

St. Andrew's Sermons
The Rev. John Rohrs
February 20, 2022

I had an experience this week that maybe some you can relate to. I'm on a Diocesan committee that's working on racial justice and healing, and we had our first in-person meeting on Thursday. We had been Zooming every month for two years, but because of Covid and because we live all over, we had never physically met. I only knew their on-screen faces and personalities, and it was totally different to actually be together. It was weird, it was like on one hand we were seeing old friends and sharing hugs and handshakes, and on the other hand it felt like starting over, almost as if we were meeting for the first time.

It made me think about what a deep connection there is between our bodies and our souls. In beautiful and complicated ways, we are embodied people. We are made for proximity and physical connection. That's why it feels so different and wonderful to be back together here. It's great that we can stream our services and help people feel connected even when they can't be here, but it's so much better when we can gather with our bodies and sing and pray and worship together.

We are embodied people, and it's interesting that even in the earliest days of the church, Christians were thinking deeply about what that means. We see it in Paul's epistle this morning. He's been teaching the Corinthians about resurrection, and some of them were worried and confused. "What about our bodies?!" they asked. They were concerned that only their souls would live on in heaven. It's a timeless question. Think about it this way: when we imagine heaven, we think about being reunited with those we love, and we want it to really be them, right? We want to look in their eyes and see their smiles. We want our bodies to be there because we are embodied souls.

Paul knows this and his response is beautiful. His tone is bad, like usual, but his theology's great. He compares resurrection to a seed being sown in the soil. The seed breaks down and decomposes but it doesn't disappear. It is transformed. It becomes something new – a flower, a stalk of wheat, a tree. So it is with the resurrection, he says. We leave behind our perishable bodies and take on imperishable ones – but they are still bodies! Think about Jesus when he appears to the disciples. At

first, they're not sure it's him; he's different somehow. But they can still see him and touch him and share a meal. It's still him, but he is becoming someone new, with one foot on earth and one foot in heaven.

None of us knows the science of resurrection or the true nature of heaven. It's all miracle and mystery, faith and wonder. But we do know that it's real, and the proof is that resurrection is all around us. Like that seed sown in the soil, resurrection is literally built in to the process of creation. We see it everywhere – in the first buds of spring, in the songs of the birds, in caterpillars that one day will fly. And we see it in our human relationships – when debts are forgiven, when enemies are loved, when broken hearts and broken lives are restored. What's clear in all of these examples is that resurrection is not simply about the next life; it's happening here and now. It is a process of transformation, and it involves our bodies, our souls, and all of God's creation. We are embodied souls through and through, and God is too, in the person of Jesus, remind us that we are made for resurrection. Amen.