

**The Lord Uses Our Mortal Bodies to Reveal a Mystery**  
**Sermon based on 1 Corinthians 15:50-54**  
**Saint Mark's, Watertown**  
**Pastor Karl Walther**  
**November 26, 2006**

King David once sang: *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you (Lord) are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.* Through Jesus Christ, the same is true for us today! Amen.

God's Word for our special consideration on what we call Memorial Sunday weekend is the Apostle Paul's statement in First Corinthians, chapter fifteen, verses fifty through fifty-four:

*I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

*Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- 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. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.*

*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."*

This is God's Spirit-inspired Word of Jesus Christ.

**Introduction: The Lord Uses Our Mortal Bodies to Reveal a Mystery**

Dear fellow Christians—whose mortal bodies the Lord uses to reveal a mystery:

Have you ever stopped to consider how fragile our bodies are? – Actually, I'm guessing you have done so fairly often....

For example, it's still football season. If you're a football fan at all, and maybe even if you're not, you know that these huge, powerful, speedy athletes—they're only one collision, one bad fall, sometimes one mere misstep from missing the rest of the season. So true is that ... that after spending twenty or twenty-five years building a body for the NFL, the average pro football player lasts only four years. A great running back has seen his best years by age thirty—age thirty, that's still so young! And a great quarterback has seen his best years before age forty—still not too old. And then I've read that, not too many years later, many of them can hardly walk. Sports Illustrated reported that a couple hall-of-famers – I think they were in their fifties or sixties – were walking together in the hall; one was so hunched over, and one swayed so from side to side, that they figured they needed only somebody bent over backwards to cover all the directions (!). You see, our bodies are fragile....

But you don't need to look at pro football players to know that. You school children, think how delicate and fragile a baby in the crib is. You teenagers, you've already lost the energy you had when you were toddlers. You young adults, probably the same physical activity you could recover from in one day in high school now takes you the better part of a week to recover from. Then you get to my age, and the doctors tell you you'll need a little more sleep, and it's true, and you'll need more light to read, and that's true, and maybe some reading glasses. And years after that, you really don't have the energy to keep up with the grandkids. Then the doctors try to put almost everybody on some preventative medication. And then you can't really work forty hours a week

anymore, so you retire. And then you find out you spend a lot of those hours going to the doctor or bringing somebody else there. You see, our bodies are fragile....

And then, we die, right? At an average age of seventy-nine for women and seventy-five for men, our bodies simply give out. Actually, it's a little uglier than that. Out of every five of us Americans, well, more die from abortions than anything else, and factoring those in would bring down our average age really rapidly. And then besides that more than one out of five who is slain in the womb, a little more than one more dies from heart disease, a little less than one more dies from cancer, and two more die from something else—when you're young, it's usually accidents, when you're older it's a stroke, or alzheimers, or complications from diabetes. You see, our bodies are fragile....

### **Part One: We Need a Change!**

Is it any wonder that the Apostle Paul states? ...that God states – and this is his Word to us today – *I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.* A human being still subject to death, a mortal body still susceptible to the results of sin, isn't going to dwell with God eternally.

We wouldn't want it to do so, would we?! Heaven wouldn't be heaven if I had to worry about dying again! Paradise wouldn't be paradise if I still faced heart disease and cancer and accidents and pain and suffering. And where there is death there is sin, and heaven surely wouldn't be heaven if I still had to struggle with my slander and greed and lust and impatience and rebellion against both people and God. And paradise wouldn't be paradise if you had to struggle with my sins and if I had to struggle with yours.

### **Part Two: We Will Be Changed!**

Do you see how desperately we need a change? *Listen, I tell you a mystery*—oh, and those aren't my words, they're Paul's words, they're God's words in his Word to us today. He's going to tell us a *mystery*, something we'd never know unless God himself revealed it.

*We will not all sleep*—in death. When there are still people living on the face of the earth, and while there are still Christians living in this world, *we will all be changed.* Bodies once susceptible to the effects of sin will no longer be susceptible to the effects of sin. Bodies once subject to death will no longer be subject to death.

How is that going to happen? Well, it will happen *in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.* From this, and from other passages in Scripture, we learn that the day is coming – it might be this very day today, it might be tomorrow, it might occur in your own lifetime, then again it may be in the distant future – the day is coming when Christ Jesus will appear again.

Instantly he will appear among the clouds of heaven, like a flash of lightning from east to west. With his command he will call every body out of its place of burial, every body put back together with every soul, and they will rise. Every eye will see his arrival. *For the trumpet will sound,* as if to call every single soul to the final battle where Christ will conquer his last enemy: death, which took the lives of his loved ones.

*The dead* in Christ *will be raised imperishable* – no longer susceptible to the effects of sin, no longer subject to death – *and we will be changed,* including those who had not yet died, who will still instantly receive glorified bodies.

*For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality*—else heaven wouldn't be heaven for those who trust in Jesus.

Now, can you imagine what that day is going to be like?! From deep in darkness – crushed underground! – you will hear Christ’s command, “Come out!” And instantly, you will arise!

You’ll look around you, and you’ll see relatives and friends – at least if you’ve been buried near them – whom you hadn’t seen since the last time your eyes drew a glance! And you’ll look up the slope and see thousands more rising from their graves!

You’ll reach your hand to your heart, whose crushing pain then silence was the last thing you remembered from earth—and that heart will be beating, strong and healthy. You’ll take a breath, and your lungs, whose pain and silence were the second-to-last thing you remembered from this world—your lungs will fill with oxygen and peace. You’ll wake up refreshed, as if you’ve just gotten up from a half a day of sleep, with sunshine flooding your existence.

Then you’ll look up, and you’ll see Christ, filling the sky, with a welcoming smile on his face, arms extended to embrace you. With no words exchanged his look will say, “My child, as you know, you were right. Look far and wide. Your sins are nowhere to be found; I have buried them forever. Look at me. As surely as I rose from the dead to live in glory, I have raised you from the dead to live in glory – free from sickness, free from suffering, free from death – forever!”

### **Part Three: We Have Been Changed!**

The change we needed we will have forever...! And it changes our attitude even now. *When the perishable body has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal body with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."* There’s nothing! – not even death! – that Christ hasn’t conquered! And that changes the way we live.

Some of you are facing death. Some of you are in the process of treatment for cancer. Some of you know that your heart is a ticking time bomb. Some of you just feel, in your body, that you will not last for long. And all of us should carry that realization. But death can’t conquer you! Christ Jesus rose. You will rise. Your death has been swallowed up in the victory Jesus shares with you!

Many others of you are mourning death. Maybe your loved one was a member of ours whose name is today in the bulletin. Maybe not, but your heart still aches. Friend, death still can’t conquer you! Christ rose. You will rise. And every loved one of ours who died trusting Christ will rise to glory along with you!

You see, it’s true: *The Lord Uses Our Mortal Bodies to Reveal This Mystery: We need a change! We will be changed! We have been changed through Christ!*

So, do you know anyone who needs to know that message before it’s too late? You are now Christ’s own messenger to carry the message of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Get busy bringing it to others! And if your pastors can help you, just let us know. It’s why this church exists.... Amen.

King David once sang: *Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!* Through Jesus Christ, the same is true for us today! Amen.