jesus’ resurrection achieve for us?*

*Why did Jesus have to overcome both (sin) spiritual death and physical decay (physical death)?*

*What does Christ’s resurrection guarantee us in the future?*

*What does Christ’s resurrection guarantee us in the present?*

*In what ways might these guarantees shape our thinking and priorities?*

*How does the prospect of reigning with Christ in His Kingdom in the future change how we prepare for that future in the present?*

**Monday Devotion: The Importance and Factual Truth of the Resurrection**

***Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-11***

The greatest chapter on Jesus’ victory over death is 1 Corinthians 15. In this devotion, we will track through the whole chapter seeing the centrality of the resurrection and its power for our lives now.

It’s always good to have a reminder of what it means to be a Christian. According to verses 1-4, it is simple. Christianity is about continually putting faith in the saving work of Jesus as the one who died, was buried and then rose from the dead for all sin. This is the foundation Christians stand on.

Paul then focuses on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (verses 5-11). He says it was at this time a verifiable fact, he names trustworthy people who saw Jesus after he had risen. He even says there were over 500 people who saw Jesus in his risen state. The resurrection is a historically recorded event that billions have based their life on for centuries.

It is easy to become distracted by so many other side issues of faith, but the only thing that matters is whether you too will devote your life to continually believing in Jesus and the work He achieved through His death and resurrection.

Spend some time, prayerfully, reflecting on your faith and committing again to follow and believe.

**Tuesday Devotion: Life After Death is Certain**

***Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19***

Paul had to deal with many issues with the people of Corinth, one of them was a belief that there would be no resurrection from the dead. Life beyond this one may seem like fanciful thinking, just something invented to make this world of suffering and death feel a little less hopeless.

Paul uses logical reasoning to show that if someone believes in the resurrection of Jesus they must believe in the resurrection of the dead. Jesus was raised to life, and we can be confident that all who die will be as well.

It is essential to believe in life after death as a Christian. If we do not then nothing else we do makes sense. Living a life of sacrificial faith, living for the good of others, denying ourselves and overcoming sin only makes sense if it is true there is a resurrection from the dead.

We don’t often think about life after death. It is a like a country that we have never visited and only heard rumours of. We need to spend time considering the reality of the world to come.

As we do, we can live with a new perspective. We don’t need to attain everything the world has to offer because we have a world to come where we can experience the completeness of Christ. Ask God to reveal more of that world to you today.

**Wednesday Devotion: Jesus is King**

***Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-34***

The word “first fruits” is a harvest term. It is the product that first arises from the ground. Paul calls Christ the first fruits of God’s harvest, a harvest of living souls who will be raised to life because of the atoning death of Jesus.

Jesus Christ has been chosen to be the ruler over all things. He will destroy every ruler and authority and power. He is the victor over every enemy that stands against humanity and God. He is the King over all other powers.

This is why Jesus is worthy of worship and worthy of the devotion of our lives. Only He can take the things that we struggle with and make them new. He has shown that through His resurrection.

There is no other way to God than through Jesus. He is the only one who has conquered and is the only one who is mighty to save.

Paul says that because he believes in Jesus he can persevere through every difficulty. He can choose to live life for more than the pleasures of everyday things, but he can devote himself to a bigger perspective.

Today, reflect on Jesus and commit again to making Him the King of your life. Devote yourself to following His way.

**Thursday Devotion: What Life After Death is Like**

***Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-53***

Just as a seed dies by being planted in the ground but then breaks to allow new life to come forth so our earthly bodies need to die to inherit a body that will be able to last forever.

These bodies will be “spiritual”, this does not mean that they won’t be material, but it refers to a reality filled with the completion given by God’s Spirit. These bodies will be like what we have now, but in many ways, very different. What we experience in seed form now we will experience in full then.

We know this is true because we have already had a picture of what those bodies will be like. We have seen it in Jesus.

When Jesus rose from the dead certain things were the same and some were different. He still appeared as a man (John 20:15). He still had scars on his hands and a hole in his side (John 20:27). He could still eat (Luke 24:41-43). Yet he could pass through a locked door (John 20:19, 26), many didn’t recognise him initially (Luke 24:15, 16; John 20:14), at one point he disappeared (Luke 24:31), and he was taken up into heaven (Luke 24:50).

There is something the same, but very different! This doesn’t tell us everything, but it gives us a taste of a reality that is the same but different. Spend time considering eternity today and prayerfully ask God to give you a picture of what it will be like.

**Friday Devotion: Come Alive**

***Read 1 Corinthians 15:54-58***

Jesus’ resurrection brings a certainty of life after death. Death has no more power over us. It has been swallowed up in the victory of Christ. What an amazing truth!

Paul concludes by showing how the resurrection affects our life now. **“**Stand firm,” he says, “let nothing move you.” He tells them to be immovable in their faith.

For Paul, the reason that people were to stand firm was his unshakable confidence in God’s power over death. God’s salvation, His victory over death, and His love were undeniable realities. His resurrection was a historically undeniable fact.

The result of this kind of faith is to give ourselves fully to God’s work now, making the most of every moment not just hanging out on earth until we die. Now is the time to come alive.

We need to fully give ourselves to the work of the Lord, to be 100% sold out to Jesus as the central person in our lives and give our time and energy to seeing what He values happen in the world. This means devoting ourselves to our church, our family, and our workplace.

As you consider the victory of Jesus think about how you can honour all that He has done and begin to walk in His victory in your own life.