

Text: I Corinthians 15:20-23,51-57 ²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ⁵¹ 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. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "Where, O grave, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear Nancy, Sherri, grandchildren, brothers & sisters, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, family & friends of Roy,

Today is a sad day, but it is also a special day. Today we are gathered to remember a dear husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, and good friend, Roy Waddington. We are also gathered to hear the Word of comfort from our Holy God. This text selected for today's service is a very appropriate and comforting portion of God's Word as we consider from it the theme: **"In Christ we will all be made alive again."**

Now I didn't know Roy very well, but I enjoyed meeting him and hearing stories about his life. He was a good family man, he enjoyed spending time with you, Nancy and Sherri, and your grands. More about Roy: In 1980 adopted baby, infant son Myron—gave him a good family and home. Roy was a picky eater... definitely a meat & potatoes kind of guy. He liked Coke, and the only kind of pizza he'd eat was pepperoni. He enjoyed watching movies with the family. When he and Nancy were younger, they used to play cards a lot with family and with Judy and RG. He was dedicated to his family--when Myron died in a car accident 4 years ago, Roy was driving truck over the road in Nebraska at the time. In talking on the phone, he said "I have to get home to Nancy." He loved you and cared about you very much.

In our text for today we are reminded of some very important truths: First of all, we're reminded that each one of us is a sinner. Sin has been handed down to us from generation to generation beginning with Adam and Eve. We were born in sin. It is like a terrible Disease that inflicts us. It ravages our lives; it causes pain and misery. And its end result is death. We can't get away from it. Each and every day we sin against God. We fail to keep his commandments. We do things that are not pleasing to him. We put ourselves and our own desires first in life. We also get lazy and stubborn. We don't do those things we know we should. We also sin against our family members, friends and strangers: by not being kind and helpful to them, by not loving them as Christ first loved us. Yes, sadly our lives are full of sin.

But thanks be to God, that just as sin entered this world through one man, so also new life and salvation came to us through one man, the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to conquer the disease of sin. He came to ease our pain and suffering. He came and lived a perfect, holy life in our place. He obeyed all of God's Law perfectly, and credited it to us as righteousness. And even though he was totally innocent, Jesus then willingly suffered and died a perfect death on the cross in our place so that we could be forgiven and at peace with God. Then to guarantee that forgiveness and new life, he rose bodily from the grave. Yes, Jesus is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. And because our Lord rose from the dead, we are confident that we too will rise again to new life. He assures us of this in our lesson and gives us a glimpse of what it will be like: ⁵¹ **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.** ⁵³ **For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, & the mortal with immortality.**

What amazing words! What a comforting promise & reassurance! Because of Jesus our death will only be like a sleep. Our bodies will be in the grave for only a short while. Our souls are carried by the angels and go to heaven to be with the Lord when we die. Trusting in Jesus as his Savior, this is what has happened to Roy. By faith, he is now at peace with the Lord. Then on the Last day, when our King Jesus returns in glory, in a flash, in a twinkling of an eye, our dead bodies will be raised from the grave and changed. Our souls will be reunited to bodies which are glorified.... made imperishable and immortal. On the Last Day we will be made like Jesus, holy and perfect. Never again will we face death. Never again will we face sorrows, pain and hardship. Yes, because of faith in Jesus as our Savior we are more than conquerors!

The Scriptures tell us in many places that God is with us wherever we are and in whatever we face. We can be confident that the Lord is with us every step of the way in this earthly journey. We pray that Roy trusted that the Lord was with him. That the Lord was giving him strength to face his health problems. That God would provide the victory over his hardships. We pray that Roy knew that God loved him because of His Son Jesus.

Because of faith in Christ as our Savior, you and I can have confidence like the believer Job from long ago (same person who endured much hardship and loss of his family) who made the bold confession of faith (the basis of a familiar Easter hymn): **"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" Job 19:25-27**

By God's grace, Roy is able to be with our Lord face to face. He can see and talk to Jesus in heaven just like we are doing now. Yes, the Lord in His good time, took Roy to his eternal home. He took him out of this world of sorrows and into everlasting life.

At times like this it's important to consider the question: What is the way to everlasting life? Many people in our society have the common misconception that if you lead a good life and do what's right here on earth, then you will go to heaven when you die. This sounds pretty good and makes sense to our human reason, but it's not quite true. The problem with this way of thinking, as we heard earlier, is that none of us can lead a good enough life on our own to earn our way into heaven. God demands perfection. He wants his Law perfectly obeyed. We can't even come close. Roy knew that. He knew he was a sinner and that he didn't live up to God's law perfectly. Roy knew he needed a Savior. By God's grace he trusted in Jesus as his Savior and relied on him for his salvation.

What a blessing for Roy, that the Lord called him quickly out of this life. What a blessing that you did enjoy so many years together... I appreciated hearing stories about his life from Diana. Roy was dedicated, hard working, and he held to his convictions and beliefs. He was loving and kind at times, was a good story teller, and he was a good friend to many.

From what I know, Roy didn't attend church very much. It's kind of sad to think about. That is the place we go to hear comfort and encouragement from God's Word. This is where as young people we are baptized into Christ and Holy Spirit creates faith in our hearts. This is where we hear many Bible stories and learn of our personal Savior Jesus. This is where we come to worship and sing God's praises. This is where we grow in our faith and can make use of Sunday School, Bible Class, VBS, and other opportunities for spiritual growth. Here we are assured of God's great love for us, his forgiveness of our sins, and eternal life in the glories of heaven.

Yes, God's Word is so important for our lives. Everything in the Bible is true. It speaks with authority; God created this earth and our universe in 6 normal 24 hour days; Adam and Eve were real people—one man and one woman that God brought together when He established marriage; the miracles in the Bible actually happened—they show God's power over the physical world; Jesus was born from a real virgin as God promised; Jesus was actually both God and man; because of that He was able to live a perfect life in our place and kept all of God's law; He suffered the wrath of God his Father while on the cross to pay for the sins of the whole world; Jesus also had the power and authority to come back to life and actually rise bodily from the grave. He appeared to the women and disciples on that first Easter.

This same Jesus comes to us now through his Holy Word, thru Baptism and the Lord's Supper where the Holy Spirit brings us the forgiveness of sins, new life now, & eternal life to come. I encourage all of you to hold onto and learn more about these important truths and continue to teach them to your children and grandchildren. If you don't currently attend church, I invite you to come check it out. This is where your faith is strengthened & built up by the Word to fight against those temptations of the devil, this world, & our own sinful flesh. And having a caring church family is so very important, especially when you are facing difficult trials & hardships in life, AND when you are

preparing for death. To have encouragement from your pastor and brothers & sisters in Christ gives you comfort and peace. You aren't alone; God is with you.

This same resurrected and living Jesus speaks with authority when he promises that all who believe in him as their Lord and trust in Him as their Savior go to heaven when their life here on this earth comes to an end. Jesus says: "Because I live, You also shall live." That's why Easter is so important to us. That's why we don't have to be so sad and afraid of temporal/physical death. Jesus is alive and is preparing a place for us in the glories of heaven. Though Roy's body will rest in the grave, he too is alive and his soul is enjoying heaven right now. He is with our Lord Jesus now along with all the believers who have gone before him.

And how is that possible? Purely by God's grace and faith in Jesus. It isn't because Roy was a nice, friendly man who knew so many people. It wasn't because he was a hard worker who was dedicated to taking care of his family. It wasn't because he was a great husband, father, grandfather, brother and uncle to a number of you. It wasn't because he was good, upstanding citizen in our community. It wasn't because he was a great fisherman and outdoorsman. These certainly are blessings we thank God for, but they aren't the reasons Roy is celebrating in heaven right now. It is only by God's grace and by the Spirit given faith in Jesus as his Savior, that Roy is now enjoying the wonders and comfort of heaven. The real place where there is no more pain, no more suffering, no more heart issues, no more illness, no more tears. God helped Roy fight the good fight and God kept him in the faith. Now he is home in heaven, at peace.

We too will experience this wonderful joy and peace when the Lord calls us home. Yes, Jesus, our dear brother and friend, will welcome us into His paradise when it is our time to leave this earth. And we look forward to the Great Resurrection when Christ will return and raise our dead, lifeless bodies from the grave. As our text reminds us, He will glorify our bodies in the twinkling of an eye and unite them to our souls, and we will all enter heaven together with our Lord.

This glorious eternal life is not something we can earn or deserve; rather it is a free gift, and what a tremendous one at that! Then we will join with all the saints in proclaiming: **"Death has been swallowed up in victory."** ⁵⁵ **"Where, O grave, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"** ⁵⁶ **The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.** ⁵⁷ **But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Yes, because of our Lord's great love for us and his amazing grace, **"In Christ we will all be made alive again."** You and I can be confident of this! May God bless us and keep us in the faith until he brings us home! Amen