

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"THE DEATH OF DEATH"

For individual study or group discussion

DATE: April 9, 2023

SPEAKER: Brian/Wil

SERIES: Holy Week 2023

PASSAGE: 1Corinthians 15:20-28, 54-57

Family Dinner Table

Death, Thou Shalt Die

At the end of today's passage in 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul concludes with a taunt about the coming final defeat of death and sin, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (v. 55). Paul references Hosea 13:14 where the sin of Israel was great, but not greater than God's power to redeem. In the Hosea 13 passage, it is God who mocks death and the grave as defeated foes.

You may be familiar with the poem "Death, be not proud" written by 16th century poet and cleric John Donne which also scoffs at death:

*Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;*

*For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.*

*From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must
flow,*

*And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.*

*Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate
men,*

*And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well*

*And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally*

And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

- Discuss the similar themes you find in today's passage and Donne's poem.

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Beloved author J.R.R. Tolkien coined the term *eucatastrophe* to describe a "good turn of events in a story." In an essay he wrote in 1938, Tolkien said: "It is the mark of a good fairy-story, of the higher or more complete kind, that however wild its events, however fantastic or terrible the adventures, it can give to child or man that hears it, when the 'good turn' comes, a catch of the breath, a beat and lifting of the heart, near to (or indeed accompanied by) tears, as keen as that given by any form of literary art, and having a peculiar quality."¹ As we examine 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 54-57, we discover that the story of Easter is an *eucatastrophe* in Tolkien's fullest sense of the word, because the resurrection of Christ radically guarantees that we rise, Christ reigns, and death dies.

We Rise (vv. 20-23)

Christ's resurrection changes everything, guaranteeing that "those who have fallen asleep" will rise again (vv. 21, 23). As surely as death came through Adam, life comes through Christ (vv. 22-23), and all that's wrong with the world will be made right. As one commentator puts it, "The resurrection of Jesus was the moment when the one true God appointed the man through whom the whole cosmos would be brought back into its proper order. A human being got it into this mess; a human being would get it out again."²

- Read 1 Peter 1:3-9. How does understanding the resurrection bring hope to those with faith, even in the midst of suffering and trials?
- According to Romans 5:12-21, how is the free gift of God in Christ different than the effects of Adam's sin?

Christ Reigns (vv. 24-28)

Jesus is the reigning King who defeats all his and our enemies. Through his death, burial, and resurrection, he disarms the rulers and authorities of this world, putting them to open shame and triumphing over them (Colossians 2:15). Death and the tomb could not hold him, nor thwart God's promise and plan for redemption through Christ's reign.

- In 2 Samuel 7:16, God promises David that his throne will be established forever. According to Paul, how is this promise fulfilled? (cf. Psalm 110:1-2)
- The Son of Man who was charged with sedition is now seated at the right hand of God as Ruler of the whole world. Read Matthew 26:63-68. What will be the reaction of those who pierced him according to Revelation 1:5-7?
- Read Hebrews 2:8-15. What effect did the death of Christ have on Satan and his power?

Death Dies (vv. 54-57)

The sting of death is our sin, shown to us by the law (v. 56). The victory that we have in Jesus is our hope (v. 57). By his death and resurrection, Jesus disarms the powers that oppose God's Kingdom. Through him, we are more than conquerors, where death is not to be feared any more, because for those united to Christ "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Because of the resurrection, nothing can separate us from the love of God—not even death itself.

- If Jesus' death paid the penalty for our sins, then why is the resurrection so important? (cf. Romans 4:25)
- Author and pastor Paul Tripp reminds us of the promised final defeat of death and sin in his devotional from 1 Corinthians 15: "So as we live in this world where sin still does its ugly work inside and outside of us, we live with the promised defeat and death of sin in mind. We refuse to give up hope and to give way to what Christ defeated and will finally destroy."³ Is your faith anchored in the Hope of Easter?

¹Tolkien, J. R. R. "On Fairy Stories." <https://coolcalvary.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/on-fairy-stories1.pdf>.

²Wright, N.T. *Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians*. 2003, London. WJK Press. 212

³Tripp, Paul. *Are You Wasting Your Time?* April 5, 2023. <https://www.paultripp.com/wednesdays-word/posts/are-you-wasting-your-time>