

“The Trumpet Will Sound”

(1 Corinthians 15:35-58) (4.18.2021)

LET US PRAY:

INTRODUCTION:

This week, I watched a movie called “Get Low.” The plot centers around an ornery old hermit who knows he is going to die soon. He wants to have a funeral party before he dies so that he can attend. To get people to come, he promises to raffle off all his property. Get low is a euphemism for being buried. The underlying themes deal with crippling guilt and the need of forgiveness.

Before the old hermit shows up at the funeral home, the mortician and business owner laments to his young co-worker, “When you are selling what everyone on earth needs to buy and your business is going broke, it has got to be you.” A couple of days later, I had a minor epiphany. Couldn’t the same be said for us in the Church? We have what everyone on earth needs and yet most churches, including ours, are just languishing along, struggling to get by.

The early Church grew exponentially even though they had very few resources, not even the blessing of the New Testament. They suffered terrible persecution because their message proclaimed the supremacy of Jesus. They were powered by God the Holy Spirit. And, the fact of Jesus’ resurrection, gave them hope in the Resurrection of the Dead in Christ. Listen carefully to Paul’s argument.

1 Corinthians 15:35–58 (NIV84) *The Resurrection Body*

³⁵ But someone may ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” ³⁶ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. ³⁹ All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. ⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. ⁴¹ The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵ “Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

The word of God for the people of God.

Title: **"The Trumpet Will Sound"**

BODY:

The house behind Carol and me, belonged to an old couple when we moved into our home. They got sick and they died. The house was for sale for a long time. A few weeks ago, there was an estate sale. This past Thursday and Friday, a truck with the company name "Got Junk" was in the driveway. There were men just throwing everything into the back of the truck until the house was empty.

At first, this struck a chord of melancholy for me. Earlier in the week, I had stood out in our back yard. It was a brisk evening, as the sun was going down. There was a strong wind blowing. My neighbor's wind chimes mysteriously made melody, and in the distance, I could hear the soulful call of the train whistle as it traveled through Absecon.

The infinite within me felt a discordant gloom that needed to be resolved. Then I remembered the song I was learning and which I just sang for you: There ain't no grave can hold my body down. Oh Gabriel, make sure you blow your trumpet so we can all be free. Paul tells us, "We will be raised in glory, raised in power, and raised a spiritual body." We will be reunited with our spirit and soul. What a great day that will be.

In contrast, what does the world offer up? On Friday night, I deliberately chose a movie to watch because it dealt with death. It is called "The Hero." The central character is an actor, Lee Hayden. He is 71 years old and has just learned that he has pancreatic cancer.

By his own admission, Lee made one movie in his life that he was proud of, the movie was "The Hero." Since then, he has kept busy but hasn't achieved anything. He longs to make another notable movie to find some form of redemption.

His marriage was a mess and ended in divorce. He is estranged from his daughter. The copious amounts of alcohol and drugs he uses, eases his feelings of emptiness, but the next morning he wakes up in the same place. There is no sustaining satisfaction in sex.

There is no mention of God. There is no hope of heaven or the bodily resurrection. The movie only offers up the sophistry of a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay:

"Dirge without Music"

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground.

So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind:

Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely. Crowned

With lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.

Lovers and thinkers, into the earth with you.

Be one with the dull, the indiscriminate dust.

A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew,

A formula, a phrase remains, --- but the best is lost.

The answers quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter, the love,

They are gone. They have gone to feed the roses. Elegant and curled

Is the blossom. Fragrant is the blossom. I know. But I do not approve.

More precious was the light in your eyes than all the roses in the world.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave

Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;

Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.

I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

In that poem, I hear echoes of King Solomon's opening words in Ecclesiastes 1:2–6 (NIV84)

² "Meaningless! Meaningless!"

says the Teacher.

"Utterly meaningless!

Everything is meaningless."

³ What does man gain from all his labor
at which he toils under the sun?

⁴ Generations come and generations go,
but the earth remains forever.

⁵ The sun rises and the sun sets,
and hurries back to where it rises.

⁶ The wind blows to the south
and turns to the north;
round and round it goes,
ever returning on its course.

Wise King Solomon goes on in a similar fashion for twelve chapters, but concludes with these two verses: Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 (NIV84)

¹³ Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the matter:

Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the whole duty of man.

¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil.

Earlier in 1 Corinthians 15:19-20, which I shared with you on Easter, Paul argued, ¹⁹ If **only** for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. ²⁰ **But** Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

You may know that the Story of Job may be the oldest scripture we have. And in that story we have his amazing declaration: Job 19:25–27 (NIV84)

²⁵ I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.

²⁶ And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;

²⁷ I myself will see him
with my own eyes—I, and not another.

How my heart yearns within me!

When you arrived here today, did you enter from Moss Mill onto the asphalt driveway? Normally, I enter from Route 9 on the dirt road through the cemetery. We have about eight acres of property here at Emmaus Church and about half of it is zoned for the cemetery. Many old churches have cemeteries but you will be hard pressed to find new churches with cemeteries.

Sometimes, I wonder if the cemetery is a barrier. People don't want to be reminded about death. If you are not a follower of Jesus, then death has NOT been swallowed up in victory. Death has a sting. Cemeteries bring to mind the law of God, sin, and judgment. When you rather ignore those realities, your natural tendency would be to detour around those very uncomfortable truths.

In this amazing chapter about the gospel and the truth of the Resurrection, Paul ends with a call to action. "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." We have this glorious good news of Jesus' life and resurrection. We have this hope that when Gabriel's

trumpet sounds, we will meet Jesus in the sky with all the other believers. How can we NOT fully and steadfastly preach, teach, and model a life-giving gospel? It is the work of God and we are called into it. In the several hundred pages I read this week, most of it dealt with Paul's arguments and examples. A lot of it was in excruciating detail and even I found it a little boring. The thing is that with a careful reading, Paul is pretty clear and convincing. Instead of me replicating them, let me give you additional powerful illustrations, so you may be fully equipped to share the truth of victory.

In his book "Our Greatest Gift (A Meditation on Dying and Caring)," Henri Nouwen tells a parable of faith and hope. He imagines twins – a brother and sister – talking to each other in their mother's womb: The sister said to the brother, "I believe there is life after birth."

Her brother protested vehemently, "No, no, this is all there is. This is a dark and cozy place, and we have nothing else to do but to cling to the cord that feeds us."

The little girl insisted, "There must be something more than this dark place. There must be something else, a place with light where there is freedom to move." Still, she could not convince her twin brother. After some silence, the sister said hesitantly, "I have something else to say, and I'm afraid you won't believe that, either, but I think there is a mother."

Her brother became furious. "A mother!" he shouted. "What are you talking about? I have never seen a mother, and neither have you. Who put that idea in your head? As I told you, this place is all we have. Why do you always want more? This is not such a bad place; after all, we have all we need, so let's be content."

The sister was quite overwhelmed by her brother's response and for a while didn't dare say anything more. But she couldn't let go of her thoughts, and since she had only her twin brother to speak to, she finally said, "Don't you feel these squeezes every once in a while? They're quite unpleasant and sometimes even painful."

"Yes," he answered. "What's special about that?"

"Well," the sister said, "I think that these squeezes are there to get us ready for another place, much more beautiful than this, where we will see our mother face-to-face. Don't you think that's exciting?"

The brother didn't answer. He was fed up with the foolish talk of his sister and felt that the best thing would be simply to ignore her and hope that she would leave him alone.

Who do you think was right? The brother or the sister?

In a few weeks, billions of cicadas will emerge from the earth after 17 years below ground. The Great Eastern Brood will burrow up from two or three feet down to the surface from Tennessee to New York. When the cicadas first emerge they are in the form of nymphs. They are brown. They shed their skin and become white. They remain motionless and they grow wings. Then their skin darkens and they are able to fly.

The transformed cicadas fly to the top of the trees and the males begin singing their mating songs. They are a very loud chorus. The eggs are laid on the tips of tree branches. When the eggs hatch, the newborn nymphs fall to the ground and burrow down. The cycle is complete until 17 more years have elapsed.

Author Josh McKibben wrote: "When picturing the "resurrection" of the cicadas, the spiritually-minded person can't help but think about the resurrection of all mankind that will take place in the Day of Judgment. Because just like the cicadas, all men and women who have ever died and are buried in the grave, will come up from the ground to meet the Lord in judgment."

The cicada being a symbolism of resurrection has been around for many centuries. It is widespread around the world from China to the Hopi Indians in Arizona. In some Asian cultures, they have created a cicada out of Jade. They have one in a museum that may be two thousand years old. This amulet would be placed on the tongue of the deceased person prior to their burial.

CONCLUSION:

For us to do the work of the Lord, we need to embrace Jesus' resurrection and the Resurrection of the Saints as a pillars of our faith. At the close of the Apostle's Creed we proclaim, "I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." At the close of the Nicene Creed we proclaim, "We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."

For us to do the work of the Lord, you need to become familiar with all 58 verses of 1 Corinthians 15. Become familiar with the basic elements of the Gospel. Learn how to make a case for Christ's resurrection. We will need our new spiritual bodies because we are going to live with God in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Understand how things we see here and now, can give insight into that promise: explain the lifecycle of seeds; God created all types of different flesh here; look at the variety of creation in the universe.

When that trumpet sounds, in a flash, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Don't you want everyone possible to hear this good news? Can't you see the dire need for such a message of hope in this day and age?

At the battle of Inkerman, during the Crimean War, a soldier was just able to crawl to his tent after he was struck down. When found, he was lying upon his face, his open Bible before him, his hand glued fast to the page by his life-blood which covered it. When his hand was lifted, the letters of the printed page were clearly traced upon it, and with the ever-living promise in and on his hand, they laid him in a soldier's grave. The words were: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

In his final breath, this soldier testified to the love of God. Won't you, while you have breath, do the same?

Amen and amen. Let us pray.