

## To Endure Conflict

Wayne Waibel – 02/16/2025

The trouble most people have with the concept of resurrection is the notion that a thing, which was dead, can be brought back to life. It is just so foreign to us. To us – death is the end.

When we're young, we're immortal. That's why wars are fought primarily with teenagers – the sting of death does not enter our consciousness until we've got a little experience under our belt. As we age – death begins to settle in on us as we bury parents, loved ones and friends. We begin to see that life goes on. What does not generally take place, however, is an understanding of resurrection.

We believe in life after death - everlasting life - life eternal. But being raised from the dead? That goes against the grain and pretty much violates every law of science known to humanity. It is true that science is the best set of tools we have for explaining natural events, but the resurrection – by its very definition – is a super-natural event.

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Jesus was not messing around in His message to the multitude on the plain. It was a very cogent and well-articulated sermon. Particularly balanced as well – four blessings followed by four woes.

And unlike the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew, the Sermon on the Plain was delivered to His disciples specifically. Not that it wasn't meant for the multitude also; this sermon was however delivered directly to the twelve. "Then He lifted His eyes toward His disciples, and said..."

As Jesus continues His lesson, we can find all the elements for a blessed life illustrated and defined. You have these blessings and woes spelled out in terms that are straightforward and understandable. Plus, they resonated with everyone listening.

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This spiritual recipe for living a life of love is repeated over and over throughout the New Testament, and yet mega-churches continue to spring up and flourish while mainstream denominations continually decline. In a contemporary popular religious culture that equates wealth with divine approbation, here is scripture telling us exactly the opposite. To be blessed of God is to have nothing but God.

I want to avoid hammering you non-stop with how important it is to understand the plight of the poor and disenfranchised among us in today's world. But we must be fully aware of the fact that the hope of the church is not confined to this world.

For the same reason – it is a thing with which we need intimate exposure to - in order to comprehend the impact we can have. It is also the cornerstone on which much of our worth as humans is based. Jesus talks of the poor and marginalized as though they are human conditions to aspire to. Blessed are the poor.

The full weight of understanding escapes us as much by our tendency to look away, as our inclination to dismiss as irrelevant the skewed view portrayed by social media. Neither is a valid excuse, and both are used as such by all of us from time to time.

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When viewing the massive destruction wrought by hurricane Katrina and the human suffering that followed, story after story was plastered on the evening news depicting the horrible conditions and subsequent pleas for help from everyone interviewed. My primary reaction was, "You can't grab a broom and start cleaning up?"

Anyone with experience in disaster recovery will tell you that the first step is to involve victims themselves. You can't do it for them. Unless they have a hand in their own recovery, relief efforts are both futile and endless.

Human experience is a many faceted journey. While suffering and tragedy are certainly involved, so too are hope and peace and love. We learn implications for human behavior only after we learn who God is and what He is up to. And His first desire for us is full access to an abundant life through the undying love of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of life everlasting through His resurrection.

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Paul elects to confront the matter of resurrection by outlining what happens to our belief system if you remove it. The Corinthians have been expressing their skepticism, so Paul lays out what proves to be a very persuasive argument despite the enormity of the challenge. His position is quite clear, and the end statement is perfectly placed, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruits of those who have died."

So for those who wonder about whether or not we will see the end of the world – rest assured – in the cross and resurrection of Christ, the end time has already begun.

In Luke's Sermon on the Plain, Jesus provides a framework for discipleship and a broader understanding of human need. Along with that need is a call to beware of the pitfalls and temptations of riches, fame, and frivolity.

It seems that our human tendencies and preferences are contrary to God's will for us. We are called to be the women and men that God has created us to be. Nothing less. And so we fight the urges and choose instead the road less traveled.

I'm sure that the multitudes that came to benefit from the power of the Word that Jesus spoke were moved also by the clarity and absolute rightness of His message. For the most part, He was talking about them specifically.

Paul also delivered to the Corinthians a basis for them to recommit to the glory of God through the life and death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. In many ways that was an act of defiance.

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Conventional wisdom dictates that following the norm will accomplish success and contentment. Going against that conventional wisdom is risky and perilous, but that is where God's wisdom resides. He loves us. He loves us so much that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have life everlasting.

I used to think that peace was the absence of conflict. It is easy for us to be deceived about ourselves. Now with the deliberate intension of living out the rest of my days at peace, I realize that peace is actually the security to endure conflict.

And the world presses on, and we continue to hurtle toward the inevitable and in a small way, we comprehend the depth of God's love and understand our role in His kingdom.

Our true nature is determined by the ultimate loyalty of our heart, and the affection of our heart determines how and for what we live. At the very least – you may count yourselves among the truly blessed because you see with great clarity the peace resulting from the beat of a grateful heart. Amen.