

The Life of the World to Come

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[0:00] Let's pray together. O Lord Jesus, risen and ascended, we thank you for the feast that awaits us, far more beautiful! and delicious and rich than all things that we can eat here in Poochim.

We thank you that in that final day we will see you face to face, we will have new bodies, all our suffering will be gone, and those who belong to you will have the hope and promise of eternal life. And so we do pray that you would help us this morning as we look at the scriptures to do what the Nicene Creed invites us to, that we would look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Just before the service, I asked Josh, who drove me here, to bring me something from your church.

And so, can everyone tell me what this is? Just a bucket, right? A bucket is a very commonplace thing.

[1:10] I use it to store water at home. You might use it to maybe wash the floor. You might use it to do all kinds of things.

But in New Zealand, one thing you must not do with a bucket is to kick the bucket. Why not? Because to kick the bucket, it's a polite way to talk about death.

I know it's a taboo topic. In some cultures, while Kiwis, they don't mind talking about death, they just don't like to use the word. Right? So, they'll say a phrase like, to kick the bucket.

To kick the bucket. Or to talk about when your time is up. But before you kick the bucket, you and I might have a bucket list.

Things that we might like to do and experience before time is at the end. Right? I'm going to talk about some folks this morning, right? Who went to New Zealand and that was a bucket list experience.

[2:08] Or for example, when I visited my brother who lives in London earlier this year, I got to cross off my bucket list, watch an Arsenal FC game at the Emirates Stadium.

Or when I actually first moved to Sydney, I was wondering, where on earth will I get some good Malaysian food? And actually, Pastor Brian then introduced me to this place called Albie's Kitchen. And so I got to cross that off my bucket list. Church, what's on your bucket list today? Is it to visit the Holy Land, perhaps?

Maybe to see the Northern Lights, some other beautiful experience. Maybe you'd love to watch an NBA game live in person. Maybe there's someone on your heart.

You'd love to see them, hear the gospel and come to life in Christ before they go. Maybe on your bucket list is that you'd just love to find someone special. Maybe marry them.

[3:08] Our bucket list, they tell us something about what we look forward to in life, don't they? So let me ask you the deeper question then. What do you look forward to in life?

Because the Nicene Creed ends with, we look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

It's not just the Nicene Creed, actually. This is almost word for word in the Apostles' Creed and even earlier summary of faith. But think about that line for a bit. Compared to everything else that you've gone through so far as a church, that's a short bucket list, isn't it?

And yet these words summarize what all Christians should believe and cherish when it comes to the topic of what happens when we die.

What happens when everything is over and done with in this life? Now I understand from Pastor Brian, you've gone through many different passages to understand and appreciate the truths contained in the Nicene Creed.

[4:13] And I want to submit that there are wonderful passages and books in Scripture that explain the doctrines of the last things, right? That's what this last line is summarizing. Theologians call this eschatology, meaning last things.

Look, there are all kinds of wonderful reflections we could go into from preachers and teachers over the years about this topic. We could spend our time this morning, for example, unpacking the writings of saints that have gone before us.

I think of a wonderful book by Richard Baxter who wrote *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*. He was a pastor in England who was wrestling with severe illness and on his deathbed he thought this book up.

Or we could think about, you know, maybe the historical point of view. There have been all kinds of false teachings about what happens after we die over the years. That we ought to actively guard against.

We should learn from the mistakes and the errors from church history. Or even today, I think of cults in New Zealand. We have one that was very, very rampant called Chinchonji.

[5:19] That was so actively brainwashing many of our young people about truths like the last things. So we could this morning perhaps turn to places where this is specifically addressed.

Passages like 1 Thessalonians 4, 13-18. Or maybe 2 Timothy 2, 18. To comfort our hearts, to stand firm against false teaching about what happens at the very end.

Or we could think about it from a doxological point of view, right? What a privilege it is to worship with song after song, celebrating what happens when Jesus returns.

Thinking about this final line in the Nicene Creed should reawaken our wonder that the King of Kings, Lord Jesus, died, he rose again, he's ascended to heaven, and he's coming back soon.

To make all things right. And so we could even go to the *All Things Right* book. The book of Revelation. Revelation. As one of our college lecturers said to me once, Revelation, the book of Revelation, is about discipleship.

[6:27] If your interpretation of it doesn't help you to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, chapter 14, then your interpretation probably needs a bit of correction. Lots of different directions we could go to just from this one line in the Nicene Creed.

But for today, I want to draw into what Paul in the 1 Corinthians 15 talks about. Particularly from verses 12, right, through to the end of the chapter.

We won't go through it verse by verse, there's not enough time for that. But I hope that as we kind of hit some highlights, we can appreciate the richness of this final line of the Nicene Creed about the resurrection of the dead and the life in the world to come.

Because we can't hide from death, can we? Death is like an intruder. Just talk to someone about how they had to rush off to a friend's funeral yesterday.

It's an enemy. It's an unwanted guest at the parties that you go to. Death is the reason we rush to hospitals and we grieve at funerals. Death, it shapes how we treat our parents and our relatives, our children.

[7:37] It scares us into making certain choices for our kids and protecting them from others. Death is what reminds us this world is not what it should be. So praise God that in Christ, we look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Now, if we transplanted the city of Kuching to the first century Roman Empire, you know what? I reckon it would have fit right in alongside the city of ancient Corinth.

It was about 50 AD, the 50s, right? Not 1950s, but actually the 50s with no other numbers. It was 50 AD, around about then, when a young 30-something-year-old pastor and missionary helped to plant a church in Corinth.

You can read that story in Acts chapter 18. And Corinth was an ancient Roman city where many cultures and languages mixed together. I mean, listen to this description of Corinth.

All kinds of languages met at commercial Corinth with its harbors on two seas. And a difference of language was a frequent barrier to common action.

[8:49] That sounds a little bit familiar, doesn't it? A little bit like Kuching. True or not? And just like a proud dad, the Apostle Paul, in a sense, he was in the delivery room when God first brought the church of Corinth to life.

Paul was the faithful parent as baby Corinth took the first steps in the way of Jesus. Here was kind of KEC Corinth, in a sense, right?

These were baby evangelical Christians. They're on mission in Corinth. They're called to be centered on the gospel of Christ. They're called to be driven by God's word. They're called to be focused on growing disciples, being a community of truth and love. This should all be familiar to you, too. And yet, when Paul writes to the saints in Corinth, it seems like some of them had drifted from this calling from God.

Paul, chapter after chapter in the book of Corinthians, addresses a gifted and yet a very worldly church. And maybe some of the people in Corinth, they had become a bit too obsessed with their own worldly bucket lists.

[9 : 59] Thinking about the careers they had to fulfill, the money they needed to make, the places they needed to visit, the people they needed to become. And this way of puffed up thinking, Paul uses that word a lot in 1 Corinthians.

This puffed up thinking had kind of infected the life of their worship. Their love piece, their lifestyles had become corrupted. And so Paul, in this very lengthy letter, has to write to correct them of a few things from the gospel.

And when we come to chapter 15, which Sharon just read for us, this lengthy letter comes to a climax. And it actually begins with a creed. Let me read to you some of the first verses of chapter 15.

Now, brothers and sisters, I want you to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel, you are saved if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you.

Otherwise, you believed in vain. Verse 3. For what I have received, I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ die for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

[11 : 13] And so on. Church, there is no greater truth than this. No better news than this. Christ, Jesus, he did not kick the bucket, as it were.

Our sinless Savior, he gave himself up as an atoning sacrifice for all our sins, past, present, future. Jesus, he took upon himself God's righteous anger for our sins.

He was buried in a tomb, certified dead. And yet, three days later, he was raised to life again. Hallelujah.

Achievement unlocked. And that is why all over the world, Christians make this day of the week Sunday, in honor of God's Son, our risen King.

And all of this happened, as it says, according to the scriptures, just as God promised in his word. In the words of the creed, the catechism we just read, the resurrection of Christ is not a fairy tale, but the true story of his victory.

[12 : 21] Amen? But you might ask, why does it matter that Jesus rose again? What difference should the resurrection of Christ make to my life now?

Or in more colloquial terms, does it matter they've got resurrection or not? And so this is what Paul gets to from verses 12 all the way to the end of the chapter.

He wants Christians everywhere, including here at KC, to know how the risen Lord Jesus shapes, transforms what we look forward to. It's a lengthy argument, but let us divide it just into two main parts.

So firstly, from verses 12 onwards, Paul argues that Christ's resurrection refuted the lie that there is no resurrection of the dead awaiting us all.

All right? Verse 12, look in your Bibles. If it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

[13 : 23] You see, in other words, Paul's addressing the Corinthians who were telling each other, oh, there's no afterlife. This world is all that you've got. Church, does that sound like a familiar message?

Church, because actually, you and I, we are surrounded by this message every day. When we're kids, we might innocently ask the question, you know, Daddy, where does Papa go when she passes away?

But actually, once we become adults, we start having lots of different priorities in life, our society kind of pushes that question away, doesn't it? We don't actually start to care about it anymore. There are other messages that flood our hearts and minds. You need a one true love, otherwise you're going to be alone. You need this car, you need this gadget, you need to go on this holiday,

then your life is complete.

You need to get into this school, then you can get this job, this career. What is the underlying truth behind all these hopes and dreams? The worldview behind it is that there is no resurrection from the dead.

[14:31] And this kind of worldview, way of thinking about the world, is what our scholars, some scholars call our pleasure-pain view of the world. I want you to just imagine who speaks to you in your head sometimes.

Right? Do you have an inner lawyer, someone that says, oh, you did something wrong today? Or do you have an inner grammar? Oh, so shameful. You know, so shameful. Or do you have an inner therapist that says, you do you.

There's no afterlife, right? This is all you've got. Paul recognizes this view is rampant in ancient Corinth, and that Christians can succumb to it.

So he kind of plays devil's advocate from verse 13 onwards. He plays with a view through it. He says, look, if this is really true, if there's no afterlife, well, verse 13, then Jesus hasn't been raised, right?

Then he also says, well, if Jesus hasn't risen from the dead, as the scriptures have foretold, then, well, why am I preaching to you? Why are you believing what I'm saying? It's a false hope.

[15:34] In fact, you might as well arrest me for blasphemy. You might as well give up on your faith. It's empty, isn't it? When the Nicene Creed began to be formulated from 325 AD, there was lots of heresy around, right?

Especially the heresy of Arianism. And as Pastor Brian has shared to you already in the past, even bishops who had recently experienced severe persecution made the point to gather in Nicaea. Why? To stand firm for the orthodox truths about the Trinity and the person of Christ. Look, Jesus was not just like a God. He is God. And while Arians, you know, according to the writings, may not have explicitly denied the resurrection of the dead, what you do when you deny that Jesus died and rose again and is divine is that you discount the hope that there is an afterlife.

There's a life in the world to come. Paul says it this way in verse 19. If it's only for this life that we have hope in Christ, then we're to be pitied more than all people.

But, verse 20, indeed Christ is risen. Jesus is alive. He is in a sense the first fruits from all who have died.

[16:55] Just as the durian enthusiasts among us will wake up early to get the first and best pick of that smelly fruit at the market. Jesus, he is the first fruit.

He's the prime example for all who fear the curse of death. The reason you and I can be sure that there is life after death is because on the 5th of April, A.D. 33, thereabouts at sunrise, Jesus Christ got an afterlife.

His heart began to beat. His lungs began to breathe again. You know, that precious blood he poured out the cross, it started to go through his veins. He bodily rose again.

And he appeared to the women, the men, over 500 witnesses and more, and he appears to you and me by faith as we believe this truth. Jesus is more alive than he ever was before.

Just as our first parents brought death to all, Jesus Christ, the new Adam, he brings new life to all who have fallen asleep.

[18:00] Paul talks more, right, in 1 Corinthians 15, about an order from verses 23 to 28. Look, Christ comes first, then all who belong to him, then there's going to be a time when every enemy is destroyed and put under the feet of Christ.

The Jewish people, they used to hope of a Messiah, a promised king, and Psalm 110 is one of those songs that they used to sing all the time.

And that psalm, that hope, comes true in the risen Lord Jesus. As the earliest Christians declared in another creed, Philippians 2, 8 to 9, at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord.

I'll be honest with you. Look, if the world is all there is, then, of course, why not just put all your eggs in the here and now bucket, as it were?

If this world is all there is, then yes, let's hustle, let's do whatever it takes to get ahead, to be better than other people. If this world is all there is, yes, we should just waste our lives trying to make a name for ourselves.

[19:09] There's nothing else after, right? Let's just build our dreams, fill our bucket list with our own selfish desires. But this world is not all there is, church. Let's not be deceived.

Again, listen to verse 23, right? Each in his own turn. Christ, the first fruits, then when he comes, those who belong to him.

That's how we will all have a resurrection of the dead. But when it says those who belong to him, this qualifies Paul's teaching in a significant way, doesn't it? There is an order.

Some will rise to blessing. Some will not rise to blessing. And so it calls us, all of us, to examine our own state before God. So maybe I can borrow Paul's words here.

Can I ask you, do you belong to him? Truly, this morning, can you see, can you say that I'm a Christian, not because I want a burial plot, you know, outside of Kuching somewhere.

[20:12] Can you say I'm a Christian, not because my parents attended this church? Can you say I'm a Christian, not because, you know, I have a Christian name, in a sense. No, church, can I ask you, honestly, does your whole life, your goals, does your bucket list, belong to him?

Is your life prioritized, all around, an eternity, with King Jesus? Do you know your sins are forgiven? And if you're here this morning, and you have not, had this gospel assurance, wow, Jesus is alive. He's up there, right hand of the Father. He died for your sins. His arms are this wide for you. You can come to him, and belong to him by faith, even this morning.

You can do it now, because, every human, will eventually die. Every king, humanly speaking, will eventually die, except one, the Son of God, the risen King.

And you can either have, Christ embrace you now, or you will have, Christ subject you, under his feet, in the final days. Church, when we belong to him, no matter what happens in this life, good or bad, we have an eternal, better hope.

[21:30] You will belong to him. You'll live with him again, in the life to come. And you can be sure of this, as sure as they, could not find the body, on Easter Sunday. As sure as the disciples, met Jesus, the risen Lord, and ate with him, and worshipped with him.

So friends, let us look forward to, the resurrection of the dead. We will rise again, either to eternal judgment, or to eternal glory, far better.

This is a truth, that is as sure, as a fact that Jesus, rose again. Christ's resurrection, church, refused the lie, that there is no such thing, as resurrection of the dead, awaiting us all.

Secondly, and more briefly, I want us to hear, and be reminded from Paul, how Christ's resurrection, refills our hope, in the life of the world to come.

How Jesus' resurrection, refills our hope, in the life of the world to come. Because, I don't know most of you here, but maybe you've come in, with heavy news on your hearts.

[22:38] Maybe you've just come in, and you've wondered, well, how are the dead raised? You believe that, there is an afterlife, that Jesus is coming back, but you're just wondering, what is it going to look like?

And this is a real question, right? Maybe you have a loved one, who has passed away recently. Maybe you have questions, right? Will grandpa need a wheelchair, in heaven?

How old will, my loved one look? Will I see my miscarried child, in the new heavens and earth? Maybe you worry, if my body gets buried, or cremated, what's the difference?

And look, Paul doesn't get to address, all these questions, and nor can I, today. And yet, in our passage, you see Paul being a pastor, doesn't he? Can't you, right?

You see how he takes the time, to respond to their query, how will the dead, be raised? Right?

Verse 35. With what kind of body, will they come?

[23:35] And this is Paul being a pastor, and in the next few verses, he basically does what he's done, the whole letter, to answer the questions. He says, look to the Lord Jesus, and you will find your answer.

Right? So he's going to work backwards here. He starts with this illustration. Look, you guys grow food, right? You know how gardening works. And so you should know this, when you plant a seed, the seed itself needs to kind of die, before new life springs from it.

Will the seed look the same as the plant? No. God is gracious, isn't he? He gives different phases of life, different bodies. And each seed will sprout different kinds of trees and flowers.

Paul, he reaches back to the first book of the Bible, how creative God was, you know, with creation. The maker is not boring, when he comes to make heaven and earth. Look at the sun, how bright it is.

Look at the moon, beautiful, month after month. Look at the stars, how the Lord leads them out. And when we marvel at God's creative handiwork, Paul says, verse 42, so it is with the afterlife. [24 : 48] You see a body that is old and weary. You see your bones, and you feel like you're tired. You look at a funeral, and you see the ashes.

They're just seeds, husks. And look, you and I, we could speculate about what heaven will look like. You know, will there be pearly gates?

Is there going to be streets of gold? Is there going to be lamb steak or not? You know, my kids really want to know the answer sometimes. But Paul is certain about one thing, that life to come will include our real bodies, glorified bodies, something totally different from the seed.

It will be a flower, like a tree. Imagine this, church. At your funeral, you are just planting your weary bodies with certain hope that one day, because of Jesus, you will blossom for eternity.

Isn't that good news? Church, when you die, because of Jesus, everything about your body and my body that you are ashamed of, that you're sad about, whatever is weak or sags or is broken, whatever is beyond repair, won't matter anymore.

[26 : 06] Because the seed is gone. The flower will bloom. We will rise again. More than just restored. More beautiful than you and I could ever imagine.

Our bodies here, they're still made in God's image, and yet they are temporary. We come from the earth, and we will return to the earth.

But Jesus changes everything, doesn't he? Every diagnosis we receive, every body issue we struggle with. It will all be left behind one day.

Today, you and I, we bear the image of the man of dust. Tomorrow, soon and very soon, we shall bear the image of Christ in heaven forever.

So if you ask, how are the dead raised? How are they not? If there is a resurrection of the dead, if there is a life in the world to come, well, I'm looking forward to something better.

[27 : 11] And so, finally, just a few application points. And I lean on the explicit commands that Paul scatters throughout this chapter. Right? Because as he's explaining this issue, he then gives a few commands.

And you'll see these kind of command words. Firstly, verse 34, we need to wake up. Wake up from our earthly haze.

You see that? Come back to your senses as you ought. The author, Paul Tripp, he talks about the problem most Christians actually have. It's called eternity amnesia.

We forget that we are going to have eternity to look forward to. Maybe that's why we get so angry with people online. Maybe that's why we live as if we are not even Christians in some areas of our lives.

But just as nobody lives at the Sineo One Night markets that I went to yesterday, no one really lives there. You go home, right? You have a better home to go to. We have something to look forward to.

[28 : 12] So come back to our senses. Church, there's a fog of war that surrounds us. Right? This fog of war, within it, it whispers, there's no afterlife. But wake up.

Your earthly dreams cannot be taken to the grave with you. Actually, verse 34, Paul's actually a bit stronger in his language, in the original language. He's actually talking as if you were in a drunken stupor.

Maybe some of your Bibles have that translation. When we live as if there is no afterlife, it is like you and I have had too much to walk. You're staggering through the streets. You don't know what you're doing, drunk on the empty promises of this world.

Wake up. Come back to your senses, church. Sober up. Ask yourself, am I living this life just like a haze for pleasure? Am I just trying to avoid pain?

Am I just trying to have fun? If you're not sure, you may need a sober driver, as it were, to help you see clearly. Oh, don't drive that way. Oh, actually, let me help you walk.

[29 : 16] Go to someone who's not drunk on this life, but filled with the Holy Spirit instead. Living life for the world to come. There are people out there, I'm sure, in your church.

Look to those brothers and sisters to guide you on your way. The ones who are always grateful.

The ones who are always giving thanks. The ones who always seem to redeem their time. These are the people that can help you to wake up as a church.

Our king is returning. Wake up. Come back to your senses. Secondly, and it comes straight after, stop sinning. Stop sinning because the Lord Jesus is alive, he's watching, and we're going to return

to him.

Sinning can be explained in lots of different ways. Some people just think sinning is just, oh, breaking a law or committing a crime. I want you to imagine sinning as if your heart, the real you, your deepest desires, imagine it has hands, as one author said.

And if your heart had hands, what does it grasp for when you're lonely, when you're tired? One of the things that it kind of reaches to that the Lord Jesus is watching all this time.

[30 : 32] When we answer to him one day, will you say, Lord, Lord, look at all the personal grudges I'm holding on to. Here they are, Lord. When you see Jesus again, will you say, Lord, Lord, here's all my property investments.

I saved them for me, I mean for you. Christ is risen, church. He's conquered your sin, your death. He died for you just as you were.

So, church, let all the temptations of this world be empty husks next to the beauty of his glorious grace. If there is something that your heart is holding on to, grasping to, Paul says, stop sinning. I say this to your shame. These are some of the glorious truths, right? And these are some of the ways that we can respond. And finally, one more response comes at the very end of the chapter. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

[31 : 35] For all of the service leaders here who serve week after week, not knowing whether what you say will have an impact, stand firm. Your work's not in vain.

For the Sunday school teachers, you're teaching the kids and you're not sure if they'll ever believe any of the gospel seeds that you are scattering. Stand firm. Just keep giving yourselves fully to the work of the risen Lord Jesus.

It's not in vain. Our King is coming. For all of you who serve, who share the gospel, who are just going through life with eternity in view, stand firm in that.

These are some of the ways we can respond when we truly believe what it says at the end of the Nicene Creed. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and life and the world to come.

I'll close with a very short anecdote. Martin Luther, the German reformer, he must have had a very short bucket list. But once, he was purported to have said, there are only two days on my calendar.

[32 : 36] Today and that day. Church, which day are you living for, dying for? Make it the day that the risen Lord Jesus comes again to bring out the resurrection of the dead and life in the world to come.

Let's pray together. Lord, in this life we will have many trials, many doubts, but we take heart that Jesus, you have overcome the world.

So as we end this series, we thank you for the gift it is to recount these statements of faith. We ask that the truths that come from the word of God will sink deep in our hearts and help us to look forward to and live for the life that is to come and the resurrection of the dead that is coming to all in Christ.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.