**worshipping together while we are apart**

**Morning Prayer for Wednesday 5 May 2021**

**Readings**: Psalm 96, 1 Corinthians 15.29-34

Reflection

As we have seen over the last few weeks while looking at 1 Corinthians 15, in this section of his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul is addressing the belief by some of the Corinthian community that there is no resurrection of the dead. As he writes in verse 12 “But 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?”

In these few verses we are looking at today, Paul essentially argues that if there is no resurrection then Christianity is worthless.

Firstly, Paul says in verse 29, if there is no resurrection of the body, what is the point in Baptism – it is worthless. Tom Wright states that the question of baptism for the dead “has long been a puzzle”. It is possible that a practice had developed of people being baptised on behalf of those who had died without faith or it may refer to non-Christians being baptised after the death of a Christian they knew in the hope of being reunited after the resurrection of the dead.

Earlier, Paul has argued that if there is no resurrection of the dead then there is no risen Christ. If there is no risen Christ, we are still in our sinful state, so we have no hope for the future. Last week in verse 20 we heard that Paul wrote “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” and he goes on to show how Christ’s resurrection was not an isolated event but has consequences for every Christian. As Janet wrote last week: “Jesus is the first fruit of a mighty harvest moving forward through the sequence of Christ’s work to the final day when ‘God will be all in all’.  Paul makes it clear that in Christ they have hope, which will take them through this life and beyond it.” Christian baptism symbolises death and resurrection. If what it represents isn’t real, then it is worthless.

In verses 30-32 Paul moves on to suggest that if the resurrection isn’t real, our Christian service and witness is worthless. Paul asks – what is the point of suffering or even dying for the sake of the gospel if there is no resurrection of the dead? What is the point of putting ourselves in danger or denying ourselves if the dead are not raised? It makes no sense. Paul says he faces death every day, this sounds very dramatic to our ears, but he is speaking of a metaphorical death - daily self-denial. In Matthew 16.24-25 Jesus said “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.  For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.” That only makes sense if the dead are raised. If we are only Christians for the benefit of this life, Paul says we are to be pitied. He quotes Isaiah 22.13 to emphasise his point “Let us eat and drink, you say, for tomorrow we die!” If this life is all there is then it makes sense to live for pleasure, and sacrificial service makes no sense at all.

If there is no resurrection Christianity is worthless, baptism is worthless, service and witness are worthless but if there is resurrection then all these things have immense value and impact how we live our lives. As Pam reminded us a couple of weeks ago, our perspective is radically different: “the world sees life leading to death, but Christians see death leading to life”. Paul ends these few verses with a reminder of how resurrection impacts how we live our lives, pointing to the relationship between what we believe about the future and how we behave in the present.

What about us? Where is our attention fixed? What is our perspective? Are we more interested in this world or the next? Are we more interested in the acceptance of others or the acceptance of Jesus? Are we more interested in the treasures of this world or the treasures of Christ? Are we more focused on getting and maintaining our best life now? Or do we recognize that we only get our best life after the death that leads to life?

What is God saying to you through this passage this morning?

What does God want you to do about it?

**The Collect**

Risen Christ

your wounds declare your love for the world

and the wonder of your risen life:

give us compassion and courage

to risk ourselves for those we serve,

to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**Prayers**

Including:

* Prayer for Roads in our parish – this week we are praying for Pix Farm Lane & Bourne End Lane.
* Those who are mourning for loved ones who have died.
* India and other countries where the pandemic is particularly bad at the moment.
* Those in Mexico affected by the metro overpass collapse.
* Those in Israel affected by the tragedy at the Lag B’Omer festival.
* People who are lonely or frightened.
* Those who are struggling financially or fear losing their jobs.
* Those delivering the vaccine for Covid-19.
* The work of DENS in feeding the hungry and helping the homeless.
* Leaders of the nations of the world, for wisdom and generosity in their decision making.
* Leaders of all churches, including Archbishop Justin and our Bishops: Alan, Michael and Richard.
* Our Churchwardens and PCC.