

I CORINTHIANS 15:35-38; 50-58

Someone will ask How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come? Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen and to each kind of seed its own body...

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. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will 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 will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability and this mortal body puts on immortality then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in

the work of the Lord because you know that in the Lord our labor is not in vain.

MATRIX OF THE CHANGELESS

I Corinthians 15:35-38; 50-58

Are you the same person you were ten years ago? You might wish you are or you might be glad you're not, but in any case, you're not! Circumstances and events have changed you. Some of the changes have almost certainly been for the better and some—perhaps not so much. We clearly do not look the same even though we may spend a lot of money to cosmetically replicate how we appeared ten years ago.

My older brother got a toupee when baldness was revealing too much of his scalp and he regularly had it dry cleaned to maintain his youthful appearance—so he thought. He would never confess to me how much it cost, but it wasn't cheap! Nevertheless, he often encouraged me to invest in one claiming it would make a big difference in my self-esteem and make me more attractive to others. But I actually like being bald. It's very economical—my wife cuts my remaining hair; I don't need a dry cleaner, shampoo and conditioner are not necessary. Think of the savings over the

years! They might actually allow me to afford a toupee! The fact is, no matter how you try, age is one thing you can't disguise.

Ten years is a long time and while we are the same person, we undergo many changes which alter not only our appearance, but our reality. We get married, we have children, children grow up and leave (hopefully), a spouse dies, we get sick, we move to a new location etc, etc. My heavens! Life does not progress in a straight and predictable line.

And what about churches? Ten years is a significant period of time in any congregation. I have been here over 14 years and you are not the same congregation you were ten years ago. There have been many new faces and many faces who have made their transition or have simply disappeared, no longer worshipping here. Change is not only inevitable in our lives, but in the life of the church as well.

While we do accept this reality, doesn't part of us long for the permanent, the Change-less, the ground that will not shift beneath us? I like being older in the sense I am still upright, but I don't care for all the consequences of being elderly. Who doesn't fondly remember the days of their youth? Who of the remaining original members of Trinity don't long for the early years when the sanctuary was full on Sunday morning and annual receipts exceeded \$200,000?

I wish I could hold onto the elation I feel after sinking a fifty foot birdie putt, but when I get a triple bogey on the next hole, the feeling is gone, gone, gone. You know it; I know it—life is defined by change, moment to moment. But the good news is that it is all occurring within the Matrix of the Change-less—the invisible, eternal, all embracing bosom of the Spirit.

At the end of his lengthy first letter to the Corinthians, Paul tackles the issue of the resurrection since members of the congregation requested more information about it. Don't we all? Birth, of course, is the first big Change in our lives and death the last...the Alpha and the Omega of our earthly existence. Paul is very comforting regarding this: *Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.* There can be no new life without first dying to the old. It is all about transformation, letting go of the perishable and putting on the imperishable—in other words, exchanging that which changes for that which is Change-less.

Yes, Trinity Presbyterian is changing. That does not mean, however, that it is dying. Transformation is necessary. But what our faith tells us is that this is occurring within the Matrix of the eternal Spirit. While we do not yet know what that will look like, that determination will be empowered by God's good pleasure. *For everything there is a season,*

and a time for every matter under heaven. Stay tuned...stay hopeful. It will all take place in the Matrix of the Change-less.

Reverend Thomas Dunlap August 25, 2024