

Jesus' Victory over Death

Intro

- Good morning church (or whenever you are watching this!).
- How amazing it is that we can still meet together virtually, Worship together, and hear God's Word together.
- We have been working through a series of Jesus' victory over... Andy shared with us last week about Jesus' victory over fear, which I found really encouraging.
- This morning I am going to be sharing about Jesus' victory over death.
- It's a big topic for a short talk on a Sunday morning, but I will do my best! So stay with me.
- The main passage I want us to look at is 1 Corinthians 15, but I will be jumping around passages, so have your bibles or devices at the ready to read with me.

Intro (part 2)

- I am going to read from **1 Corinthians 15 vs 1-8, 20, 26, 54-57**.
- I am going to be considering this in three ways:
 - 1) Firstly, I want us to think about 'Death' in the Old Testament- what is the narrative in the run up to the death of Jesus?
 - 2) Secondly, the actual 'Death' of Jesus- why was it significant? What happened?
 - 3) Thirdly and lastly, what does it mean for 'Death' now- what has changed since?

'Death' in the Old Testament

- So firstly, I want us to think about our understanding of 'death' in the Old Testament.
- Looking back at our passage, **1 Corinthians 15 vs 3-4**, in the space of 2 verses Paul has reinforced 'according to the scriptures' twice.
- I don't think Paul is trying to cross reference us with specific passages, but I think Paul is really trying to reinforce the greater over-arching narrative here, that Jesus' death isn't the snapshot isolated event, there is a narrative, a back story, a purpose.
- We need to sit up and pay attention to the scriptures, and how they have been fulfilled.
- And what is the scripture narrative? Very simply, it's how our creator God is rescuing the world.

- We know that 'death' came into the world at the fall (**Genesis 2 vs 17: "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die"**). And as we know, Adam and Eve did, when humanity died both physically, and spiritually.
- A physical death as part of judgement from God as a result of Adam and Eve disobeying his command, God later says in **Genesis 3 vs 19: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and dust you will return"**. A physical death.
- And by spiritual death we are talking about the connection to God being broken, a separation from God. Sin came into the world, and God in all His holiness can't be around sin.
- We are all born with the capacity for good and for evil.
- Since the fall, we have a greatly increased innate attraction to sin.
- We are also born into a world environment full of sin, where it is easy to learn our patterns of behaviour.
- Therefore, from the first moment each of us sins, we die spiritually.
- **Romans 5 vs 12 says: Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned'.**
- From this instance 'according to the scriptures', as Paul states, our scripture narrative is our creator God seeking relationship with his people, and setting about his rescue plan, to restore that connection with us.

The 'Death' of Jesus

- Second point- the death of Jesus.
- So remembering the scriptures, our over-arching narrative of God's rescue plan is pointing to Jesus and His death.
- I'm currently in the process of reading 'The Day the Revolution Began: Rethinking the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion' by Tom Wright. Tom Wright very strongly reinforces that the day he is referring to as the start of the revolution is **Good Friday, the death of Jesus.**
- That day being the turning point in history.
- A few weeks ago, before Easter, I did a YP talk around a 'Holy Saturday' reflection, taking time to think what on earth was going through the disciples minds once Jesus had died!?

- Jesus died, and they were left none of the wiser that everything had changed... Their Messiah, teacher, and friend had died, and I'm sure there were many emotions and questions they were dealing with as a result, as well as being fearful and in hiding...
- Until Easter Sunday, and the resurrection!
- As Tom Wright says, the death of Jesus changed everything, that was the day the revolution began, with the resurrection being the **first sign** of things to come. The ultimate sign, and proof of his victory over death...
- Our symbol of the cross which to us now symbolises the hope of life we have in Jesus, is actually a sign of death.
- I have been working my way through 'Spring Harvest Online' material on YouTube (if you haven't done so already I recommend checking it out after church!), and the theme was 'Unleashed', particularly looking at Acts and the early church.
- I have loved learning more about the early church, and trying to put myself in their place. Crucifixion was immersed in their culture (which we can't even begin to understand), Jesus grew up in that culture, and in higher societies you wouldn't even be able to say or speak of 'crucifixion', it was a massive taboo, the most severe execution, it was degrading, gruesome, and for the worst criminals and rebels. So for that culture, the sign of the cross would have been a big no no! (As Paul emphasises in Philippians 2 vs 8 Jesus becoming obedient to death, **EVEN** death on a cross!). Emphasising he faces the worst possible death. **EVEN** death on a cross.
- Yet the early church talked about it, spread the gospel regardless! I think it's an incredible challenge and encouragement to us today, still!
- So Jesus died, physically, and in a sense spiritually (i.e. separated from the Father), in that he took on himself our sin (**2 Cor 5:21** 'God made him who had no sin to be sin (or a sin offering) for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God'), the turning point in history.
- And as mentioned, the first sign that history had changed forever was the resurrection.
- We read about how Jesus appeared in his resurrection body in the gospels. Sometimes it's easy to think of the gospels as the back story and we get the meaning from Paul, but I want us to briefly look at two accounts of Jesus appearing to his disciples after his resurrection.
- These accounts are so descriptive, and it's important to note the description of Jesus' resurrection body, because he is both spiritually and physically alive.
- **Read Luke 24 vs 5, 36-43**
- **Read John 20 vs 24-28**
- I love the emphasis these gospel accounts put on Jesus' physical presence. He isn't a ghost! He has a physical body post resurrection.

- Going back to our passage in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says:
- **Read 1 Corinthians 15 vs 42-44.**

'Death' Now (relevance to us today)

- Our last point for today, death now, the relevance for us today.
- In this current situation it has been sobering to see the realisation that we are only humans, we are weak, we are not invincible of our own accord. And we have had to talk about death more.
- One of the phrases at the moment is 'COVID-19, it doesn't discriminate'. Which is true, but ultimately, it's death that doesn't discriminate, there is certainty that we are all going to physically die. And that's a tough thing to think about, especially on a Sunday morning, so sorry for hitting you with that one...
- But we do have hope!!!
- We need to get away from miscommunicating our belief of what Jesus did on the cross as simply 'he died for my sins in order for me to go to heaven and live forever'.
- It's not the ultimate hope that we are given in the Bible.
- We've thought about the over-arching narrative of God's rescue plan, for the earth and everything in it, for **all** things.
- Jesus overcoming death means **we** overcome death if we believe in him to be the true saviour and are followers of him.
- And we wait for his return, when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and we will have resurrection bodies! Like how Jesus' was described in the gospels, but thanks to him, we won't bear the same crucifixion marks.
- This message is so important for a nation and a world that is hurting, and dying. That there will be a day where there is no more pain or suffering.
- **Revelation 21 vs 4 says 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away'.**
- **It is so important for us to remember the death of Jesus, the significant and turning point it is, but ultimately, his victory over death.**
- Death does not have the final say. Because Jesus has conquered death, we too can rise again to eternal life after death. Christians need not fear even the worst possible result of Covid-19, for Jesus has won the victory over death.
- Let me finish by once again reading **1 Corinthians 15 vs 54 -57.**

Response

- As we move into a time of communion, it would be good for us to take some time for reflection, prepare ourselves to share and remember Jesus' body and blood, his physical and spiritual death on the cross, for us and our broken world.
- As we reflect and respond, once again think about what Jesus' death means for you, what does His ultimate victory over death mean to you today? Is it something you celebrate and appreciate? Or maybe take for granted?
- Offer your heart to him now...
- I am going to pray to close, and then Andy will lead us in communion.