

## Resurrection | 2 Thess. 2:1-3; 13-17; Luke 20:27-38 | LUMC | Nov 6, 2022

Dear church family and friends: around this time last year I preached on sainthood. There are saints living among us, while others have passed on to join the church triumphant in heaven. The saints are celebrated worldwide by Christians and other religions. During All-Saints day Christians pause and thank God for the witness of those who toil and serve daily doing Christian witnessing in word and deeds. We also thank God as we remember those who joined the company of angels before us. Most Protestant denominations and other religions recognize their saints by popular acclamation.

Methodists do not practice the patronage or veneration of saints, but we honor and admire saintly people. It is the tradition of LUMC to observe and celebrate 'All Saints' in our congregation including those alive and those who have entered the church triumphant. Let us recognize both the living saints among us and our deceased saints, and celebrate them.

The Methodist teaching and belief on 'All Saints' is threefold: (1) honoring universal church saints through the ages, (2) celebrating our local saints, both those living, and (3) those whose mortal life has ended. On this All-Saints Sunday, I want us to reflect on the resurrection<sup>1</sup> of the saints who have moved on to their permanent home. Will they resurrect and enjoy this life again? Let us hear what Jesus teaches on resurrection of the body.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus engages in a dialogue with the second largest Jewish party, the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the dead. These people posed an interesting theological question with the aim of downplaying Jesus' teaching about resurrection. They gave an illustration of a dead woman and her seven husbands—all brothers wondering who her husband will be if they all resurrected! To answer this question required Godly courage to discuss the dead people's mortality in the presence of their families. But the Sadducees, with a firmly formed opinion about the dead woman and her seven husbands, wanted to stump Jesus.

Recall how Jesus contended with the Pharisees about their religious adherence because he forgave the tax collector, Zacchaeus. Jesus had literally just shut the religious leaders off when they asked a political question concerning tax paying by using a coin with Caesar's image! Jesus beat these three teams at their game by revealing that his mission was to save sinners. Local politics belonged to the local social environment, and obeying secular leaders in their leadership role was and is a Christian obligation— "Pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar".

The resurrection debate continues today, though in a different shape and form. The modern resurrection debate is given impetus by the new methods of disposing of a dead body. There are people who believe the body should be buried intact to give it a chance to resurrect fully on that resurrection day! Such people reject cremation

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<sup>1</sup> The resurrection of the dead will errand the judgment of the unbelievers and the reward to believers.

(burning the dead body), or composting<sup>2</sup> the body on the assumption that such an act denies the deceased a proper resurrection.

There are other people who do not worry about cremation or composting methods, believing that during resurrection God will decide how the resurrected body shall be. For these people, what is important is faith in God and some trust in science behind the disposal of the corpse!

There is no doubt that modern science is contributing to enlighten some people on their death and the disposal of their bodies. Others are too much focused on worrying and the fear of losing their familiar territory if their bodies are cremated or composted. The fear is accompanied by anxiety and unexplained emotional and physical pains because of the confusion originating from their imagination of losing familiarity.

We can be comforted by Jesus' answer about life after death; He says after death we shall be transformed into spiritual bodies and not the physical bodies we own in our earthly life. The people who will be resurrected into that spiritual body are believers, who may recognize their spouses, children and friends all living in spiritual bodies. Of course, the believers in spiritual bodies might recognize each other because Jesus did not say that is impossible. Couples<sup>3</sup> may enjoy the spiritual life together with their friends and children, whether by birth or adoption, or spiritually.

Jesus affirms that after physical death there shall be no more death; we shall be in a spiritual body and promoted to angel's status. We shall be crowned daughters and sons of God with full status. We shall enjoy the full taste of eternity that we have partly enjoyed on earth.

It does not worry me about my dead body's disposal at this time. It can be buried, cremated, or composted. I would prefer a cheap and simple method that does not cost my loved ones so much money or take too long to conclude. After all, I shall resurrect with a spiritual body. I will see Christians I served, people we fellowshiped and prayed with. I will see friends, children, and my husband, although we will never be related again as a couple. Jesus clearly says there is no marriage in eternity. I will not be concerned about a physical body. I prefer to leave that physical body's disposition up to God. God can put my physical body back together if he decides he wants me in the physical body rather than the spiritual body.

God can call back my ashes wherever they were scattered or entombed, and bring it back together. God will call up the intact body that decomposed in the grave and turned to soil. Only God can put us together as he deems. There is nowhere in the Bible where Jesus taught how a corpse should be disposed of. While Jesus lived among mortals, his teaching about a dead body was a non-issue. If it was important, Jesus would have advised Christians when and how to bury the body.

About his death, Jesus taught that he would die and resurrect on the third day. He never taught where his body would lay those three days. It was his followers who

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<sup>2</sup> New method of turning the dead body into fertilizer. This new method began in Washington state. It's cheaper and the mixture feeds plants.

<sup>3</sup>There is no marriage in heaven and Couples shall be in spiritual bodies and shall only relate spiritually.

decided to put Jesus' body into Joseph's new tomb. They also prepared his body according to the Jewish burial ritual. Jesus, our Lord, was silent about burial and its rituals. We want to be careful not to sin by overthinking about our final resting place as if it is a Christian obligation to do so. What I know and respect is having a decent send-off in a manner that each congregation of faith determines under the theological rubrics of their denomination.

Jesus taught that the physical body is a part of the earthly life, not eternity. Jesus emphasizes living in the spirit after death, and encourages all believers to attain spiritual resurrection and join the company of heavenly angels. We need to endure all temptations, and win because Christ won! We shall graduate from this life, take on a spiritual body and wear an eternal crown.

We shall join Christ and the angels in eternity to the praise of God. *Halleluiah!*

How I long to see my parents again! I have no doubt they are in a spiritual body because they loved the Lord. My reunion with them shall be so comforting and enjoyable. On our first meeting, we will go back in time to review our life together, and celebrate the blessings God accorded the family. I am sure my parents will embrace me and congratulate me for overcoming the sinful world and achieving the crown of glory.

Oh! what a joy,  
what a joy that will be x 2  
when I see my lord!

I am sure so many of you who have lost someone to death will also enjoy the reunion and never-ending song!

The only condition is to remain focused on the teachings of the cross. Despite what comes your way, please, keep the faith. There is life after death and there is joy and celebrations in the next life where there is no pain, there is no threat from Christians in sheep's clothing. Those faithfully walking their spiritual journey will resurrect and enjoy eternity with God.

Amen.