Incarnate Community

A Bible Study from the LCMS Northern Illinois District

Incarnate Community Bible Study Sermon Series

Session IV The Body of Christ Incarnational Community

Helping congregations be more centered on a rich life of Word and Sacrament, with congregational support in transitions as well as time of joys and sorrows.

A Bible Study from the LCMS Northern Illinois District

Incarnate Community
Northern Illinois District Bible Study and Sermon Series
Week IV The Body of Christ – Incarnational Community - Sermon Notes
Pastor Mike Gudgel

1 Corinthians 15:35-49

Vernacular: Initial Look at the Text

- Prior to the Text:
  - Earlier in the chapter – Paul asserts: Christ was indeed raised and the dead are indeed raised.
  - Earlier in the chapter – Paul asserts: There is a physical ("incarnate") resurrection. It is a reality.

- Verse 35
  - *"But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?'"*
    - As a result of Paul's prior point, it is highly likely that someone will then say, "Ok. Fine. Tell me then: How are the dead raised? And, with what kind of body do they come?"
      - These questions flow out of Paul's prior points.
        - But not all questions are good questions – or, not all questions lead in the direction where God wants us to be led.

- Verses 36-37
  - *"You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain."*
    - Paul calls the person who asks such questions "foolish." – "You foolish person!"
      - Then he makes one of his main points. – "What you sow is not the body that is to be."
        - *"What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain."*
          - There is a "death" for every seed as it undergoes the same kind of burial that our bodies will undergo.

- It is hidden. From that hidden state, it will one day change and reappear. When it reappears, it will not look like it did before.

Verse 38
- *"But God gives it a body as He has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body."*
  - Key words: "as He has chosen" – Thy will be done.
    - As you pray the Lord's Prayer, you are praying for God's will to be done in all things, including the look of your resurrected body.
      - You might want to be shorter/taller/thinner/have more hair or less hair.
        - With your first body God's will was done (fearfully and wonderfully made), and with your second body His will shall be done – "as He has chosen."

- Verses 39-41
  - *"For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory."*
    - Every created thing has the body God wants it to have.
      - Humans
      - Animals
      - Birds
      - Fish
      - Sun
      - Moon (not green or purple or yellow like cheese)
        - "The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer."
          - Oh how true that is!
            - The Creator makes the initial creation look the way He wants it to look and the New Creation, too.
              - Have you ever seen siblings who look very different? Can't predict it! And that's the way it will be with our resurrected bodies.

- Verse 42

- *"So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable."*
  - What will be raised will be an imperishable body – a totally different kind of body – could be like the body of Jesus that was not stopped by locked doors.
    - Don't know what it will look like, but we know it will be more glorious for it will be "raised in glory."
      - The sun is a star but its proximity to us makes it appear far more glorious than any other star.
        - As the sun is more glorious than other stars so your resurrected body will be more glorious than your current body (by a large degree?).
          - Cannot put this into words (how foolish to try!) for we have no idea what it is like to live in a body that is imperishable.

- Verse 43
  - *"It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power."*
    - What a change!
      - From dishonor to glory!
        - From weakness to power!
          - *"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength … in the resurrection!"* (cf. Isaiah 40:31)

- Verse 44-46
  - *"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual 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."*
    - Strange and confusing for us and for our hearers. Need to clarify.
      - Is "spiritual body" an oxymoron?
        - Jesus as "spirit" seems to go against the incarnation. The meaning must be deeper.

- Verses 47-48
  - *"The first man from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and so is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven."*

- As man came from the earth on day six, so it will be on the Last Day for those who are six feet under.
  - They will rise from the earth.
    - *"Dust we are and to dust we shall return."*
      - *"Dust we are and from the dust we shall arise."*

- Through Adam – the "man of dust" – we are men of dust/those "who are of the dust" – and return to dust.
  - But through Christ – the "Man of heaven" – we are men of heaven/those "who are of heaven."

Verse 49
- *"Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven."*
  - This is a beautiful Gospel promise – "we shall."
    - Christ is risen and "we shall" arise, give God the glory, Alleluia!
      - We are new creations in Christ now – we have His image on us now – but the fullness, the consummation has not yet come.
        - *"But when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."* (1 John 3:2)

Greek Study
- "You foolish person!" = "You fool!"
- "God gives" = "didosin" – giving talk is Gospel talk. Present tense to God as our provider who is continually giving us everything we need to support this body and life.
- "perishable" = "phthora" – corruption, destruction, decay, rottenness, decomposition. (Our bodies are prone to all of these but our new bodies will be rot-proof.)
- "imperishable" = "aphthora"
- "living being" = living "psychain" – soul, life, being
- "life-giving spirit" = "pneuma zoopoioun" – life-giving spirit … one is the recipient of life and the other is the Giver of life. We are nothing but given to.
- Verse 48 "man of dust" = "the one (masculine) of dust" and "man of heaven" = "the Heavenly/the heavenly One"
- Verse 49 – Lit. "And as we have born the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Concordia Commentary: *1 Corinthians*, by Gregory J. Lockwood, copyright 2000 CPH
- "Paul knows there are some in Corinth who will still not be satisfied with his arguments for the resurrection of the dead. They claimed they could not grasp the mechanics of the resurrection – how a corpse which had been reduced to dust or ashes could be raised to life again. For the Greek mind such a concept was a sheer impossibility, and a number of the Corinthians, like the Athenians (Acts 17:32), were inclined to scoff." (584)
- Quoting Luther: "Man will retain only what pertains to his essence, but nothing will remain that relates to this transitory life. And yet it will be the same body and soul with all the members that man had here. But he will have to leave behind all that he required in this world." (LW 28:182) (584)

- "His sharp reply ('fool') in 1 Corinthians 15:36 indicates that these questions were not innocent requests for information; rather, they stemmed from a deep skepticism disposed to mock the very idea of a resurrection (cf. 2 Pet 3:4) (585)
- Re. the question, "How are the dead raised?" Paul is saying, "You will find the answer in your own garden!"
- Quoting Luther: "When you see a peasant or husbandsman walking along on his field, reaching into his sack and then scattering and strewing something about him, you have a beautiful picture and painting of God's method of resurrecting the dead. … You can imagine and think of God as such a peasant and yourself as a small kernel which He casts into the ground, so that it may come forth much more beautiful and glorious. … [Thus] the cemetery or burial ground does not indicate a head of the dead, but a field full of kernels, known as God's kernels, which will verdantly blossom forth again and grow more beautifully than can be imagined." (LW 28:176, 178) (586)
- "The risen body will no longer be subject to the earthly limitations and mortality that result from the fall, nor to the tug-of-war with the sinful flesh." (589)
- "to bear" = "to wear" - clothed with a resurrected body according to the will of God.
- "Here, in this life, we have all worn the garment of human flesh, a fallen human nature. As Seth bore the image of his father Adam (Genesis 5:3), the man formed from dust in the image of God but then condemned to return to dust because of his sin (Genesis 3:14-19), so all of us in subsequent generations have borne the image of that first frail man of dust. 'That which is born of flesh is flesh.'" (John 3:6) (594)
- Re. the "spiritual body" – "*Spiritual* is not antithetical to *physical*; rather, it is antithetical to the natural state of corruption in which fallen humanity now exists. Hence Paul can speak of our resurrected body as a 'spiritual *body*' (15:44), fully affirming its physical reality as well as its character as something (re)created and existing by the power of the Spirit." (594-595 emphasis original)
- Quoting Luther: "We shall … receive another's [image], namely, the celestial Christ's. Then we shall have the same form and essence which He now has since His resurrection. … The entire body will be as pure and bright as the sun and as light as the air, and, finally, so healthy, so blissful, and filled with such heavenly, eternal joy in God that it will never hunger, thirst, grow weary, or decline." (LW 28:196) (595)

<u>Gospel – What of Jesus is the text seeking to deliver?</u>

- The One who, having defeated sin for us, rose in the flesh ("incarnate") so that we could forever be with Him in the flesh as part of a never-ending incarnate community.

- The One who, having hidden the potential greatness of wheat in the bare kernel of a grain, gives it life after its burial. He also hides the potential greatness of our glorified bodies in the bare ("naked") bones of our skeletal remains. The glory of the wheat will be seen in His time and the glory of our spiritual bodies will be seen in His time. His timing is right.
    - Galatians 4:4-5 - "*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*"
        - The One who, at the right time was hidden in the flesh of a baby, was also, at the right time, revealed in glory with a crown of thorns and then a resurrected body.
            - At the right time, He will raise up the formerly dead seeds from cemetery fields. Bodies hidden in sadness six feet under will rise in glory. Death no longer has dominion over Him (Romans 6:9) so death will no longer have dominion over us!
- The One who pours out His Spirit on Pentecost (and on us in Baptism) will bless us with "spiritual" bodies that are 100% free of anything contrary to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will produce His fruit through these bodies for eternity, and our sin will never get in the way. Never, ever!
- The One who currently gathers us in person around His gifts in the Divine Service will gather us together again for worship and it will be in person. As we gather now, it is in the bodies that "He has chosen" for us. As we gather then, around the Lamb who was slain for the forgiveness of all our sins, it will be in the bodies that "He has chosen" for us.

<u>Law – What gets in the way of that delivery?</u>

- Scoffing at the resurrection.
- Doubting the promises of God.
- Believing that our in person gatherings here will only be followed by disembodied gatherings in heaven.
- Failing to appreciate the resurrection of Christ and our resurrection in Christ.
- Missing out on the joyful expectation of eternal in person worship because we don't trust what the Bible says about our renewed/resurrected bodies.
- Being preoccupied with the stuff of this world (e.g. COVID-19, vaccines, presidential changes, inflation, sicknesses, death, and depression) that we utterly fail to do what we are called to do: "Look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

<u>Homiletical Possibilities</u>

- Introduction

- We want to know, don't we? We want to know what the future holds.
  - We are curious. What will heaven be like? What will I see? What will I hear? What will I do?
    - We wonder about heaven, but what about the New Heavens and the New Earth?
      - Are you looking for the resurrection of the dead daily?
        - Are you living with a joyful expectation of the time when you will worship in person while covered in a resurrected body?
          - Or is the concept of a resurrected body too strange?

- Some of you are like those in Corinth.
  - Scoffing. Doubting.
    - It's easier to think about souls blissfully worshiping in heaven than cemeteries suddenly covered with living bodies.
      - But this is our hope!
        - This is not the hope of our Covid-culture, but this is Christian hope – worshiping the Risen Christ while dwelling in our risen bodies.
          - It's easy to doubt and scoff and laugh for it is hard to imagine what we will see.
            - We don't even know what our bodies will look like and we cannot know what our bodies will look like.

- Body
  - Apply Law and Gospel.
  - Walk through the text.
  - Use Luther quotes.
    - Cemeteries are places where small kernels are planted in the ground.
      - We do not know what resurrected bodies will look like just as we don't know what the full-grown wheat will look like.
        - But we know it will be "as He has chosen."
  - Could talk about "hide and seek" or objects that are hidden inside something mundane. Then tie that into bodies hidden in the ground coming to life in glory.

- Conclusion

- Last Sunday of this series – could tie in thoughts from other weeks and "put a bow on it."
- Could paint a picture of being together in person for all eternity (see Revelation 7).
- Could conclude with Gospel thoughts on the hiddenness of God in Christ.
    - Bodies buried in the ground don't look special (especially after they "rot" and "decay").
    - The Babe in the manger was not knock-your-socks-off impressive either.
    - The Suffering Servant at the cross was certainly not impressive for *"He had no form or beauty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him"* (Isaiah 53:2) and the Lord had *"laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6).
    - But there will be an Easter Day for the unimpressive "bare" bodies we lay in the ground. We will be raised as He was raised!
- The in person worship we have right now is not always impressive but hidden in Word and Sacrament is Christ for us.
    - Every week, as we worship in our "incarnational" communities, we get a foretaste of the feast to come and also a foreshadowing of the worship that is to come.
        - It will be in person.
            - And it will be far better than anything we can imagine!