

Resurrection of the Body

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 May 2018

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0:00] So we're at 1 Corinthians 15, 35-58. We've been going through this series for some time now. We're wrapping up the book next week.

And last week we established that Christ's resurrection guarantees our future resurrection. But what exactly will this resurrection look like?

When we die, our bodies will be buried to decay or be burned to ashes. Then how will we be resurrected? This seemingly sensible question is the one that's on the mind of the Corinthians believers as well.

And so in fact the main reason why some of the Corinthians have rejected the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. It was because they could not conceive of the resurrection of the body. Because they could not understand how it would happen, they rejected that it would happen. So they rejected the doctrine on that ground. And so Paul is answering those questions here. So in chapter 15 so far, first Paul talked about the resurrection of Christ. Second, he talked about the resurrection of the dead.

[1:06] And now today, in this passage, he talks about the resurrection of the body. And this for Paul is not just an abstract theoretical exercise. He understands that this doctrine affects how we live and that's why he teaches it.

And the main point really that he brings into climactic focus on the doctrine of the resurrection is this. That the hope of the resurrection enables us to abound in the work of the Lord.

That's the main point of this passage. Hope of the resurrection enables us to abound in the work of the Lord. I'll cover that in three points. The first is the resurrection like the Lord's. Second is the victory through the Lord.

And third is our labor in the Lord. So Paul anticipates the Corinthians question first in verse 35.

Look with me at your Bibles in verse 35. But someone will ask, how are the dead raised?

With what kind of body do they come? And Paul doesn't pull any punches. He says in verses 36 to 37, You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

[2:09] And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. The Corinthians' argument against the resurrection of the body was that it was so contrary to nature and common sense.

But Paul demonstrates with an example from nature that what they deny as unnatural and impossible is in fact quiet in keeping with the way things operate in nature.

So the two questions that he anticipated in verse 35, he takes time to answer. The first question was, how are the dead raised? How will it happen? There's thousands of years of empirical data that show us that dead don't rise from the dead.

So how will this in fact happen? Paul's answer is this. What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. From the ordinary experience of farming, we recognize that life comes from death.

Unless a seed is buried in the ground in death, unless its integrity is broken, life does not sprout forth from the seed. In the same way, so the death necessarily precedes life in that picture.

[3:18] So Paul sees in the example of nature a pattern of death and resurrection that points to the saving death and resurrection of Christ. He's not the only one to have made that observation.

Following in Paul's footsteps, C.S. Lewis, in his book, *Miracles*, writes and observes the same pattern. In the Christian story, God descends to re-ascend.

He comes down, down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity, down to the very roots and seabed of the nature he has created.

But he goes down to come up again and bring the ruined world up with him. In this descent and re-ascend, everyone will recognize a familiar pattern, a thing written all over the world.

It is a pattern of all vegetable life. It must belittle itself into something hard, small, and death-like. It must fall into the ground. Thence the new life re-ascends.

[4 : 15] The pattern is there in nature because it was first there in God. For certainly, no seed ever fell from so fair a tree into so dark and cold a soil as would furnish more than a faint analogy to this huge descent and re-ascension in which God dredged the salt and oozy bottom of creation.

Then Paul answers that second question that they ask in verse 35. With what kind of body do they come? With what kind of body can people possibly be resurrected after they are thoroughly decomposed?

Another facet of the analogy provides the answer to that question. And what you sow, he says, is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.

When we plant a seed on the ground, we don't expect the ground to bubble forth with some more of the same seed that we planted. We expect the plant to come forth.

When we plant wheat grain on the ground, we don't expect more grains to come forth from the ground. We expect the wheat plant. When you plant a corn kernel on the ground, we don't expect more kernels to come out of the ground.

[5 : 24] We expect the corn stalk. In the same way, Paul says what you plant and what you get from the produce that it yields are not the same. In the same way, when our bodies are dead, it's sown on the ground, it does not produce the same kind of body at the resurrection.

It is transformed like a full-fledged plant. Our bodies will be transformed into different bodies. And then in verses 38 to 41, Paul turns to other examples from creation to demonstrate the diversity of the kinds of bodies that God chooses to create.

And that it is God who sovereignly chooses what kind of bodies he will give to different parts of creation. So read with me verse 38. But God gives it a body as he has chosen and to each kind of seed its own body.

For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind and the glory of the earthly is of another.

There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars. For stars differ. For star differs from star in glory. In verse 39, so he structures it in this kind of enclosing, chiasmic format.

[6 : 39] So in verse 39, Paul mentions the various kinds of earthly bodies. So humans, animals, birds, and fish. And then in verse 40, Paul tells us that these earthly bodies differ in glory from the heavenly bodies.

And then by heavenly, Paul is not speaking of spiritual bodies that he talks about elsewhere in this passage. It's two different words that he uses for that. By heavenly here, he means the celestial bodies, right?

The bodies that exist above the earth's atmosphere. That's what he's speaking of. And then in verse 41, he says that he lists what these heavenly bodies are and says that even they are diverse in the kinds of bodies that they have.

So not only are the earthly bodies and heavenly bodies different in their glories, within each of those groups, they have a diversity of bodies. And all of that is according to God who gives them bodies as he has chosen.

So, of course, Paul's interest here is not to prove that there's diversity of bodies in creation. I mean, that's not the point. But his point is that the diversity that we see is evidence that God is the one who gives particular bodies as he sees fit.

[7 : 50] As he did in his creation. And as he does in the new creation with the resurrection of the dead, that's what he will do. So Paul circles back now to the analogy of the seed that he used in verses 42 to 44.

He says, So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor.

It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body.

The body is presently, our bodies are all perishable. They're subject to decay or dysfunction. But the resurrected body will be imperishable.

And it will not be subject to decay or dysfunction. Our present bodies are lowly. It's base. It's humble in its state. But our resurrected body, it will be raised in glory and honor.
[8 : 52] The present body is sown in weakness. It's characterized by the frailty of the human body. Infirmary. But the resurrected body will be characterized by power and strength.

And the present body finally is a natural one. It's limited by the conventions of nature. But our future resurrection body will be spiritual. It will be a supernatural one.

And that's the contrast that he is drawing. Now, make sure that when you hear spiritual body, that you're not thinking of an immaterial body. Right? This kind of spirit. Because that's our tendency to think.

And that tendency to think in that way actually shows us that, shows us how prone we are to think in exactly the same way the Corinthians thought. Right? Because that's exactly the objection that they're making to Paul.

They despise the perishability of the body. They despise the dishonorable and weak natural body. And that's why they were so eager to say and to believe that when they died, they would discard the bodies altogether and be these disembodied souls in heaven.

[9 : 52] That's what they believed. And so, it's shocking to them that Paul would here juxtapose these two words. Spiritual body. Right? That would have been shocking to them. Right? Because their favorite word is spiritual.

They're all about being spiritual. These gifts. Spiritual gifts. All throughout Corinthians. The first letter. We see how they were too enamored with their own spirituality. That's their favorite word. And then he puts that word to describe their least favorite word. The body. The body that they despise. And he says, the spiritual body. To prove to them that the body is not evil in and of itself. That it is not beyond redemption. But that our bodies will be transformed into this glorious body. And Paul demonstrates that further in verses 44 and 45.

He says, if there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. The first man, Adam, became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

[10 : 55] He's quoting here from Genesis 2-7, which I'm putting up on the screen for you. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

And the man became a living creature. Paul is returning once again to the typological connection he made between Adam and Christ.

Adam is the first Adam. Christ is the last Adam. And Paul proves his point that the existence of the natural body necessitates the experience, the existence of the spiritual body.

And Christ is called the last Adam. If you were with us last week, you'll know this. But it's that Christ is called the last Adam because Adam was the head of humanity. He was the source of humanity. He represented all of humanity. And in his sin, he led all of humanity into sin and death. And so he was the first Adam. But Christ, the second Adam, he's the son of man and the son of God.

[11 : 50] And he comes to represent all of his people and all those who align themselves to him so that in his righteousness we find our righteousness and salvation. So on the one hand, the first man, Adam, became a living being.

He was alive. But the word being here is a verbal cognate of the word natural that he used earlier. So he's making that same comparison. Adam is the head of the natural body. On the other hand, the last Adam, he says, became a life-giving spirit.

And the word spirit, of course, is related to the word spiritual that he's mentioned earlier. So while Adam merely received the breath of the Lord and became alive, a living being, Christ is a life-giving spirit.

So where is Paul getting that idea, right? Because Genesis 2-7 doesn't mention anything about Christ or him becoming a life-giving spirit. But it does mention that the Lord God formed the man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

In the same way that the Lord God breathed life into humanity in creation, Paul now makes the connection that it is the Lord Jesus who now breathes life into the new creation.

[12 : 59] His people, the church of God. This recalls Jesus' post-resurrection appearance in John 20-22. It says, Jesus breathed on his disciples and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

A similar way in Romans 8, Paul writes, Paul's talking about the future resurrection of the body. He said, Not the spiritual that is first, but the natural.

And then the spiritual. That's why he said in verse 45 that the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Paul's not speaking here of the pre-incarnate Christ, the Word of God.

He's speaking here of the resurrected Christ. And so while it is true that the Corinthians as believers do have the spirit of God, their experience in the spirit still has not been completed.

[14 : 39] It's not been consummated. So for that reason, they must have the first, the natural body of Adam before they can have the raised spiritual body of Christ. And Paul continues that contrast in verses 47 to 48.

The first man was from the earth, a man of dust. The second man is from heaven, and as was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust.

And as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. This is a little bit, it could be confusing and misunderstood. This verse is sometimes taken to mean that Adam came from, right, came from the earth, and that Christ, his origin is from heaven.

It's possible to understand it in that way. But the preceding text, the context makes it clear that what is in view is not the incarnation of Christ, but the resurrection of Christ. So it's not speaking of Christ's origin, but it's speaking of their composition.

What are they made of? What stuff are they of? That's why verse 47 specifies that the first man was from the earth, a man of dust. It's referring to his composition as a man made up of dust.

[15 : 46] His body is made up of dust. The name Adam comes from the Hebrew word Adama, which means ground. He's literally made up of ground, made up of the earth. That's why in verse 48 it says, As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust.

And as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Christ being of heaven is contrasted with Adam being of the dust. So he's saying that not just that Christ came from heaven, which he did, but he's saying that Christ is of the stuff of heaven, the resurrected Christ.

He has a spiritual body. And so in verse 40 he's contrasting the two things. Adam has an earthly body, Christ has a spiritual heavenly body, and that's the body that we will get in the resurrection.

And for that reason, he says in verse 49, Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Earlier I mentioned that Paul listed various parts of creation and their diverse bodies. He was referring to the things that God created in days 3, 4, 5, and 6 of creation in reverse order.

[16 : 53] And then he was talking about how they were all created according to their kind. That's the language that Genesis uses. All these different things are created according to their kind. But when it comes to the creation of man and woman in Genesis 1, 26, instead of creating them like everything else in creation according to their kind, God says, Let us make man in our image.

Everything else in creation is created according to its own kind. But humanity was created not according to its own kind, but in God's image.

And so he says, We shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. The word image, it doesn't mean that we look like God, God's a spiritual being, right? It refers to the idea of representation.

In the ancient Near East, in the context in which Genesis was written, the kings were seen as images of God. And when people believed that when they placed images or idols of their gods in a temple, they believed that those images and idols were actually indwelt by their gods.

So that's what an image does. That's the function of an image. It's to represent something.

Represent God. And that's the idea behind the creation of men and women in God's image.

[18 : 15] But instead of just royalties being created in God's image, of course in Genesis all men and women are endowed with the capacity and the call to rule in God's stead and to represent Him over the earth.

But this image of God, of course, was marred by sin. And because Adam rebelled against God and sought to rule for himself and not for God as his image bearer and representative.

But in Christ Jesus and at the resurrection of the body, the image of God among God's people will be fully restored to its proper glory.

That's what he's talking about. We shall bear the image of the man of heaven. But Paul's point here is not merely about the future, but actually even more about the present.

If you have an ESV Bible, an IV Bible, or some similar Bible that has references, and look carefully at the verse again, you might find a little footnote there. Now follow the footnote to the bottom of the page, and it will probably say something about, some manuscripts say, let us bear.

[19 : 21] Right? The ESV translates this in the future, but most of the Greek manuscripts, and the best and the oldest manuscripts, all have let us bear the image.

So people translate it as we shall because they think that makes more sense. But the actual text says, let us bear the image of the man of heaven. So Paul is here pivoting from an ontological discussion about being and body to a moral, ethical exhortation.

So he's just as, he might use an analogy, just as a royal prince who is an heir to the throne should behave in a dignified way as it befits his station and his future.

Right? Just as someone who is a job applicant who is going into an interview should dress the part and act the part as someone who is qualified for the job that that person intends to fill.

Right? In the same way as Christians who are destined for the glorious resurrection of the body where the image of Christ is fully restored, let us bear that image now.

[20 : 28] That's what Paul is saying. And so, like in 2 Corinthians 3.18, we all with unveiled faces beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

Isn't that glorious? At the resurrection of the body, we shall bear the image of Christ perfectly and even now, as we wait eagerly for that day, let's strive and be transformed daily into that image more and more.

That's Paul's exhortation. Let us bear the image of the man of heaven. So that's Paul's first point and that's the longest point, so stick with me. The resurrection like the Lord's.

That leads us to the second point, the victory through the Lord. In verses 50 to 57, Paul teaches that the resurrection like the Lord's is guaranteed for us because of our victory through the Lord. He says in verse 50, I tell you this, brothers, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. So those are parallel statements.

[21 : 36] Flesh and blood correspond to the perishable and the kingdom of God corresponds to the imperishable. So we cannot inherit the imperishable kingdom of God in our perishable bodies.

So our bodies too must be made imperishable is what Paul is talking about. Now this is not directly related to this passage, but you guys, some of you asked this question, so I'm going to address it.

Some of you are probably wondering at this point, well, then what happens when we die?

Don't we go to heaven? Don't our souls enter into the presence of God? So that is true. That's what's called the intermediate state. When our souls leave our deceased bodies to be with the Lord until the resurrection of the body.

It's the intermediate state. And Paul makes that abundantly clear in places like 2 Corinthians 5, 6 to 8. We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Yes, we are of good courage and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. That's pretty clear, right? He's talking about the intermediate state. In Revelation 6, 9 to 10, he sees a vision of heaven.

[22 : 44] He says, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, O sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?

So clearly, these souls are with God and they are not on earth and they have consciousness and they are not in a sleep-like, comatose state and their bodies have not yet been resurrected.

So this is a description of the intermediate state. But it's important to note that this is just an intermediate state. It's not the final state. Heaven up there is just a layover for us believers.

The ultimate destination is a new heaven and a new earth here when God dwells with us and that's when we will be united and dwell with God in our resurrected bodies.

But if our souls can enjoy our union with God after death when it departs from our body, then why is it important for our bodies to be resurrected? Isn't it enough that we're with God in our souls?

[23 : 46] Well, the reason is this. Our triumph is not total and our restoration is not complete until death. Our last enemy is vanquished.

And the havoc that it has wreaked in all of God's people is finally and irrevocably reversed. God created the whole world and saw that it was very good until the toll of death that's taken in all of creation until the material universe that God created too is redeemed.

God's redemption is not fully consummated. And He has not yet made all things new as Revelation 21.5 says He will do.

So our resurrected King, He will not stop His victorious march until the very last vestige of the enemy is wiped out.

all our suffering due to the frailties of the flesh, the disabilities and pains of our bodies under which we groaned in our life will be healed and we will have glorious immortal bodies.

[24 : 58] The Son of God is the head of the body of Christ which is the church and since the Son of God was incarnated, He took on flesh, human flesh, died and rose again and therefore He has a glorious body for all eternity.

His body, the church too must have a body. We must have, we must be resurrected in our bodies. That's when the church's union with Christ in a sense will be fully consummated.

That's why the resurrection of the body is necessary. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Our bodies must be made imperishable.

Then in verses 51 to 52 Paul explains how this will happen. Behold, I tell you a mystery. Paul uses the word mystery frequently in his letter, six times in this letter and in all of those occurrences it doesn't refer to something that remains secret or hidden.

It refers to something that was formerly hidden that has been revealed by God through Jesus Christ. And that's why he describes the apostles or the ministers of Christ in chapter 4 verse 1 as stewards of the mysteries of God.

[26 : 05] And the mystery that has been revealed through Christ is this. Read with me. We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed.

Well, the fact that the flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God raises the obvious question. Well, what about those believers who will still be alive when Christ returns? They haven't exactly died so they can't really be raised from the dead so what's going to happen to them?

That's a very logical question. So Paul anticipates that question and he says, no, they too will be changed. We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed.

Now, this doesn't necessarily mean that Paul expected some people in his lifetime to be alive when Christ returns, at Christ's second coming. It's possible that Paul believed that but that's not the necessary implication of this verse because he uses the plural pronoun, personal first person plural pronoun we all throughout this passage even when he's referring to all the saints across all generations not just to the immediate people that are there, Paul and the Corinthian believers.

So when he writes here that we shall not all sleep he means not all believers will be dead at the time Christ returns but nevertheless they will all be changed. And so those who are still living at the time of Christ's return will have changed bodies and that will happen at the blink of an eye he says.

[27 : 37] And when the last trumpet sounds to announce the return of the king and summon God's people to himself the dead will be raised imperishable on the one hand and the believers who are still living will all be changed.

So that's what he's saying. All will be changed. All will have glorious bodies. For this perishable body he continues in verse 53 must put on the imperishable and this mortal body must put on immortality.

When the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality then shall come to pass the saying that is written death is swallowed up in victory.

Oh death where is your victory? Oh death where is your sting? That's so defiant. when the effects of Christ's resurrection are fully realized and when we his people are raised with imperishable immortal bodies the unbroken chain of death inaugurated by the first Adam will be broken once and for all by the last Adam.

It is then that the prophecies that he's quoting from Isaiah 25a and Hosea 13 14 will be fulfilled. Death is swallowed up in victory. Oh death where is your victory?

[28 : 59] Oh death where is your sting? He's just saying if I have to put that more colloquially he's saying take that death right your tyranny is over it is time for death to die and there is nothing death can do to survive the mortal blow inflicted upon it by Jesus Christ this is why we are assured of victory through the Lord.

He says in verses 56 to 57 the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The sting of death is sin right that means because the wages of sin is death the just penalty for sin is death so the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law because as Paul says in Romans

5 13 sin is not counted where there is no law right no wrong can be counted where there is no standard of right there can be no crooked line unless there is a standard of a straight line so even though the law is good sin derives its power from the law that's what Paul is talking about but through the death and resurrection of Christ the law of God is fulfilled so that sin would be impotent and sin is atoned for so that death would be without its sting I don't know if you've ever been stung by a bee but a honey bee right when it stings a person because the sting is barbed he's unable to pull the sting back out of the flesh right so after it's stung a human being and it tries to leave when he's pulling himself out it actually causes this huge abdominal rupture in his body so he actually he dies honey bees don't survive after they sting a host in the same way when death stung Jesus Christ on the cross

Jesus inflicted a mortal blow to death itself so it lost its sting and is unable to recover from it and its death is inevitable and that's the progression we are on when the resurrection of the body is complete the devil and his minions rage against us if you're not a believer yet if you're not yet a follower of Jesus Christ and I urge you to put your faith in him because all of us we have all sinned and we have all been waging this battle against the devil the devil and his minions rage against us they tempt us to sin they drive us into despair and we are all of us together powerless to resist his advances in this battle for our eternal fate and when we were facing utter despair eternal destruction it is Christ who rose from our very own ranks as the son of man to be our champion and as our representative he fought the epic battle against sin death and Satan and he triumphed over them by dying on the cross and rising again that's the good news the gospel of Jesus Christ in order for you to be saved you must align yourself with Christ and entrust yourself completely to him as your champion and commander later in the service we all have we will have the privilege of witnessing a baptism where a person makes a public profession of faith and makes a commitment to Christ baptism in water signifies our union with Christ in his death and death to sin and serves as a visible pledge that we will be united with Christ in a resurrection like his in the future and baptism is not this extraneous activity that sometimes

Christians make it out to be in Mark 16:16 it says Jesus says whoever believes and is baptized will be saved but whoever does not believe will be condemned he associates baptism with belief similarly in Acts 2:38 Peter preaches repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit Christians sometimes talk individualistically about salvation as if personal private repentance and faith were sufficient but our Bible associates private repentance and faith with the public profession of faith in baptism it associates our personal repentance and faith with a corporate baptism into the family of God the body of Christ the church that's because the reason for that is because the Christian faith is not a matter of personal opinion but a matter of truth that's because Christ calls us not into a private faith that you keep to yourself but to a public faith for that reason it's in the context of this personal and corporate profession of faith that the promise of the Holy Spirit is given don't hear what [34:18] I'm not saying I'm not saying that it is baptism in and of itself that saves people it is God who saves us by sanctifying us and indwelling us with his spirit but baptism is God's chosen means his appointed means his command for us to enter into this relationship with him so if you are not yet a follower of Jesus Christ I urge you to look watch carefully and consider what it would be like for you to commit your life to the Lord if you're already a Christian Paul concludes this passage with the final exhortation in verse 58 therefore my beloved brothers be steadfast immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain this is my third and final point our labor in the Lord the brothers I just want to say he refers to brothers and sisters Greek in the plural form refers to all siblings brothers he's speaking to all and he even though the Corinthians are his biggest problem church causing him all kinds of grief and questioning his apostleship even he still calls them beloved brothers and everything he has set up to this point leads to this climactic exhortation because the resurrection of the body is not merely an intellectual exercise to tickle our brains or to prove

Paul's own theological correctness rather Paul has a pastoral concern because he understands that by denying the resurrection of the body the Corinthian believers were jeopardizing their faith and perseverance they were indulging in all kinds of sexual immorality idolatry and selfishness because they denied the resurrection of the body and believed their sins to be inconsequential for their future well-being so Paul now exhorts that my beloved brothers be steadfast immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain be steadfast be

immovable in your faith cling to Christ and his gospel don't be swayed by worldly wisdom or led astray by worldly pleasures always abound in the work of the Lord not only when you feel like it not only when you're on a spiritual high always abound in the work of the Lord and don't think for a moment that your labor is in vain

J.R.R. Tolkien understood what it's like to work hard on something that might never be appreciated by anyone to work in vain looking for a way to vent his frustration while he was working on something that he thought was fruitless and in vain he predictably wrote a story to vent his frustrations he wrote a story entitled Leaf by Niggle it's a great story I commend it to you the protagonist of the story is an artist named Niggle who has been commissioned to paint a mural on the wall of a city hall he devotes his entire life attempting to recreate this mural about which he dreamed in his dream he saw this large strong and vibrant and fruitful tree that he knew would inspire everyone who looked at it and he devoted his entire life to drawing this on that mural on the wall but in the end he dies having completed just a single lonely leaf on the mural on his train right to heaven

Niggle notices in the distance a vague but very familiar picture and he tells the conductor please stop the train and he gets off the train approaches the object and lo and behold it's a real tree it's the tree it's his tree the one he dreamed about devoted his entire life to and there in the middle of the tree is the single leaf that he drew the leaf by Niggle for the whole world to see and it is at that point in time Niggle comes to realize that his leaf that he is commissioned to draw was a small part of something far grander a part of a greater creative activity and work by a greater artist who for the joy and delight of the world was creating this great eternal heavenly city and the story goes that Tolkien wrote leaf by Niggle as he was toiling away writing something that he felt would never be appreciated by anyone and the name of that seemingly insignificant work was the Lord of the Rings every sacrifice you make for the Lord's sake every meal shared for the Lord's glory every hour of sleep lost for the service of Christ every earthly pleasure luxury forsaken for the sake of Christ every dollar you give to the cause of Christ every instance of humiliation and death to self that you undergo for the sake of Christ so that he might be honored so that he might look precious to the world so that Christ and his saving message might go forward to the rest of the world it is not in vain so cling to

[40 : 22] Christ hope in the resurrection and let's abound in the work of the Lord together