**March 15, 2020 John 5:25-29**

***The Final Word***

**Scripture:**

John 5:25-29 NRSV

*(25)"Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. (26)For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; (27)and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. (28)Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice (29)and will come out--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*

**Notes:**

1. Jews believed in the “***someday***” resurrection of the dead.
   1. The day of the Lord revolved around ***judgment***.
   2. ***Judgement***aimed at those far from God.
   3. There will be a day that God ***restores*** all things.
   4. Our view of ***salvation*** focuses on what happens when we die.
   5. ***Jesus*** is doing the work of God now.
2. Jesus is the embodiment of ***God***.
   1. ***Resurrection*** is happening now.
   2. ***Resurrection*** is a continuation of the life lived by those who follow Jesus.
   3. We still live in the ultimate hope of ***resurrection***.
3. We are to follow the way of ***God***.
   1. Do the work of the resurrection in the ***present***.
   2. Jesus’ work is continuing through the ***Holy*** ***Spirit*** and the people of God.
4. The work of ***resurrection*** has already begun in us.
   1. Look death in the face with ***confidence***
   2. Work in the dark and broken places with ***hope***.
   3. The power of resurrection is in our prayers, fasting, and sincere ***repentance***.

**Transcript:**

We exist in a culture that is uncomfortable with death. I remember as a child when a person entered eternity in death. There would be days of mourning neighbors would visit with those who had lost a loved one Food was taken into their homes so they didn’t have to worry about fixing meals in the days ahead. To free them from the daily tasks and allow them time to process and grieve their loss. And funeral home visitations were two or more days and the funeral service and committal service were on the third day. I can see the symbolism here that as we commit the body of our departed loved one to the ground their resurrection to heaven may also take place. Today we see one day of visitation most commonly but it is just as common these days to have but a brief visitation before the funeral service. Everything is wrapped up and taken care of in one day.

My how things have changed; in days past, the funeral procession followed the Hurst to the cemetery. No matter what the weather, no matter how many persons attended the funeral, most people in attendance went to the grave side. Funeral directors try to persuade the families away from graveside services if possible; especially when the weather is difficult.

We do everything we can to shield our self from death; from the loss of a loved one to death, and the mourning process that we need so desperately. And we even do more to avoid death of our self. We avoid it, if at all possible. We have skincare regimens, plastic surgeries, hair dye, and nutritional supplements, we have diets, fads, not to mention other things we do to look and feel young. These things do their best to make us look younger, to keep away the signs of aging; and thus, they keep our own mortality at bay.

If our employers give us any bereavement time, it’s usually only one day, unless the deceased is a very close family member and then you may get a couple of days more. We are part of a “get over it” and “get past it” culture, a culture that doesn’t like to be in the presence of death; a culture who doesn’t want to be reminded of our own pending mortality, let alone being in the presence of the dead, and their mourning families for too long.

Though we avoid physical and earthly death as much as possible, we know that death is all around us. Spiritual death is not quite so rigorously avoided. At times we even see people running *toward* spiritual death, thinking there is no other way. At times we see people trapped in systems of death, sometimes by their own making, but others in social systems of death like poverty, pollution, or racism. Whether by our own making or the making of others we live in a world that is permeated by death; especially spiritual death.

Lent is a season to acknowledge death. Ash Wednesday urges us to confront our own mortality Urges us to reaffirm our dependency on God, but the entire season of Lent also does this as well. It is oppressive, as we fast and pray prayers of repentance. We are constantly reminded of death, even by the deep, dark colors used to symbolize Lent and Holy Week. Death feels so inescapable that it can be suffocating. We may know that feeling; in our own lives, or see it in the people around us. It can be easy to sink into hopelessness Easy to sink into despair in the midst of it all, to let the darkness of death overcome us.

But there is a voice calling to us in the midst of this darkness. It may seem far away at times, but it is there, and it is a voice of life and hope. It pulls us from darkness; it pulls us from despair and reminds us, while death holds a tight grip on our world, death does not have the final word. Life does; life in the light of our Lord has the final word. Turn with me to our passage in John 5:25-29as we share in our sermon passage for today

(25)"Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. (26)For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; (27)and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. (28)Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice (29)and will come out--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.John 5:25-29 NRSV

Many Jews held a belief in the “someday” resurrection of the dead. It was a common belief that God would come to restore all things one day. The day of the Lord would be one of resurrection to judgment, whether punishment or reward. The day of the Lord tended to revolve around judgment. While the images throughout the Old Testament scriptures points to destruction, Judgement and destruction was always aimed at those who were far from God.

The Jews didn’t fear the day of the Lord; instead, they viewed it as the day that all things would be made right. The righteous would be raised, and they would no longer be oppressed; they would be freed from the bondage of this flesh freed to dwell with Yahweh and their ancestors for all of eternity. The idea that a time was coming when the dead would hear the voice of God would already have been familiar. There is an eschatological bent to this text as well. In the language of “coming,” we see that Jesus is affirming their belief that there will be a day that God restores all things.

We hold this belief of someday as well. Often our views of salvation and resurrection evolve around something to come in the far-off future. We focus heavily on what happens to us when we die. Where do we go? What happens? We even have studies on heaven. We also focus on the idea of Jesus coming again to restore things, or of God coming to bring judgment.

The Jews would have also been familiar with a system of family apprenticeship. You did the work that your father did. If your father was a fisherman, you learned to become a fisherman from your father. If your father was a carpenter You learned to work with wood, from your father. Jesus is illustrating, in the previous text, that he is learning His father’s vocation he is an apprentice to God the Father. What the Father does, Jesus does.

Verses 19–21 especially touch on this theme. The son is not working outside the will of the Father but is working as the Father works. Thus, the power of resurrection is not relegated to a future coming but is already at work in the present because Jesus is doing the work of God in the world, now. Verse 21 explicitly points to Jesus doing the work of resurrection because he is doing the work of his Father and that is the work of resurrection.

While Jesus talks about the future to come, he also speaks of a present resurrection that he is bringing. Jesus is the embodiment of God on earth and is doing the work of God in the present. Jesus is already doing the work of the resurrection. This work is illustrated in various miracles that he does throughout the Gospel of John. The most obvious might be in the physical/bodily resurrection of Lazarus (John 11). The ways Jesus heals others; resurrects them from disease and social death. These smaller miracles all point to the larger miracle of Jesus’s resurrection.

Resurrection is not only something that happens in the future It is also happening right now. Those who listen to Jesus Those who follow after him They are the ones who experience resurrection in their current lives. Bodily resurrection; resurrection after death is just a continuation of this life abundant and free already being lived by those who follow after Jesus.

This is a statement of the already/not yet kingdom of God. While God is in fact going to come someday to judge, and there will be a bodily resurrection of the dead, the work of the resurrection is already happening here and now in you and me. This is important for those of us living in the season of Lent. While we are in a season of grief, and of confronting our mortality and sin, we still live in the ultimate hope of resurrection.

Lent is a time of fasting. But, in order to illustrate that the resurrection has ultimate power, we suspend our fasting on Sundays; that’s right Sundays are free days, where we are able to celebrate the resurrection in the midst of grief and mourning We recognize that we live in the ultimate hope and power of Jesus’s resurrection, even in a dark time. This is a reminder for us to do the work of resurrection in our world, even in the face of insurmountable obstacles, we are able to demonstrate the love of God in this world.

Just as Jesus was following the way of God and beginning the work of God in the world, we are to follow in the same way. There are often dark and dead places in our world that need the refreshing word of resurrection. We can join God in that work. While this work may not be yet completed, it is good to do the work of the resurrection in the present.

Are we living like people of the resurrection now, or are we only longing for the coming of God in the future? The word of resurrection should transform our lives in the present. Ways we used to gravitate toward death are overcome by the power of the resurrection. The work Jesus began is a continuing work in the world through the Holy Spirit and the people of God. We do not need to fear or avoid death like the culture around us because we have confidence that the work of resurrection is already at work in the world and will one day be fulfilled.

The work of resurrection has already begun in us. The moment we hear the voice of Christ calling out to us with words of life, and the moment we respond, we are living in the power of the resurrection. Some of us have compelling stories; stories of the ways that God has saved us from the brink of spiritual death, and sometimes even physical death. Stories of God continuing to work resurrection in our everyday lives, in no less beautiful ways. We are all people of the resurrection, called out of darkness called out of death called into a life abundant with the power of the holy Spirit. Who are you sharing thee stories with? Who are you telling about the resurrection that is offered; to all of mankind, through the love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ?

While our culture avoids places that reek of death, we can look death in the face. We can face it with deep confidence that the resurrection is already at work in our lives. We can grieve in hope, and we can work in the dark and broken places not with despair but with hope. While we were dead in our sins, the Lord made a way for us to experience the same resurrection as he.

The work of resurrection often feels hard and unrelenting, but when we look for it, when we fervently to seek it, we can find it, even in the darkest places. In the midst of Lent, when the days can be long, somber, and weighty, we can still celebrate. The power of resurrection is already here in our prayers of confession, in the midst of our fasting, in our sincere repentance. The work Jesus began is still at work in the world. Thanks be to God!