

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 03 December 2023
Services: *Across the Diocese*
Series: On that day
Title: We will rise
Passage: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (CF 1 Cor 15:51-54)

Series introduction

- I believe in Christ, risen from the dead
He now reigns victorious, His kingdom knows no end
Through His resurrection, death has lost its hold
I know on that final day, I'll rise as Jesus rose

- On that day, we will see You
Shining brighter than the sun
On that day, we will know You
As we lift our voice as one
'Til that day, we will praise You
For Your never-ending grace
And we will keep on singing on that glorious day. ////

- Those are the lyrics which have inspired our Advent series this year.
- Our world is in a complete mess right now – you don't need me to recount the ways...
- But we are people of **Advent hope**
- Because Christ is coming **back //**
- He is **risen** from the **dead**
- He reigns **victorious**
- His kingdom knows no **end**
- Death has lost its **hold!!**
- And on that final day – we will **rise** as Jesus **rose!**
- So picking up the themes raised in the song... our Advent/Christmas series this year is
- **Today** – we will rise
- **Next** Sunday – we will see you
- **Advent 3** – we will know you
- **Advent 4** – we will keep on singing
- And **Christmas** – His Kingdom knows no end //

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Sermon

- So I want to get straight into today's first message in the series... what does the **song** mean – what does the **Bible** mean - when it says we will **rise** as Jesus **rose**?
- And if you'll turn with me to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, we will find the answers there.
- Look with me at v14 – *For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him*
- and v16 – *for the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first*
- So here's where we are heading today as we unpack these verses: let me try and answer these 3 questions, those verses may cause you to ask:
 1. What does 'fallen asleep in him' mean?
 2. What does God will bring us **with** Jesus mean? AND
 3. What happens if we're still **alive**?

1. What does 'fallen asleep in him' mean?

- Jesus and the New Testament often use the term 'fallen asleep' for death.
- When Jesus went to attend to Jairus' daughter, he told all the people weeping – 'she is not dead, but asleep' – Luke 8:52.
- She **was** actually dead, but as the death was **temporary** – because Jesus was about to raise her – he described it as '**sleep**'
- When you and I **die**, we **will** be dead in one sense – the doctor will come and fill out a death certificate – but **because** we will rise again, the death is **temporary... as if** we were **sleeping**!
- Can you **fathom** that!?!?
- Now – notice the passage refers to God bringing with Jesus, those who have fallen asleep 'in him' – meaning – 'in Jesus'... a lovely turn of phrase – but what does it mean?
- I think the best way of understanding it is from other parts of the New Testament... which teach that when you undergo physical death.... you go to **be** with the **Lord**.
- The Apostle Paul says in 2 Cor 5:6-8 that *to depart from the body is to be at home with the Lord*
- He writes in Philippians 1:22-23 - *if I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far... //*
- Departing this body – this world – will mean going to be with the **Lord**, says the Holy Spirit, through Paul...
- so the **Bible's** teaching is that upon death, **we will be with the Lord.... //**
- Let me ask you Christian – do you **fear** death?
- You may fear the **process** of death... the way it will come about... I understand that.... though advances in palliative care means that no one – **no one** – should be suffering in that process....
- ...but what about death **itself** – and what you will face at the **moment** of **death**?
- If you are a **Christian**... you will – as it were – go to **sleep** here – and wake up in the **presence** of **Jesus**...

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- That will be **lovely** – it will be **beyond description** – it will be **peaceful** – will be **exciting** – it will be **welcoming**... you will feel no **pain**, no **anxiety**, no **restrictions**... you will be thinking **clearly**... and all will be **well** – **very well!!** //
- We don't know all the details... but if you're in the presence of the **Good Shepherd** who knows his sheep – in the presence of the one who is **gentle and lowly** – in the presence of the **compassionate one** – it will be **nothing** like you've experienced **before**...
- You will have '**fallen asleep**' in **Jesus!** //
- Don't **fear** it brothers and sisters... **anticipate** it... look **forward** to it... I **guarantee** there'll be days you'll **long** for it!
- And this is what it means to 'fall **asleep** in **him!** ////
- ...and **then** we read... - again in v14 *God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.*
- So:

2. What does God will bring us with Jesus mean?

- Have a look again with me at v16 - *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*
- Jesus will **return** – bringing with him those who have been with him since their **death** and they will then be **joined** with their **resurrected bodies**... //
- You may ask: **how** will the Lord manage to join us together with our resurrected **bodies** when people have been **cremated** and their ashes **spread** all over the place or are in **cemeteries** built over with **buildings** or people **lost at sea?** ///
- **Hardly** a problem for the **God** of the **Bible** for whom **nothing** is **impossible**...! // - but I don't know the details!
- **What** will our resurrected bodies be **like?**
- If **Jesus'** **resurrected** body is anything to go by – there will be both **continuity** and **discontinuity** with our present bodies...
- Mary only **recognised** Jesus when he said her **name** in the **old familiar way**
- and the two **disciples** on their way to Emmaus didn't realise who Jesus was until he broke the bread in the old familiar way
- And remember **Jesus'** in his resurrected body, **ate** and **drank** with the disciples and yet was able to appear in a room **suddenly** when all the doors were **locked!**
- What a **great** and **amazing day** that will be...! ///
- I remember walking into Randwick racecourse one Sunday afternoon... and I heard this amazing and wonderful trumpet fanfare... and I was thinking – this is it – this is the end – there's the trumpets... Jesus is coming!!!
- But – no – it was just the band rehearsing for the Billy Graham rally! ///// I was kind of disappointed!
- We don't know **WHEN** Jesus will return.
- If he continues to delay – then my guess is that most of us here today... will die our physical death, and find ourselves wonderfully in the presence of Jesus...

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- And then one day – Jesus will bring us **with** him on his return... and we will be united with our resurrected bodies which will rise as it were from the **earth**...!
- I know that on that final day – says the song – I’ll rise as Jesus rose!!
- You may ask – well Mark – what is the **timing** of all this...??
- For how long will we be with Jesus before being joined to our **resurrection** bodies?
- And what **state** will we be in??
- And **when** will Jesus bring us with him to return to the earth??
- Don’t **know**, don’t **know** and don’t **know**!
- Remember the words of Jesus – not even he knows the hour of his return... and the words to the disciples in Acts 1 – *it is not for you to know the times dates the Father has set by his own authority.*
- Everything will happen according to God’s perfect timing and purposes...
- And you’ll remember when I remind you from 2 Peter 3 – that the reason for his delay in coming back is give more people more time to repent and trust in the Lord Jesus! //
- But **there** is one question you might have which I *can* answer...

3. What happens if we’re still alive?

- ...ie – still alive when Jesus returns?
- Glad you asked - v17 *After that we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...*
- That’s what will happen.... Sound amazing?
- The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul, fills this out a little in 1 Corinthians 15:
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.
- So if you’re still **alive** when Jesus **comes**... at **that** moment you’ll be **transformed** and receive your **resurrection bodies**...!
- Won’t **that** be an amazing time... if we’re still alive...? We’ll **bypass physical death** and receive our **resurrection bodies** right **away**!
- And **then** what??
- well v17 says – *we will **be** with the Lord forever...*
- more of what that will be like in the following **weeks** of our Advent series...
- But for **now**.... don’t miss the **last** words of the chapter....
- Therefore v18 – **encourage** each other with these words...
- That’s a **great exhortation**... “**encourage** one **another**...”
- What would it mean? – to **encourage** each other with **these words**?
- **Reminding** each other – talking about this – saying to each other.... “isn’t this **wonderful**?” – exploring – “hey – when we **die** – we will find ourselves in the presence of Jesus....
- “We’ll **go** to be with the **Lord**...”

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- “We will come **back** with him!”
- “We’ll be **joined** to our **resurrected bodies!**”
- “We’ll be **reunited** with those we **love!**”
- “We’ll **be** with the Lord **forever...! ///**”
- Now **THAT’S** morning tea conversation **worth having...!**
- After church you can talk about the **weather** or **politics** or **real estate** or the **cricket** or what you’re doing for **Christmas... ///** or you can **encourage** one another with **these words** and **celebrate** together **all** that is to **come!! //**
- For friends... ON THAT FINAL DAY WE’LL RISE AS JESUS ROSE!!

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- I believe in Christ, risen from the dead
He now reigns victorious, His kingdom knows no end
Through His resurrection, death has lost its hold
I know on that final day, I'll rise as Jesus rose //
 - Through his resurrection, death has lost its hold. //
 - Death will not be the last word for you
 - During these past weeks, we’ve seen too much death.
 - Israel and Palestine
 - Russia and Ukraine
 - South Sudan
 - The murder of women in domestic violence situations
 - Death on the roads
 - Death of a police officer
 - Yet through Jesus’ resurrection death has lost its hold
 - And one day, death will be no more
 - And the season of Advent is meant to lift our eyes from all the disaster which surrounds us – to see in our minds eye – the **glorious** nature of the **future** which **awaits...**
 - To see that there will one day, be an **end** to the **mess**
 - To understand that that Jesus has **conquered** the **evil one**
 - He has conquered **evil**
 - He has conquered **death**
 - And we look – especially through Advent – for his coming **again** – and we’re reminded that Christians are people of **hope... of expectation...**
 - People who know the **best** is yet to **come**
 - People who know **justice** will be **done**
 - People who know that on that **final day** – the day of Jesus’ **return** – we will **rise** as **Jesus rose....**

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- Yes, I believe in Christ, risen from the dead
He now reigns victorious, His kingdom knows no end
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