



Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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HG169 *The Apostles Creed: I Believe In ...* **The Resurrection And The Life Everlasting**

Luke 24:36-49 & 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

Home Group Study Notes

22 July 2018 - Revd Paul A. Carr



**PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!**

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful for your discussions.



Welcome (10 mins) *Ice Breaker*

What do you imagine heaven or eternal life will be like?



Looking Upwards (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



HG169 *The Apostles Creed: I Believe In ...*
The Resurrection And The Life Everlasting

Luke 24:36-49 & 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Home Group Sermon

22 July 2018 - Revd Paul A. Carr

Introduction

As we come to the end of the Apostles' Creed, we find that it ends on a very positive note of Christian hope. "I believe in ... the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." Of all the topics I've preached on over the years, this must be the one I've spoken about the most. I've preached at over 200 funeral and memorial services, I have 21 years of Holy Week and Easter Sunday sermons; the constant theme of the hope of the resurrection and eternity in regular sermons and if you include the many conversations I've had with those who have lost loved ones or are facing death – you get some idea of how many times I've spoken about it.

But despite that, I have to say, I never get tired of talking about it or of hearing about it. Just this week I was asked to preach at Jane Tolaini's funeral service on John 11 - the miracle of Jesus raising of Lazarus from the dead - when Jesus declares 11:25: "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.*" In a world like ours which has lost all sense of any certainty of life after death, where all thoughts of death are encrusted by a mix of sentimentality and fear, that is very good news indeed.

The Resurrection of the Body

To say "I believe ... in the resurrection of the body" is almost the hardest phrase to believe because it goes against everything we are taught and everything we see with our eyes. If you have walked away from the funeral of a loved one, you know how the harsh reality of death can erode your faith. Death, on a human level, is our greatest fear, the sum of all fears. The Greek philosopher Aristotle put it this way: *Death is a dreadful thing for it is the end.* But as Christians we believe the opposite to be true. The creed reminds that we believe that death will not have the final victory.

Note how it is "the resurrection of the body" not "the resurrection of the dead". Christians believe that the body itself will be raised from the dead. Unlike the ancient Greeks and the contemporary Hindus who see the body as merely the 'covering' or the 'container' for the soul and something to discard when we die so the soul can be set free.

The death we'll face: I was talking with someone the other day about how death, in British culture, is something we just don't talk about it. Death remains the "final frontier" that we all must cross sooner or later. The Greek playwright Sophocles said: "*Of all the great wonders, none is greater than man. Only for death can he find no cure.*" He's right about that. Whilst medical science is making great strides in virtually eliminating many fatal diseases, death will come to us all. And though we all know that death is coming, many prefer to live as if it will never come at all. But not for the Christian – death is not the end, it is just the beginning.

What does the Bible say about death? Death is certain. "*It is appointed for man to die once*" (Hebrews 9:27a); Death is not the end. "*And after that comes judgment*" (Hebrews 9:27b); Christ defeated death. "*Christ Jesus ... abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*" (2 Timothy 1:10); Death remains the last enemy. "*The last enemy to be destroyed is death*" (1 Corinthians 15:26).

4. How would you answer someone who asked you what the difference is between reincarnation and resurrection?

5. Read Revelation 14:13. What does this promise mean to you?

6. What, out of all that we have studied through this series, really sticks in your mind? What has strengthened your faith the most? What has challenged your faith the most? What has inspired you the most?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. Do you agree with Paul when he suggested that to say “I believe ... in the resurrection of the body” is the hardest phrase to believe? Why might this be the case?

2. Why is death such a ‘taboo subject?’ Do you find it easy, or difficult, to talk about death with other people - Christian and non-Christian alike?

3. Read Isaiah 66:17-24 and Revelation 21:1-5. How has the belief in eternal life after death shaped the way you live?

The conundrum for the Christian is this: If Christ has abolished death, why do we still die? How can death be both abolished and yet be the “last enemy” of the people of God? According to the Bible, death came into the world because of sin (Romans 5:12). Death exists because sin exists. When sin has been removed once and for all, death will no longer exist. That’s why there will be no death in heaven (Revelation 21:3).

Christ abolished the power of death once and for all when he died and rose again from the dead on that first Easter Sunday morning. He abolished death as a ruling power in the universe. Death itself will one day die, and the true state God intended will be restored.

The resurrection we’ll enjoy: If death is the fundamental human problem (and it is), what is the Christian answer? Listen to Paul’s soaring words in 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 (ESV): *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”*

The resurrection of the body is necessary to reverse the effects of sin. Old age, cancer, disease, accidents, terrible tragedies. These things are all part of the curse upon the earth because of sin. Salvation will not be complete until our bodies are finally redeemed and changed forever. Salvation touches the body not just the soul.

Your salvation will not be complete until your body becomes immortal and imperishable. The body that is raised will be a new body - not just the old one patched up. If a loved one dies of cancer, it won’t do any good to be raised with cancer. Personally, I don’t want a “renovated” body. I want something brand-new that won’t wear out or run down. I want a body suited for eternity.

We believe in resurrection, not reincarnation. If I come back as a Chihuahua, I’m going to bite someone on the ankle. But that’s not going to happen. I won’t come back as someone else or something else. I’ll be raised as Paul Carr with all the destructive marks of sin removed from all parts of my being. The parts of me that annoy other people will be gone forever, thank God. What remains will be Paul Carr cleansed and purified and perfected by the grace of God. I will still be me and you will still be you. But we will also be like Jesus because we will see him as he is (1 John 3:1-3). We will have new bodies fit for new people who will live in the New Jerusalem.

Our only way of understanding the resurrection body is to consider the experience of Jesus from Luke 24. After he rose from the dead, the disciples could still recognize him and he bore on his body the marks of his suffering. He ate and drank with them, yet he also appeared and disappeared from their midst, suggesting that in his glorified state, he transcended time and space.

The Life Everlasting

The poet Robert Frost said: *“Home is where, when you go there, they have to take you in.”* Billericay feels like home to me. It hit me recently that I’ve lived here longer than anywhere else since I left the mining village where I grew up Sunderland 30 years ago. I could go back to the place where I grew up and no one would recognize me. Even when you go home, it doesn’t always feel like home.

That’s what Hebrews 13:14 means when it says, “For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.” The NLT translates the first phrase this way: “This world is not our home.” And that brings to mind the words of a familiar gospel song: *“This world is not my home, I’m just a passing through. If heaven’s not my home then Lord what will I do? The Saviour beckons me from heaven’s open door, and I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.”* Jesus tells us in John 14 that that heaven is a real place, it is His Father’s house and we can go there too!

The phrase “life everlasting” tells us that our home isn’t in this world. Our home is in heaven. And we will never really be at home in this world because we are constantly saying goodbye to the people we love the most. They leave us, or we leave them. Our children grow up, they leave home, they come back for a visit, and all too soon they leave again. There is no getting around that fact as long as we live on planet earth. I think God set it up this way on purpose so that no matter where we’re from, we’ll never feel really at home anywhere. The goodbyes of this life are meant to make us homesick for heaven.

The American evangelist Billy Graham wrote, long before his death in February: *Someday you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. I shall be more alive than I am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God.* If you know Jesus, you have “life everlasting” here and now. It begins the moment you believe, and it continues right on through your death, and it carries you all the way home to heaven. ”

Revelation 14:13 (NLT): “*And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this down: Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blessed indeed, for they will rest from their hard work; for their good deeds follow them!”* 1 Corinthians 15:58b (NIV): “*... you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*”

Amen

And so the Apostles’ Creed finishes with the word ‘Amen’. Our problem with ‘Amen’ is that we hear it so often that it loses all meaning. For most of us, ‘Amen’ either means, ‘The prayer is over’ or ‘It’s time to eat!’

‘Amen’ is a Hebrew word that basically means ‘be true’. It was a word that Jews used to confirm or agree with something, whether it was a prayer, a blessing or even a curse. In modern English, it means ‘so be it’, ‘let it be so’ or even ‘let what we have said be binding on us’. The word ‘Amen’ teaches us several important things:

These things really are true: ‘Amen’ is like the signature at the end of a contract. Until a contract is signed it is merely words and has no value. It is only binding when a signature is put at the end. By signing our name, we are saying, ‘I personally approve of what has just been written. I agree with it and I allow myself to be bound by its terms.’ So, when we say ‘Amen’ we are adding our verbal signature to what we have just said. But it also has practical implications attached to it. By signing a contract with your signature, you are committing yourself to a course of action. You are bound by it. You cannot subsequently back out and say, ‘Oh, that isn’t what I meant!’

Truth demands a personal response: It’s not enough merely to say or to recite the creed on a Sunday. We say Amen because the creed is true - you must at some point decide whether or not you actually believe what you are saying. The “Amen” forces you to make a choice. When we say ‘Amen’ to the Apostles’ Creed we are saying: ‘Lord, help me to believe this and help me to live it out day-by-day.’

Truth is ultimately wrapped up in Jesus: Did you know that ‘Amen’ is one of the names of our Lord in the Bible? In Revelation 3:14 he is called “*The Amen, the faithful and true witness.*” If you say Amen at the end of the Apostles’ Creed, you are saying, “*Lord, these things are true, and I truly do believe them, and I truly believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour.*”

Note that the creed begins with the phrase ‘I believe’ and ends with ‘Amen’. The creed is more than a doctrinal statement. It’s a declaration of your personal commitment to what the creed says.

Next time you say a Creed, the Lord's Prayer, or any other prayer, don't just say 'Amen'. Pause and ask yourself some questions: Am I serious about what I have said? Am I prepared to commit myself to what I have agreed? Am I prepared to live in a way that is consistent with what I have said? If you are then, and only if you are, then go ahead and say 'Amen'.

Conclusion

Our series on the Apostles’ Creed started with God and ended with Life Everlasting. In between we’ve touched on all the major doctrines of our faith. Although we talk a lot about a personal relationship with Jesus, that’s more than a feeling or a personal experience. It’s a relationship based on the truth revealed in the Bible.

Truth matters. I know we live in an anti-intellectual age, but truth matters. I realize that in the evangelical church we have almost elevated personal experience to the level of Scripture itself, but truth matters. Truth towers over our personal experience and stands in judgment over our personal opinions. If we don’t know the truth, then we will fall prey to all the false ideologies of our day.

Belief In Action

Our belief in everlasting life should not be restricted to that future life alone but should shape the way we live our lives here and now. Consider what the writer to the Hebrews said about Moses; ‘He chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin because he was looking ahead to his reward’ (Heb. 11:25-26). This is what Jesus was talking about in the Sermon on the Mount, where He told His followers to, ‘store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal’ (Matt. 6:20).

When we live our lives for God, doing those things which please and glorify Him, we are storing up heavenly treasure, looking forward to our eternal future despite the cost in the present. Regardless of whether the idea of receiving rewards appeals to you, the Bible presents this as an important incentive for godly living!

So, if we really believe in eternal life - the promise of a new, perfect world where we will live together with Him in new, perfect bodies - we will pursue God now, increasingly living our lives for Him, loving one another, battling temptation and sharing the good news of all that Jesus has provided for us. These things are hard now, but we do them because we believe a day is coming when the godly way of life will be the only way of life, and we will live together with Him forever!

I believe in ... the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. I really do.

