

Readings: 2 Ecclesiasticus 27:4 – 7; Psalm 91(92) 1,2, 11 – 14; 1 Corinthians 15: 54 – 58;
Luke 6: 39 – 45.

Today brings us to the end of Saint Paul's teaching about the Resurrection.

He has reminded his hearers that the death, burial and resurrection of Christ have been an essential part of Christian preaching from the time of the apostles to whom the risen Lord appeared.

He has gone on to point out that, if there is no such thing as the resurrection of the dead, then Christ cannot have been raised and so *our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain...If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are the most unfortunate of all people.*

After explaining how Christ's gift of life has overcome the death shared by all who are 'in Adam', Paul has contrasted the natural man – the *first Adam* – with the life-giving spiritual man – Christ, *the last Adam*, on whom *we...shall be modelled.*

Paul concludes his teaching with an exposition of the *mystery* of the destination of all who, in this earthly life, have been *modelled* on Christ. This is a secret, revealed to and through Paul, of what will happen when Christ comes – an event which Paul believed would happen during the lifetime of his contemporaries.

Those Christians who have already died – Paul speaks of them as having fallen asleep – will be raised to life first, and then those who are still alive. Then – not before, but only at the coming of Christ – *we shall all be changed.* Our human nature, which is *perishable* and *mortal* – that is subject to death, will be clothed with the new *imperishability* and *immortality.*

This will be the final victory of life over death – the death which is the consequence of sin.

So, Paul concludes, there are two ways in which we who await the coming of Christ should respond: first with thanksgiving – *Let us thank God for giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;* and secondly by perseverance in living the Christian life – *keep on working at the Lord's work... knowing that, in the Lord, you cannot be labouring in vain.*

Here are two responses which we may well seek to make more deeply as we begin our Lenten journey towards the Easter celebration of our Lord's victory over sin and death.