

The Final Harvest of the Dead - Risen!

by Michael Flowers

Michael Flowers explores the profound implications of resurrection, emphasizing transformation through suffering and the hope of new creation in Christ.

Duration: 19:45

Scripture: Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:7, Psalm 42:1, Matthew 13:37-38, 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, Philippians 2:15, Philippians 3:21

Topics: "Resurrection"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of hope in relation to the resurrection of the dead. He emphasizes that faith, hope, and love are essential, and that optimism is not the same as hope. The preacher uses various analogies, such as plant life and the image of kale, to illustrate the restoration of the perfect image and likeness of God in believers. He also delves into the topic of the resurrection of the dead, describing it as the final harvest and the restoration of our bodies. The sermon concludes with a reflection on the daily sacrifice and surrender of our lives in Christ.

Transcript

Fourth Sunday of Eastertide, yeah, absolutely. And we're in the third reflection in First Corinthians 15, working our way through the chapter and we're almost there, we're almost there. And this is Paul's most comprehensive chapter on the subject of the resurrection of the dead.

So today we're going to jump into the section verses 35 through 49, where Paul seeks to describe what the stuff of the resurrection is. He's going to resurrect our stuff, our bodies, we're made out of stuff, you guys. Yeah, right.

It's just materiality. Paul's going to talk about what type of stuff is this that's going to be raised, the stuff of the resurrection, like new materiality, the final harvest of the dead. Have you ever heard the resurrection described as the final harvest of the dead? Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it cannot bear fruit.

And he's talking about himself, sowing himself into death. And he invites us all, the Christian life is a sowing of death. I die daily, Paul says, every day I'm dying so that life may work in you.

Right. And what does he mean by that? He's going through hardship, sleepless nights, persecutions to get the gospel out to the nations of the world. Right.

And that is an utter death process. It's no picnic. It's no vacation.

If you read about what he put up with, oh, gosh, in order for us to be sitting here this morning, in order for us to have, you know, a vast majority of the New Testament that he wrote. Thank God for St. Paul. Suffering produces stuff.

Yes. And this is why he could do it. Suffering produces perseverance.

Right. Romans 5, perseverance produces character and character produces hope. You know that hope is not optimism.

Optimism won't see us through. Hope is a spiritual thing. Optimism is of the flesh.

It's not bad. It will give up at some point where hope has to kick in because faith, hope and love, these three things abide. Not optimism, but hope, Christ in you, the hope, that's what it's all about.

And so we're going to talk about this final harvest of the dead. And he's going to run through various analogies just to get just to make that point. He talks about plant life, you know, he's saying, and as for what you sow, you don't sow the body that is to be that is.

You know, I was out here yesterday morning, there was a gal working in the raised beds over here and I was walking out and she says, hey, you want some kale? And I said, yeah, absolutely. You guys are not into it, but I am. I'm into kale, right? Everybody in the kale.

I mean, some of you in the kale. Come on. Yeah, it's good.

And so she gave me, you know, we were talking and I'm looking at this and I'm going like, you know, this is not what it looked like in seed form. You know, it just this is not kale. This is not what I planted.

Right. And this is where Paul's going with all of this. You know, you're planting seeds, perhaps wheat or some other grain or kale.

But God gives it a body. God gives it a form and it transforms that seed, which has to go into the ground and what really has to die. This is such an analogy for our lives.

Death is good because death, the final enemy for now, death will be destroyed at some point where it will not exist anymore. But for now, until the final enemy death is destroyed, it's been made a servant. It's been made a doorway into life eternal.

Right. That was last week's sermon. But so death is being used.

Jesus had to suffer death and we must suffer death. And death becomes a paradigm for our daily lives in Christ, laying down our lives. Our suki is the word there for life.

Got a lot of different words in Greek for life. Right. You got zoe, suke and bios.

Those are three big words. Biology, zoe, zoology, suke, psychology, the study of the soul. But the Greek word that you get psychology from the study of the soul is suke.

And, you know, when you break it down, you guys. It's that part of our will that I want, I think, I feel. Think about that.

That's that's the vast majority of how we live our lives. We operate by what I want, my desires, I think, my thoughts and my feelings, my emotions that makes up the soul. And that's principally what psychology deals with, you know.

And so there's something in that soul apart from the spirit that must be submitted. It must be surrendered. Right.

In order to live the risen life in Christ Jesus, to put off the old nature and to put on the new nature. So all of that is behind all of this that we're talking about this morning. God gives it a body as he has chosen and to each kind of seed, its own body or its own form.

He's using the word Soma here, though. Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another flesh for animals, another for birds and another for fish. There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one thing and that of the earthly is another.

There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars. Indeed, star difference from star in glory. OK, it's a beautiful thing.

Paul is suggesting that the realities. To which we apply these terms. To which we apply these terms may not be the only realities to which such terms can be applied just in the natural world.

Right. He's using analogy. We've limited our sphere of reality to the visible material world.

Right. But creation is both seen and unseen. You know, angels are created beings.

But they're unseen and there's an unseen realm. And it's creation. Only God is uncreated.

We believe in God, the creator of heaven and earth, things seen and unseen, that's the heavenly realm. And then there's a realm beyond the merely created order, which we've been talking about, and we can call that now because new creation is seated at the right hand of the father in the person of Jesus Christ. He's the embodiment.

Of it all. He's the embodiment of it all, he's making all things new. That's what new creation is becoming in us.

If anyone is in Christ, new creation. So God is calling us now what we shall be in our destiny. The fullness, the unbroken communion of new creation in union with Jesus.

Right. It's where we're headed. So what is the resurrection body like? This begins in verse forty two.

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. So he's going to he's going to give present body resurrection body analogies here in John 20.

I thought he was the gardener. Well, he is. And he's calling us to sow and reap the way he sowed ultimately his life for the life of the world.

What we sow matters, right? What we sow, we shall reap. We sow to the flesh, we sow to the spirit. We sow to this present order.

We will reap corruption because the ultimate end of this present order is corruption. Right. And we can see that with the ultimate end of our bodies, our lives.

And so sowing to the spirit is living in that realm, in that place of new creation by faith, through grace. Right. It's all by faith.

We walk by faith and not by sight. And so, wow, look at that. It's sown a perishable, but it's raised an imperishable.

It's sown in dishonor. And it's raised in glory. It's sown in weakness.

That's OK. If there is no resurrection, we are most miserable in this life. So it's OK to embrace weakness, to embrace death, to embrace the aging process, all of that.

Because, right, he's saving the best wine to the end. And so Paul turns the tables on his opponents because he's speaking to his opponents here. Some say there is no resurrection of the dead.

That was last week. So he's answering these questions and he's going towards an end. And he's speaking to his opponents who accuse him of some sort of crude literalism.

That is, are you talking about a resuscitation of a corpse? No, that's not what the resurrection is. There were several people that he raised from the dead in his earthly ministry, but they died. That wasn't the resurrection.

That was a foreshadowing of the resurrection. But Paul is saying that's not it. Resurrection of the dead is a transformation into a new and glorious, eternal state in Christ, completed communion with God.

You know, that hunger and that longing that you have now for God, my soul pants for God, David says. If you don't feel that way at times, just getting the Psalms, it'll rub off. If you go through the daily office, you'll go through the entire book of Psalms in a year, five times.

It's pretty good. It's more than any other book. Oh, OK, so this is not some sort of resuscitation that can't read it like that.

And so there are places the present body just cannot go. You ever tried that? I have a new car with a sensor on it. It has that little sensor.

And so they warned me. And this car was made for me. I was going to Chicago and it was out on the road and I had it on cruise control.

But this thing starts slowing down. Oh, yeah, good. That's good.

That's good. We're leasing a car and they said, we tested this and, you know, there was a fake wall out there and we were like doing 60 miles an hour and we're going straight to the wall, you know, and all of a sudden the car just stopped before it hit the wall. But our resurrected bodies are going to be better because we can just go through the wall, we won't have to stop, we can just go right through it.

Like Jesus, right? There's just things that our present body cannot do. It's susceptible to sickness and coughs, Father, for the last two weeks. And we pray for one another and, you know, we're wiping away every tear from our eyes in this place, right, in this present existence.

The entrance of sin, breaking, loving communion with God prompted the loss of the state of glory, all of sin and fallen short of our former glorious trajectory. And so it is sown a natural body and it's raised a spiritual

body. Some translations, though, say that it's sown, our bodies are sown a physical body and it's raised a spiritual body.

And that sounds right because we have physical bodies. That's not what Paul's getting at. The word, as I said earlier on, for soul is psuche in the Greek language, and we're just so familiar with it, we use it so much.

And this word is psuchikon, and it's not physical. That's not what that means. It's derived from the word soul, psuche, and then it's raised a spiritual body.

Pneuma is the word there, pneumatikon, it's raised a pneumatikon, it's raised a spiritual body, a body of the breath, of the wind, of the spirit, a convergence of the material and the spirit come together and you get a new materiality. Verse 44, this is Jerusalem Bible, and this is what Richard Hayes chooses. But he says this gets the idea when when it is sown, it embodies the soul instead of it is sown a physical body.

He says the better the idea there is when it is sown, it embodies the soul and when it is raised, it embodies the spirit. If the soul in its earthly existence has its own embodiment, so does the spirit in its risen existence have its own embodiment. And yet at this point, we just must clasp our hands over our mouth and go, oh, my God, the mystery, you know, that's where it stops right there.

Words cannot describe it from this point on. And so this is Paul's point. Our mortal bodies embody the soul, the animating force of our present existence, but the resurrection body will embody the divinely given spirit.

Where the body itself has been transformed. Not just the temple of the spirit, but the temple is, in a sense, transformed into new materiality. It is to be a spiritual body, not in the sense that it is somehow made out of vapor.

You know, that would be more of a Gnostic view, and this is what Paul is fighting against. He's trying to get away from that idea. I'm reminded of Philippians 3:20 where it says, But our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body.

And that's all we can say. We can't go any farther than we're going to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. And then he starts using Adam, the first Adam, and the second Adam to drive home the point.

And what's interesting about this, you guys, is that many of you know that Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, there's two creation stories describing the same event. There's two different creation stories. Genesis 1, God made man in the image and likeness of God, so he made him.

And then in Genesis 2, there's another creation story of man, but he's reaching down like the potter and making man out of the clay of the ground, and then he blows in him the breath of life. There's all kinds of ways of looking at this, but the first account created in the image and likeness of God is the ultimate intent. That's the ultimate intent of creation.

But before the fall, even in Genesis 2, it shows how we're created and how we actually are. We actually are clay. We actually are dust.

We actually will return to the ground. But the ultimate intention is for us to be in the image and likeness of God, which got very marred in Genesis 3. And so Jesus comes on the scene as the second Adam he's being described as. And he does what Adam could never do.

In the beginning, God created materiality, the word created materiality, the word became materiality, the word became flesh, the word himself who created materiality, united himself with his creation and he became crucified and risen in new materiality, new creation, and therefore shall restore materiality back to its ultimate intention. That would be like an image of Genesis 127 in that perfect image and likeness, which the Christian life is a trajectory as we pray, as we fast, as we give ourselves to him and take up our cross daily, that image is being restored in us until we see him in the final eschaton and we shall be like him in the twinkling of an eye. And so that final touch, there it is, you know, here's what you've been longing for.

Blink, surprise, welcome to heaven or welcome to the new earth or wherever we're going to be. I just want to be with Jesus, but I know heaven's coming down. So this is the final state of our great salvation, complete and perfect deliverance from this present evil age where now we struggle with spiritual forces in high places and suffer in numerous ways as we plant churches, form communities of hope and reconciliation, shining as stars in the midst of in the midst of depraved generation.

He uses those terms, holding out the word of life. That's it. That's our mission.

And may we continue to go forth into Kansas City in the power and presence of this risen Lord, who is making all things new. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. Let's stand together and we will confess the resurrection of the body in the Apostles Creed.

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