

Sunday, June 24, 2012
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Today, we continue our exploration of Paul's letters to the early church. Looking at the end of 1 Corinthians we find Paul reflecting on resurrection and what it means for believers.

He is encouraging the saints in Corinth to remember that Jesus' death and resurrection, freed all souls for life in the spirit.

The reading is from Paul's letter to the Corinthians 15:35-49.

Sermon - "The Spiritual is Yet to Come"

When is the last time you had a checkup?

How many doctor appointments have you had in the past year?

How often do you work out?

How much time do you spend worrying about your physical health?

How much money do you spend to make sure that you are physically healthy?

How about your spiritual health?

Where are you with that?

Better than most, because you are here.

Connected in some way to a church or at least a faith.

Our spiritual health is not something that we discuss very often.

It is a somewhat private affair.

Imagine if we spent as much time talking and thinking about our spiritual well-being as we spend talking about diet, exercise, bodies, illnesses, doctors, and treatments.

In today's letter Paul feels compelled to assure the believers in Corinth that their physical bodies are only part of the equation.

He asserts that what will last, what we will carry with us to eternity, is our spiritual body.

This physical existence, this earthly life that we find ourselves in, is temporary.

At the resurrection, we will leave our physical bodies behind and bear the image of the "man of heaven."

I love this idea.

I love the notion that there will come a time, someplace in eternity, when I will not have to lug around this body.

I like to envision my soul – my spiritual self – soaring in the sky like a bird or a cloud.

My picture of the spiritual self is unfettered, unworried, at peace.

Paul goes on to say that flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God – the perishable will not inherit the imperishable.

This passage concludes with the oft cited:

Death has been swallowed up in victory

Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death is your sting?

If all of our efforts at physical health are designed to prevent or stave off death – which of course we know we cannot do – what then must we do to strengthen our spiritual bodies – the ones that we will have for eternity?

First, we must love ourselves. We must learn to be at peace, to accept who we are and to make the most of it.

We must tune out the cultural messages that tell us we are not good enough.

We must remember that we are God's children, beloved and blessed.

Second, we must love our lives.

We must live with gratitude in our hearts for all the blessings God has bestowed upon us.

Count your blessings everyday.

List the things that you are grateful for.

This is a great exercise to do when you are stuck in traffic or waiting in line.

Accept where you are as where you are meant to be and embrace it.

Third, we must love our neighbors.

To be spiritually healthy, we must radiate love, as Jesus did.

We must push ourselves to reach out, to care for someone else.

We must forgive those who have caused us harm or distress.

One of my daily devotions this week advocated for forgiveness.

A quote attributed to Charles Fillmore said, *"Here is a mental treatment guaranteed to cure every ill that flesh is heir to: sit for half an hour every night and mentally forgive everyone against whom you have any ill will or antipathy."*

We do promise to do this every time that we say the Lord's prayer when we say 'forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors – or forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us..'

So give this a try. I promise it will make you feel lighter.

Next, we must be in relationship with God.

This is what spirituality is.

When someone says that they are spiritual but not religious – it really means that they want to be in relationship with God alone and not have to bother with the burdens of community.

That is simply, not the way Jesus laid it out for us.

Being in relationship with God includes self, neighbor, spirit and earth – all of creation.

This is the message of this place – of Silver Lake Conference Center.

Silver Lake exists to give people a place to safely explore being part of Christian community.

Here children and adults have an opportunity to integrate their experience of nature – God's incredible creation; while in relationship with other people.

This is a place where people learn to be still, to listen to God's voice, to pray.

The Holy Spirit is alive and moving in this space – whether in children's laughter, music, stars at night...God is on the move here.

I invite you to open your hearts today – to let the Spirit in.

Do a few prayer push-ups;

Run a spiritual mile;

Push your limits – strain to hear God's voice.

Make a commitment to get in shape this summer – spiritual shape, so that you might truly be a reflection of God in heaven.