

Daniel Waldschmidt – Easter 2016 – 1 Corinthians 15:19-26¹

Sometimes I watch the Home and Garden channel: HGTV. Have you ever seen that channel? There are 5 or 6 shows on that channel who show people whose whole job is to remodel houses. They take an old, rundown house and then remodel it. At the end of each episode, they reveal the glorious new remodeled house.

When God raised Jesus from the dead, he began a remodeling of all creation. You see our bodies are a little like homes. Houses when they get a little older, start to break down. The paint starts to chip and crack. The electrical wiring gets old and frayed. Our bodies are kind of like that. Our bodies wear down. But God has promised that he is going to completely remodel and remake our bodies. He's going to remake this whole universe. And he's already started with Jesus.

By raising Jesus from the dead God has begun a remodeling project to remake this whole universe. One of the things that frustrates me about myself is that I start projects and then don't finish them. Do you ever do that? Maybe you start a project around the house, but then three months (or three years) later, there it sits, half-done. God is not like that. When God starts a project, he's definitely going to finish it. The point of today's passage in 1 Corinthians 15 is that God has started a remodeling project of all creation, and if he started it, then he's definitely going to finish it.

Our passage today is from 1 Corinthians 15. It seems like the Corinthians believed that Christ was raised from the dead. But they didn't believe that anybody else was going to be raised from the dead. So it seems like they said, "Christ was raised from the dead. But we are not going to be." And Paul says, "That's ridiculous! You think God's not going to finish the project?" If Jesus was raised from the dead, then we're definitely going to be raised from the dead. There's a hymn that we sing that goes, "Could the head rise and leave his members dead." We are connected to Jesus. So if he rose then we're definitely going to rise!

He calls Jesus the firstfruits. **"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." (1 Corinthians 15:20)** When they planted their crops, they waited with baited breath for the first crops to come. Because if the first crops didn't come that meant there was not going to be a harvest and they were not going to eat. But if the first crops appeared, then that meant there was going to be a harvest. The firstfruits were a good sign for the future. The firstfruits were a taste of what was coming, a taste of the future. The firstfruits were the advanced presence of the future.

What Paul is saying is this: There is this present world. And this present world can be a gloomy place sometimes. In this present world there is frustration and sickness and death. But the Bible says that there is a future world. A world of glory and blessedness and happiness beyond our wildest imagination. But the problem is that there is a huge thick cement wall separating this gloomy present world from the future world. Jesus entered our present gloomy world and he died in this present gloomy world and everybody was sad. But then like Superman he came smashing through that thick cement wall. He died in this present world, went into the future world and then came smashing through that thick cement wall back into the present world. With the resurrection of Jesus, the future world has invaded this present one. There is a big Jesus shaped hole in that cement wall and the power of the future world

¹ Some of the paragraphs in this sermon are developed from insights gained from Pastor Tim Keller.

has come rushing into our hearts. We Christians are the ones who live in this present world with the power of the future.

God is remodeling this whole world. He started with Jesus. And he is also remodeling our hearts before one day he remodels our bodies.

We need a remodel pretty bad because we were made in Adam. Adam was the first man and he fell into sin. And every person after Adam is sinful like Adam was. That's why we break down and decay and die. But God is going to remodel us, not after the pattern of Adam but after the pattern of Christ. Adam was the first man. Jesus is the first resurrection man. Adam was the first man and every person after him was made after the model of Adam. But Jesus is the first resurrection man and everyone who believes in Jesus will be remade after the model of Jesus: with a glorious resurrection body and perfect and sinless. Christ is like a new and better prototype. We were first made after the prototype of Adam. In the resurrection, we will be made after the prototype of Christ. A little later in 1 Cor 15 Paul says, For just as we bore the image of earthly man, so we will bear the image of the heavenly man. Paul says, **"For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."** (1 Corinthians 15:22-23)

Imagine a long horizontal line of mountain climbers climbing up a mountain. And all of the mountain climbers are connected by a rope. On one end is Adam. On the opposite end is Christ. In the middle is you and me and everyone else and we are all connected by a rope climbing up this high mountain in a horizontal line. Adam on one end, fell. Since Adam fell, what is going to happen to the rest of the mountain climbers? One at a time they fall too. One after another each one falls. Christ at the other end sees this happening. And he takes his pick and he digs into the mountain. And when it finally gets to him the weight of all the people tries to pull him down too. The rope tightens with all the weight of those people. And it crushes him, but he stays put. With the weight of all those people. He stays put and he rises. He climbs and he brings all the other people up with him. The analogy breaks down at one point. The one point the analogy breaks down is that everyone is connected to Adam just by being born. But not everyone is connected to Christ. You need to be connected to Christ through faith, through believing in him. If you don't believe in Jesus, now is the time to believe because I want you to participate in God's remodeling project.

The remodeling project has already begun. But we know that it is not completed yet. **"For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death."** (1 Cor 15:25-26) The remodeling project has started it is not completed yet. We still live in this present world. We haven't been physically raised from the dead yet. But the point of the passage is that God has started the project by raising Christ from the dead and if he started the project then he's definitely going to finish it by raising you and I from the dead and by completely renewing this whole creation.

"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him." God has set the future irreversibly into motion. The resurrection is a freight train that has invaded this world. You can't stop our resurrection from the dead anymore than you can stop a freight train. Our resurrection is coming, because when God starts a project, he always finishes it. Amen.