

**1 CORINTHIANS 15:21-26, 35-43**  
**JESUS IS YOUR LIFE**

Welcome to art class. Today we're going to be making cups, cups of clay, and cups of silver. The pottery class will be on one side, and the metallurgy class on the other. For pottery you'll be given you lumps of clay, water and spinning wheels. The metallurgy class will be working with old battered pieces of silver, melting them down and pouring the melted liquid into a form, and letting it cool down to form your cup.

At the end of the day the pottery class has ended up with cups that look pretty much as ugly as the broken pieces of silver the other class started with. On the other hand, the metallurgy class has beautiful silver cups that were formed out of their broken and battered pieces of silver.

Today, we're looking at life and death, death and life – the resurrection to come. We all live. We'll all die. But only some will live again. Each will go onto another existence. Some will go onto a deathly existence, something like a misshapen piece of pottery that doesn't hold water. It's ugly, and it's good for nothing. The Bible calls that existence hell. Others will go onto a life that's even more beautiful than a well-formed silver cup.

Today we look at life, death and the resurrection, and how we struggle to understand it, and explain it. If you didn't like art class, maybe you'll like a nature class? How about studying dragonflies and butterflies. These are beautiful creatures, but they start out as bugs that swim under water or caterpillars that crawl about. Some people think that caterpillars are beautiful. Some think they're ugly and creepy. Yet that same creature then somehow flies away as that beautiful dragonfly or butterfly.

How could one body be turned so dramatically into another body? What will happen to our bodies at the resurrection of the dead? We're told that they'll become glorified bodies, but what that form will take we're not told. We have to wait until that day and be content with talking about what we have been told. Oh, we try to imagine, but our imaginations will never take us to what God has planned for us.

Yet, that's not good enough for some. Adam and Eve weren't content with what God had planned for them. They disobeyed God and brought death into this world. Like with a beautiful forming piece of pottery they flinched and the pottery got all distorted with bits and pieces flying off in all directions. We now have to live within this broken world of pottery. Sin has broken many things in our lives. Sin has sent many good things that we need to live good lives flying far away from us, and we'll only see them when we're made whole and new, when Christ returns and brings about the resurrection of the dead.

We don't like this predicament, and some try to construct a different reality made to their own liking. They think we're all butterflies already. Some claim that we all have a divine spark of God within us. We have goodness within us, and if we just try hard enough, we can fix the mess that we're in. We can even evolve to a higher, better form of life. But dreaming about these kinds of things don't make them so.

For understanding life and death, and why our lives are so messed up, and not perfect, as we might think of perfection, we only have God's Word to guide us in our thoughts.

We're all going to die because of sin. We cover that in every sermon, and sometimes in depth. Today we look at the other side, the resurrection of the dead. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" – Romans 6:23. "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:21), the opening verse to our text.

Those are only two verses. The Scriptures teach us much more about the resurrection of the dead. Generally, they teach us that on the Last Day Christ will raise you and all the dead. The same bodies that have died shall be made alive again. Paul uses language of sowing seeds, of planting bodies in the ground, and not burying them. Paul talks about wheat and other grains. You can think of tulip bulbs if you like. Something different from what you put into the ground comes out of the ground, but it's still wheat, or tulips, still you.

Job wrote, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!" (19:25-27).

Let that sink into you, because my hearts faints at such thoughts too. Think of our cemetery like a farmer's field. Row upon row of bodies sown into the ground. Jesus said, "An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out" (John 5:28b-29a). Those in the cemetery will come out, not as zombies, ghosts, or angels, but as themselves with their own flesh and blood and they'll look upon Jesus with their own glorified eyes. No glasses, or canes or other medical aid will be needed.

Yet, we still need to acknowledge the rest of what Jesus said. Believers will rise with glorified bodies to everlasting life in heaven with God, and unbelievers will rise to eternal death, that is, to shame and torment in hell forever – eternal separation from God. Kind of like the ugly piece of pottery that once it has been fired in the kiln will never be remade into something beautiful like a silver cup.

That's the wages of sin, and yet our focus is more on what happens to believers after we die. Did you pick up on what Jesus was saying, that when He comes back then your body will rise and enter heaven. It's a hard concept for us, and so we comfort people at funerals by telling them that their loved one is in heaven, when truthfully only a part of them is in heaven.

The soul does not die. At death your soul and body separate, and your soul immediately goes to heaven, in the twinkling of an eye, but your body goes into the ground as that seed sown in the casket, or in an urn, which kind of ruins the imagery that Paul is using. We don't burn our seeds before we sow them, except for a few like jack pine that needs fire to open the cone and release the seeds. So, if your loved one was cremated then think of something like a jack pine cone instead of the kernel of wheat that Paul talks about.

The point is that the body and the soul separate, and the soul is immediately in heaven and is only reunited with your glorified body when Jesus returns. What happens in the time between? There has been much speculation, and people use these ideas to try to comfort themselves and others who grieve, but the Bible clearly tells us that these ideas of ours do not happen. Your loved ones do not fly around and hover over you like a ghost, or communicate with you. You might find comfort in those thoughts, but the Bible tells us that those kinds of experiences are demonic.

We shouldn't go about making up stories to comfort ourselves about what happens after we die, but rather we should find our comfort in what the Bible clearly tells us, which is more than I can put in one sermon. And for what it doesn't tell us, let's just trust that whatever God has planned for us is good.

Ecclesiastes says "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (12:7). Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Read past our text and hear, that the body is raised in glory; it is raised in power. "The dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (15:43, 51-52).

Even now as you believe in Jesus as your Saviour know that you've been chosen to eternal life out of God's pure grace in Christ without any merit of your own. As Jesus said, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 3:36). That is present tense now. Now you have God's promised eternal life, and no one can pluck you out of His hand.

Jesus said, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand". "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 10:28-29; 11:25-26). Thus you can say, 'I'm a poor sinner, deserving of death, but in defiance of sin and death Jesus clings to me and will not let go of me.' Jesus is your life, your eternal life, your resurrection from death. Amen.