

Last Sunday of the Church Year

Sermon Road Map
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1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
November 22, 2020

Let the Resurrection cast its rays of hope over everything.

- Grief, doubt, worry, and fear cast a shadow over Thessalonian believers.
 - ◆ Voices claimed that dead Christians wouldn't be with Jesus when he returns.
 - ◆ This intensified the grief over their loss. What happens when a believer dies?

¹³ We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you do not grieve in the same way as the others, who have no hope.

¹⁴ Indeed, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then in the same way we also believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus.

- *Fallen asleep* only rightly applies to the dead who will wake up alive and well.
 - ◆ That's what Jesus' resurrection promises. He was the first of all his followers.
 - ◆ The Last Day is the Grand Easter - the resurrection rescue reality realized.
 - ◆ Here, Paul lights the torch of this hope to deal a death blow to darkness.

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- ❖ There's hope in the facts. **Know about** that day. Know what's going to happen
 - The normal rhythms and cycles of daily life **suddenly halted!**
 - Sounds of trumpet, archangel, command of God - heard worldwide
 - The heavens spit wide open, rolled up like a scroll
 - Jesus and his angels appear. Jesus dispatches his angels: ***Gather all people***
 - At Jesus' command every human comes out of their grave, body & soul joined
 - ◆ Those rescued through faith in Jesus - rise from sleep with glorified bodies
 - ◆ Those who died hostile to their Creator rise in a state of eternal corruption
 - ◆ At the same time - believers who are alive - transformed into glorified bodies
 - ◆ Unbelievers - their bodies instantly descend into a state of eternal corruption
 - The angels gather all, putting believers on Jesus' right and unbelievers on the left
 - ◆ One look at their bodies it's clear on which side they belong.
 - ◆ People hostile to the Lord - removed from God's presence and every blessing
 - ◆ Believer: Come be with the Lord Jesus, Father, and Spirit forever.
 - ◆ Where? In a new physical creation, free of sin, curse, death, the Devil.
 - ◆ The **ultimate**: ***And so we will always be with the Lord.*** Not in the air, but in our new home - the paradise of the blessed.
 - This is our hope - our ultimate goal - the purpose of our existence, of this life.
 - ◆ Since it will happen on the Last Day - the Day of the Resurrection - that day shines like a beacon from the future on our daily life here and now.
 - ◆ Don't relegate this knowledge to Sunday School, Catechism, the Nicene Creed

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¹³ We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers,...

- Knowing the facts lays the foundation. Being *uninformed* leaves us in the dark.
- Jesus doesn't want us to be ***unfamiliar*** with this reality. Live in its light.
- This is the difference between our grief and those who grieve without hope.

- ❖ There's hope knowing the implication of that day - living in its promises.
 - Consider the darkness that leaves *others grieving without hope*.
 - ◆ Good to understand and care, knowing what to listen for, to offer real hope.
 - ◆ Good to identify where this good news has not done its work in us.
 - Consider what death is for those who don't know Jesus.
 - ◆ Death closes the door on all hopes for a future with your deceased.
 - ◆ Death is a black hole of unknowns: Is it *good, bad, empty, nothing*?
 - What is my loved one experiencing? What will I face in death?
 - The natural knowledge of God points people to suspect that:
 - There is an existence after death and accountability to God.
 - They don't want *bad* or *empty*. *Nothing* would be better.
 - But conscience nags, leaving no room to hope for something good.
 - Attempts are made to speak hopefully, to cover up fear and doubts.
 - We know this nagging voice well. It's the voice of our sinful nature.
 - ◆ They deal with their grief with doubts, worry, and fear. *Grieve without hope*
 - Those who live in the rays of Resurrection hope practice hope-producing grief.
 - ◆ Grief is the natural and rightful response to loss and failure.
 - ◆ Believers grieve over their sin - the affront to God and harm to others and self
 - ◆ Believers grieve over tragedy and loss of life and property in this cursed world
 - ◆ Believers grieve over loss of jobs, friendships, disappointments.
 - ◆ Believers grieve over the death of a loved one, like Jesus wept over Lazarus
 - ◆ God grieves over the impact of sin and death. God's people do too.
 - ◆ But we ***do not grieve in the same way as the others, who have no hope***.
 - Their grief is hopeless for **the loss is not redeemed**. It's **eternal**.
 - Our grief is **temporary**. The loss is temporary and the solution is **permanent**.

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- Resurrection hope is far more than a pain and time killer. It's life enriching.

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God.

³ Not only this, but we also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, ⁴ and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. ⁵ And hope will not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us. Romans 5

- ◆ Where does **patient endurance** come from? Knowledge of the **ultimate goal**.
- ◆ Keeping the **ultimate goal** ushered in by the resurrection transforms our character ⇒ tested, remade in God's image ⇒ at home with him ⇒ our hope.
- ◆ Daily inform your life - your heart & mind - what all this leads to - the Day.
 - If you don't, you leave room for worry and fear to fill you with darkness.
 - Putting hope back in a corner, only to be used for funerals & your death bed.
 - Daily aches, pains, frailties, limitations, losses, disappointments viewed in the rays of the Resurrection makes that Day look better all the time.
 - The facts of the Resurrection enrich us as we face both life and death. It's the only cure - the perfect cure for a life without hope.

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