



Daily Faith Practices

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany (C)

1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

Focus: The Resurrection of the Body

word of life

“What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.” (1 Corinthians 15:50 NRSV)

Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

Chapter 15 in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians focuses on the significant topic of resurrection. In the lectionary, the chapter is divided into four independent readings which are assigned for the Fifth through Eighth Sundays after the Epiphany (Year C). It is somewhat surprising that these texts are not read during the season of Easter as we celebrate the risen Christ.

And yet, these texts lend themselves to the season of Epiphany—of revelation and manifestation. Those who encountered the risen Christ experience “Aha!” as resurrection took form and became realized. It is natural for people to question the implications of the risen Christ for their own resurrection.

Paul does not avoid challenging questions. Instead, he asks the questions himself. “But someone will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?’” (1 Corinthians 15:35 NRSV)

1. *How would you answer Paul’s question: How are the dead raised?*
2. *Or his question: With what kind of body do they come?*
3. *How often do you think about your own resurrection?*

Paul’s abrupt answer to his own question is startling. “Fools!” Paul believes it a waste of time to imagine one’s current physical body as the one for eternity. That’s true if our bodies are young, fit, and healthy. But it is also true if age and illness has taken its toll. Our bodies are meant for a limited length of time on this earth.

That’s also true for other parts of creation. Whether the birds of the sky, the plants of the earth, the fish of the sea, or any other aspect of God’s world, each has an expiration date. As humans, we are part of this intricate cycle of life and death with our body being part of this world—the perishable world.

4. *How does that make you feel to know you are part of the perishable world?*

This is not a modern concept. Instead, Paul connects our human story with that of Adam, the firstborn of God’s creation. Genesis 2 describes how God created Adam from dust. God took the earth and formed an earthling. From dust you came and to dust you shall return.

But that is not the end of the story. “The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.” (1 Corinthians 15:47 NRSV) Dust does not have the final word. Because of Christ, there is the promise of something beyond the grave. “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.” (1 Corinthians 15:49 NRSV) Paul proceeds to describe in the next paragraph how we will be changed as our perishable body puts on imperishability.

5. *What might it mean to bear the image of Christ in our resurrection?*
6. *What if we cannot imagine resurrection? Does that mean our faith is weak? Explain.*

Word among

Self-help books and blogs abound. It is easy to find advice about how to improve our life and grow into our full potential. These books range from diets, exercise, positive thinking, and even how to decorate our house for success. No matter how helpful the advice, it is limited.

As humans, we are created with an imperfect potential. We are part of that which is perishable. Our full potential does not exist on this earth, but only after our death. That's what Apostle Paul was trying to explain. "What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." (1 Corinthians 15:50 NRSV)

1. *How can the fullness of our human potential NOT be reached on this earth?*
2. *What does it mean for the fullness of our human potential to come after death?*

Accepting that our human nature is like that of Adam and is limited does not mean we rush to our death: eating whatever we want, never exercising, and wasting our gifts. Instead, understanding our limitations gives us both perspective and hope. Like with Paul, God can use us and our gifts to proclaim the good news of Christ.

But what about Paul's opening questions, "But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?'" (1 Corinthians 15:35 NRSV) Those are still wonderful questions, but not pressing. We can move forward in faith with confidence, but without grasping the "how" or the "what body" of our resurrection. We can trust God to be at work, giving us the kind of body which will allow us to embrace our full potential—one who bears the image of Christ.

3. *How does Paul free us from worries about the resurrection of our body?*
4. *What might you say to someone who keeps asking questions about the how and what of resurrection?*

faith practice in daily life

Serve all people following the example of Jesus

Life is limited on this earth, but there is more. Just as Christ rose from the death, so will we rise from death—not with our earthly body, but with a body which can bear the image of Christ. Until that day, we can serve all people following the example of Jesus, experiencing a foretaste of the feast to come.

5. *How does this influence the way you intend to live your remaining days?*
6. *What do you most look forward to as you think about resurrection?*

Prayer

Creator of all, you have made such a beautiful world, it is difficult for us to imagine anything more glorious than what we experience here and now. And yet we are not blind to the hardships and limits of this life. Continue to strengthen our faith so that we might live fully here, but also anticipate with joy the fullness of the resurrection.

last word

Take a moment to look at the back of your hand. Reflect on how your hand has changed over the last decade and imagine how it will continue to change. Offer a prayer for God to guide you to use your hands and life on this earth.