

Wednesday

Church of Our Saviour  
February 10, 2010

Theme: A quiet steadiness

Let us pray.

Most holy, Lord God, we are gathered this day to remember the life of Jack Farley, a man who enjoyed people and food, who like your son, ate with many different people, giving us signs of your heavenly banquet where Jack now enjoys the abundance of your love, with the holy Spirit and with your son, through whom we pray. Amen.

Jack Farley and I have not had lengthy discussions. When he talked to me, he was always soft spoken. Even if he confronted me about something he either didn't like or had a question about, Jack was always soft spoken.

An example was the introduction of icons here. Even though the Stations of the Cross have been here for many years, Jack asked if an icon was a graven image. I explained that Jesus can never be a graven image. Graven images referred to in the Bible are those of pagan gods. His question asked here in church didn't allow for a discussion of the history of the iconoclastic controversy.

During visits, he was always appreciative. One time I visited him he also had a visit from some of the masons. He seemed to me a little bewildered at the attention he was given. It was as if he was questioning why all these people in the room would spend the time to give him any attention. This was an example of Jack's humility.

Another example is Jack's service during World War II. Jack was a tail gunner on a bomber, a B-17 I believe. This was a position that had a high turnover rate. When a bomber was being shot at from a plane, the first target available to the fighter was the rear of the bomber and the person shooting at them, the tail gunner. Only a steady person would still be around to talk of that experience.

Now I understand that not everyone may have had this same experience of Jack. All I can talk about is my experience. I'm sure Jack had times when he was angry. I'm sure Jack had times when he drew a line in the sand and wouldn't budge from his position. After all, he was a human being.

It is not always easy to see all aspects of a person or an idea. This is what St. Paul struggled with in trying to explain the resurrection to the Greeks in Corinth. Resurrection was a hard concept for them. Everything hinged on Jesus. Paul had to get the Corinthians to understand who Jesus is. If they followed Jesus, not an easy task in those days, then they should have faith in the resurrection, otherwise their faith in Jesus is in vain.

Jesus is the first of many, many who are raised from death to life. It seems to make sense that since death came through a human being then eternal life should also come through a human being. Death came through Adam. Life comes through Jesus. We have to wait our turn. Jesus is first and then the rest of us will gain eternal life.

After Jesus destroys every army and every weapon and every government, then the end will come and God's Kingdom will be established. Jesus will rule until every enemy is put down and the last enemy is death.

Of course, some will ask and it is a logical question, "Exactly how are the dead raised and what kind of body will they have?" Though logical, these questions are absurd. A seed must die before it is planted in the ground. The seed is placed in soil, which looks nothing like the plant that will sprout in its place.

God gives everything the kind of body it will have. So, the resurrected body will be a different body than the one that we now have. Our current bodies are destined to die.

The Corinthians, to whom St. Paul wrote, were Greeks. Greeks would find the idea of a resurrection of the body as alien and strange. That is why Paul is so forceful with his argument. Paul wants the Corinthians to know that if Jesus did not rise after his death, then everything Paul is doing and everything the Corinthians are doing is in vain.

C. S. Lewis put it this way and I am paraphrasing from memory, "We cannot accept Jesus as merely a great teacher or prophet. If Jesus wasn't who he said he was, then he was a madman."

So, according to Paul, this is what the resurrection is like: our physical bodies are sown and will die. Our resurrection bodies come from our

physical bodies and never die. Our ugly, weak physical bodies rise into beautiful, strong resurrected bodies.

We are sown as physical bodies. We rise from death into spiritual bodies. So, if there is a physical body, then there is a spiritual body. Our perishable bodies transform into imperishable bodies. Our mortal bodies transform into immortal bodies. Our weak bodies will die. Even in this weakness, they will be changed into bodies that are eternal.

Just as the scriptures say (Hosea 13:14), “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is powered by sin and sin is powered by the Law of Moses. We give God thanks and praise for letting Jesus Christ give us the victory! So, hold your ground. Work for Jesus Christ, because nothing you do will be a waste of time.

“Paul felt that the great hope of the Resurrection was that it gave promise of the ultimate victory of God in all things. When God raised Christ from the dead He took sides: for the truth and against lies; for the good and against evil; for love instead of hate; for life rather than death.”<sup>1</sup>

We now pray: Gracious God and giver of all good gifts, we give you thanks and praise for the gift of the resurrection; may we enjoy what Jack now enjoys, your love and eternal presence, through Jesus Christ the source of our hope and glory. Amen.

Text: **1 Corinthians 15:20–26, 15:35–38, 15:42–44, 15:53–58** (NRSV)

<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

<sup>21</sup> For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; <sup>22</sup> for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

<sup>35</sup> But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” <sup>36</sup> Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup> And as for what

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<sup>1</sup>Chafin, K. L., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1985). *Vol. 30: The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 30: 1, 2 Corinthians*. Formerly The Communicator's Commentary. The Preacher's Commentary series (181). Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc.

you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. <sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

<sup>42</sup> So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup> It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body.

<sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> 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." <sup>55</sup> "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.