

1 Corinthians 15:19–26
“Without Easter?”
Easter Sunday

March 27, 2016
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
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Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Introduction] Easter! Christ is Risen! He is Risen, Indeed! Alleluia!
Today is the greatest day of the year
because it celebrates the greatest day in history!

You know...

the entire Christian religion is based on our Lord’s resurrection from the dead,
and it is an inexhaustible source for doctrine, confession, life, and celebration.

And it is hard to imagine...What Would Life Be without Easter?

[Take Away Easter]

Yes, I want you to have a “It’s a Wonderful Life”-Jimmy-Stewart moment!
St. Paul tells us, **“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile”** (15:17).

Take away Easter,
and we are no longer the first fruits of Christ’s resurrection,
but rather the leftovers of Satan’s temptation and Adam and Eve’s first sin.

Take away Easter,
and you take away the forgiveness, for Easter tells us that Good Friday worked:
God has accepted the sacrifice of his Son.

Take away Easter,
and you put everything back—everything bad.
You put back into power the devil, with his hold over you in sin and death.

Take away Easter,
and you take away life,
because death now becomes everybody’s eternal destiny, everybody’s fate.
Yours and mine too.

**“If in Christ we have hope in this life only,
we are of all people most to be pitied”** (v 19).

Take away Easter,
and you take away the glorified body as the capstone of our Christian hope
—not only life forever, but an embodied life and one so glorious
that we can hardly imagine it is gone.

But it is this very idea—the resurrection of the body—
that some of the first Christians in Corinth balked about.
“How can this be?” they asked. “When you’re dead, you’re dead!”

Well, it sure looks that way.
If you’ve had anything at all to do with dead bodies,
you know the Corinthians were right.
Dead people do not come back to life.
Reality is not a zombie movie with the walking dead.

Here and now, life always ends in real death.
Fight it or deny it, maybe even ignore it.
Choose whatever strategy you like.
It doesn’t matter one little bit. Death always wins.
It happens—to everyone.
It’s final; it’s permanent.
When you’re dead, you’re dead. Or so it seems.

But Easter Easter turns that all around.
***“in fact Christ has been raised from the dead,
the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep”*** (v 20).

Our Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead.
“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (v 22).
He lives, and because he lives you will too—and with a glorified body:

[Glorified Body]

Again, some of the Corinthians were skeptical.
Hard enough to imagine breathing new life into a dead corpse,
but what then? A second death?

Not at all, but difficult to describe...

Paul writes a little bit later in this chapter:

***“So it is with the resurrection of the dead.
What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.
It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory.
It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power”*** (15:42–43).

“Perishable,” “dishonor,” “weakness”—that’s us,
that’s our experience of bodies and life.

Since we know no other way, we are used to this reality and these bodies.
And in spite of all their frailties, we *like* our bodies, love our bodies.
In fact, let's be honest about this:
we don't just live in our bodies, we *are* our bodies, and they are us.

Moreover, these bodies—natural and earthly as they may be
—are still pretty impressive, both individually and collectively.

God has endowed humanity precisely with what we need for creating and maintaining our lives—in fact, for providing not just what we need but often what we want and what gives us pleasure.

And so we not only *live* life in these bodies, but we also *enjoy* it
—at least some of the time.

But that's the rub, isn't it? "Some of the time."
Sometimes more, sometimes less, but that's just it "some of the time."

For our bodies *are* perishable and weak.

Now is a wonderful time to be alive in these bodies,
since here in the twenty-first century
we enjoy all kinds of methods, tools, and medicines
to take care of and help these bodies

—everything from exercise machines to heart transplants. You name it, and we've got it—at least when compared with all those previous generations—so that life expectancy in the modern world is higher than it has ever been.

And yet, in spite of everything,
we still know what Paul means by weak and perishable.

Two thousand years after Paul,
our bodies are just like those of the apostle and everyone in Corinth:
they get old, they wear out, they die.

And death can strike the very young and will always strike the very old.

We do indeed live in the body, but we also die in the body.

[Live in the Body]

And, oh, yes, just one thing more: we also sin in the body.

For this flesh is not only weak and perishable, it is also dishonorable.

We are subject to the appetites of our body.

Our hands do things they shouldn't.

Our feet take us places we shouldn't go.

Our minds conceive the worst wickedness.

Our tongues, well, our tongues are completely out of control.

From first to last, life in the body — is a life in sin, and we know no other reality.

And for Christians, this really hurts.

The new man or woman inside us doesn't want to sin.

Yet, with the apostle we have to admit,

“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.

For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom 7:18–19, 24).

Yes, who?

Jesus Christ, of course.

[Conclusion] And how? By Easter.

By Easter and the sure promise of a glorified body:

not weak but powerful,

not perishable but imperishable,

not dishonorable but glorious

—glorious and glorified, like His.

That's the promise.

Jesus lives!

This shall be my confidence.

That's the victory of Easter.

The victory's won!

Amen

Now, let us sing a joyful noise unto the Lord. Amen!