

Harvest is Coming

1 Cor 15:35-41

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Nine years ago today, I lost my first loved one, my Papaw Lee.

1. Papaw Lee was quite the fellow.
 - a. He was always concerned that the trash be compacted in the trash cans as tightly as possible.
 - 1) In order to accomplish a tight compaction, he would stand in the trash can and stomp it to make sure it was as tight as could be.
 - 2) Imagine his embarrassment when he had to go to the Emergency Room & explain to the ER physician how & why he broke his arm.
 - b. Papaw got up early for work. He left the house around 4:30 each morning, so he went to bed about 8 in the evening.
 - 1) It was not at all unusual for my family to be there when Papaw went to bed. He would always say to my two brothers & me, "Boys, come on & let's go to bed."
 - 2) He did that for years, until we three boys snuck in his bed while he was taking his bath.
 2. Papaw was a very good man, but for all his good qualities, he was not a Christian.
 - a. Dad & my grandmother & I all talked with him—every time we'd have a gospel meeting, we'd make sure the preacher stopped by for a visit.
 - b. But, Papaw just wasn't interested *until* he knew the end was near.
 - 1) Dad had made up his mind that he was going to go & talk with Papaw quite bluntly.
 - 2) Dad walked in the room & said, "Eugene, we need to talk." Before Dad could say another word, Papaw said, "Randy, let's go do it."
 3. When Papaw died, I was so very grateful.
 - a. I was grateful that Papaw had obeyed the Gospel & that he had died in Christ.
 - b. In fact, I was grateful that Papaw had a slow-moving cancer. While it was a dark cloud over our family for many years, that cancer provided him with many opportunities to be clothed in Jesus.
- B. How grateful we should be to grieve in hope!
1. There can be no doubt but that death hurts, that death causes untold heartache & that death is God's enemy.
 - a. Death is not in this world because of God's will but because of sin: "Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Rm 5:12).
 - b. Death is God's enemy: Jesus "must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor 15:25-26).
 2. While death hurts, brings much heartache, & is God's enemy, we grieve in hope.
 - a. "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope" (1 Thess 4:13).
 - b. Paul doesn't say that it's wrong to grieve, but he says that we should not grieve as others who have no hope.
- C. The Corinthians weren't quite sure what to make of death.
1. As we have mentioned before, some of the Corinthians denied the resurrection: "Some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor 15:12).
 2. From what Paul writes here, it seems that *the* major stumbling block to the Corinthians' accepting the resurrection was the state of the resurrected body.
 - a. We read at v 35: "Someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?'"
 - b. Undoubtedly, those who first raised these questions in Corinth are nothing but dust.

- 1) Some of them might still have a bone scattered here or there, but there is likely little left of their bodies.
- 2) These brethren were greatly concerned about that: "What if several millennia pass & we're nothing but dust? How are we going to be resurrected & what is that body going to look like?"
3. To answer those questions, Paul uses an agricultural analogy.
 - a. Corinth wasn't as much an agricultural community as were some of the other ancient cities.
 - 1) However, because of the city's location, Corinth was a major harbor in the ancient world.
 - 2) The Corinthians would have seen goods from all over the world come through their city.
 - b. Therefore, although they would have been more indirectly involved in agriculture, the Corinthians would have known as much about harvesting as any other group in the ancient world.
4. This morning, we want to think about the coming harvest of the resurrection as Paul answers the Corinthians' questions.

II. HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED?, vv 36-38.

A. Paul begins this section with quite strong words: "You foolish person!"

1. That's not very kind, is it?
 - a. Jesus teaches that we ought not to refer to people as fools: "Whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire" (Mt 5:22).
 - b. If RJ came home & said that he had raised his hand in class to ask a question & the teacher called him a fool, I'd be over to school faster than you could blink!
2. So, what should we make of Paul's calling the Corinthians fools?
 - a. The basis of Paul's statement here seems to be Psalm 14: "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Ps 14:1).
 - b. Paul's basic answer to how the dead are raised is: GOD.
 - 1) They are fools who look at the marvelous universe we inhabit & say there is no God.
 - 2) They are fools who say, "How are the dead going to be raised?" If God could make everything that is from nothing, how hard will it be for him to raise the dead?

B. The seed we sow does not come to life unless it dies.

1. You likely understand that when we plant a seed it does not die in the ground & then come back to life as a plant. That is a botanical absurdity.
2. But, Paul isn't teaching botany here; he's teaching about the resurrection.
 - a. In the ancient world, it was believed that seeds did die before they sprouted. Paul takes that belief to teach about the resurrection.
 - b. We do basically the same thing when we tell our children a fable to make a point. If we tell the story of the tortoise & the hare, we aren't saying it's true, but we're making a point.

C. So, seeds die before they live & what is sown is not like what comes forth from the ground.

1. Paul's point in mentioning that seeds die before they sprout is to teach the truth that life follows death.
 - a. As strange as it sounds, we see this principle in medicine all the time.
 - 1) If I have cancer, what is my oncologist going to do? He's going to kill the cancer cells so that I can live.
 - 2) If I need an organ transplant, surgeons will remove my diseased organ & replace it with another. The diseased organ will be allowed to die so that I can live.
 - b. This paradox works spiritually as well.
 - 1) "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 16:25).
 - 2) As Paul writes here, we have a merging of these two concepts: Paul is teaching about the spiritual truth of the resurrection, but the resurrection will be a bodily resurrection.
2. But, we must not think that our bodies will look the same in the resurrection, for you what you sow is not the body to be.
 - a. When you plant a corn seed, you don't expect the plant that's going to sprout from that seed to look exactly like that seed, do you?

- b. When it comes to the resurrection, what is placed in the ground is not the same as what comes forth.
 - 1) In the next paragraph, Paul compares the body that is sown with the body that is raised (vv 42-49).
 - a) The body that is sown is perishable (it is susceptible to decay), but the body that is raised is imperishable (it cannot decay).
 - b) The body is sown in dishonor (it is buried to rot), but the body is raised in glory (the resurrected body will be like Jesus' resurrected body).
 - c) The body is sown in weakness (is there anything weaker than a dead body?), but it is raised in power (God's power shall raise our dead bodies).
 - d) The body is sown as a natural body (it is susceptible to the laws of nature), but it is raised a spiritual body (it will be fit for the spiritual realm).
 - e) The body that is sown is of the earth (it is made out of elements in the earth), but it is raised a heavenly body (fit for the heavenly kingdom).
 - 2) There is no need, therefore, to worry about the state of the body prior to the resurrection.
 - a) If I die in a plane crash over the ocean & fish eat my body, I'll still be raised on the Last Day.
 - b) If a nuclear bomb goes off right here & we are all disintegrated, we shall still be raised on the Last Day.
 - 3) Rabbis in Paul's day said that the body would be resurrected from a bone in the neck that was indestructible. However, it doesn't matter what physical matter remains; God will raise our bodies!
 - D. How is that even possible? "God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body."
 - 1. The reason a corn stalk looks so different from a corn seed is that God has designed them that way.
 - a. When God first made the world, he decreed that plants would yield seed a certain way: "God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kinds, on the earth'" (Gn 1:11).
 - b. You don't expect to plant corn & have green beans come forth. That is not the laws of nature God has placed on earth.
 - 2. Why does Paul talk about each kind of seed having its own body?
 - a. Who among us can cause a seed to grow?
 - 1) We can plant a seed, we can water the seed, and we can make sure it gets enough sun. But, can any of us look at a seed & say, "Okay, it's time to grow & expect it to grow?"
 - 2) Only God can cause a plant to grow. He does so today through the laws he set in place at the Creation, but all seed growth goes back to God!
 - b. Paul is saying, "Look, folks, don't worry about the resurrected body. The God who made this world & causes all things to grow is the One who will cause our bodies to come forth at the Last Day."
 - E. A young boy had been promised a new puppy for his tenth birthday, but he had a hard time choosing between a dozen likely candidates at the neighborhood pet shop.
 - 1. Finally, Jonathan decided on an ugly, shaggy dog who was wagging his tail furiously.
 - 2. His dad said, "John, why do you want that dog?" Jonathan said, "I want the one with the happy ending."
 - F. It doesn't matter what our bodies look like as they rot in the ground, for Jesus is going to come again & God is going to raise them up as beautiful, spiritual bodies. Our bodies are going to have happy endings!
- III. WHAT KIND OF BODY WILL WE HAVE IN THE RESURRECTION?, vv 39-41.
- A. There is likely not a one of us who hasn't pondered what our resurrected body will look like.
 - 1. There isn't anything at all wrong with pondering what our bodies in the next life will be like.

2. The problem in Corinth was that those brethren were doing much more than simply pondering. Because those brethren couldn't uncover every minute detail, they said the resurrection wasn't going to occur.
- B. To those pondering their future bodies, Paul says, "Look around you. You see that humans are designed one way, animals are designed another, & birds and fish are different from humans and animals."
 1. Think about the different kinds of flesh on this earth.
 - a. Many animals have coats of fur that keep them warm in the winter; we humans kill those animals & take their flesh to keep warm. We aren't made like they are.
 - b. Who here would want to try to live under water like a fish? Our respiratory systems function much differently—fish can't live outside of water & we can't live inside of water.
 - c. Would any of us want to climb the building after worship & jump off and fly like a bird? We don't have wings as they do.
 2. Of course, we can get much more specific even among different kinds of creatures.
 - a. There are many physical differences between men & women.
 - 1) Females generally outlive males by four to eight years in the United States.
 - 2) A woman's metabolism is normally lower than a man's.
 - 3) Men & women have a different skeletal structure: woman have a shorter head, broader face, less protruding chin, shorter legs, & longer trunk.
 - b. Our flesh differs from one another.
- C. Not only does flesh differ from creature to creature, but bodies differ from one place to another.
 1. There is one glory for human bodies & another glory for heavenly bodies.
 - a. Our bodies differ remarkably from heavenly bodies.
 - b. E.g., we do not shine as do they, we are not nearly as large as are they, etc.
 2. Just as there are different kinds of flesh on this earth, there are different glories of heavenly bodies.
 - a. The sun & the moon differ greatly in their glory—the sun is much brighter, gives off much more warmth, and has a greater gravitational force than the moon could ever hope to have.
 - b. We can tell from our vantage point than no two stars are quite the same: some are much brighter than others, some appear much larger than others, & some even appear different colors.
- D. What does all this have to do with the resurrection of the dead?
 1. When Jesus comes again, all the heavenly bodies we've spent time talking about this morning are going to be burned up.
 - a. "The heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!" (2 Pt 3:12).
 - b. There isn't going to be sun, moon, & stars after the resurrection, so why waste time talking about their differences this morning?
 2. When Jesus comes again, there will not be differences between men & women.
 - a. "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Mt 22:30).
 - b. Jesus doesn't say there is only one gender in heaven, but he does say that gender differences are absolved in heaven.
 - c. If that's the case, why waste time talking about the differences between men & women this morning?
- E. Here is the point: If God clothed bodies as he chose at the Creation, why can't he clothe our bodies as he wills at the Resurrection?
 1. He is the same God, he has the same power, & he will not allow our spirits to be naked, but he will clothe them as he sees fit.
 2. We don't have to spend time worrying about bodies decaying, about what they'll be like in the Resurrection, for God has taken care of those things. I don't have to worry about them!
- F. But, wouldn't it be nice to know exactly what our resurrected bodies will look like?
 1. We know what those bodies will look like without any doubt: "We are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him,

because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (1 Jn 3:2-3).

2. That's all I need to know about my resurrected body—it's going to be like Jesus' body!!
 - a. What a glorious thought!
 - 1) These bodies we inhabit on this earth sometimes give us fits with aches & pains & illness, but when Jesus comes again, our bodies will be perfect just like his body!
 - 2) These bodies don't always work exactly like they should, but when Jesus comes again, our bodies will work perfectly just like his body!
 - b. Is that the hope you have this morning? Are you purifying yourself as he is pure so that you can be like him at the Resurrection?