

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Saints Triumphant; November 19 & 20, 2023

Did you know?

- **You breath harder while typing.** Ever feel like you are sitting around on your computer and not getting enough exercise? Well, it turns out that typing is a form of exercise, so give yourself a pat on the back. Studies have found that your breathing rate increases while typing, which is a common sign of physical exertion. Any time that you use a muscle in your body, your body needs more oxygen to function, therefore, increasing your breathing rate.
- **A new baby can cost new parents 750 hours of sleep in the first year.** Having a baby is no easy task, but raising one might be even harder. Studies have shown that a parent loses around 109 minutes of sleep every night with a newborn in the house, resulting in around 750 hours of lost sleep between two parents in the first year alone.
- **Fast food logos make you hungry.** Massive fast-food chains like McDonald's, Wendy's, and In-N-Out Burger all share a similar color scheme on their logos: red, orange, and yellow. It's not by accident that they do that. Studies have found that certain colors evoke certain human responses. For instance, the color blue generally makes people feel calm. Yellow and orange, two of the most common colors on fast food logos, make people feel hungrier than they actually are. Combine that with the color red, which invokes passionate emotion in people, and you get passionately hungry customers.
- **Dum Dum's "mystery flavor" is a combination of the end of one batch of candy and the start of another.** Made in Akron, Ohio, Dum Dums are a type of sucker that comes in a variety of different flavors. Most of these flavors are normal, like Cherry, Lime, or Raspberry. However, there is also a "mystery flavor" that is just a combination of the end of one batch of candy flavor and the start of another. That means that the mystery flavor can be a near endless variety of flavors mixed together.
- **Froot Loops are all the same flavor.** While the different colors may be meant to represent different fruits, the pieces of cereal are all made the exact same and taste identical. If you have found that they have slightly different flavors, try closing your eyes when you eat them and see if you can taste a difference.
- **Vacations can actually lower your risk of heart disease.** A study was done that followed 12,000 men over a nine-year period of time who were believed to have a high risk for coronary heart disease concluded that taking a vacation every year significantly reduced your risk of dying due to heart disease. They found that people were 32 percent less likely to die from heart disease and 21 percent less likely to die from any other cause. Feel free to use this the next time you request a vacation at work.

If all those things are true – and they must be because I read it on the internet – it changes one's perspective on a few things. That's what the Apostle Paul is trying to do with the Thessalonians in our text this morning. He is trying to change their perspective of life. Everything has an end in our world. Eventually, our cars will come to an end. The homes that we live in will come to an end. Our lives will come to an end. The world as we know it will come to an end. For many that can be a terrifying thought.

Paul wants to lay aside those fears. They had some misunderstandings about Christ's return. They thought that Christ was going to return during their lifetimes. They feared that those who had already died would be at a disadvantage than those who were still alive. Paul wants to reassure them that they would not. **"Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him."** Paul wanted these new Christians to know the certain hope that they have in Jesus. When Paul talks about "hope," he is talking about something that is more than just wishful thinking. **Hope** is really the center of the Christian Faith: **"we will be with the Lord forever."** Death does not bring an end; it brings a beginning.

The Bible tells us that Jesus wanted this world to have this hope so badly that he chose to come into this world and take on human flesh. Not only did he take on human flesh, he suffered more than anyone can ever imagine as he battled with himself on the cross. He suffered for all the sins that the human race had ever done. He did it all, so you wouldn't miss out on eternal life! Talk about HOPE!

That hope completely changes our view of death. We have Jesus. When it comes to death, Jesus makes all the difference in the world. Because of Jesus, and only because of Jesus, we can call the Sunday we are celebrating what it is - *Saints Triumphant*. The Bible calls those who are believers in Jesus being "*saints*." We celebrate that all, those who have died in saving faith in Jesus, now in the glories of heaven. Why can we have that kind of Hope? Paul says: **"For we believe that Jesus died and rose again!"** It's right there in those words. It's all in Jesus.

In November of 1940, the city of Coventry in England was bombed by the Nazis. The town was destroyed, the centuries-old cathedral took two direct hits and was reduced to rubble. In the aftermath of the war, the church made an interesting decision. They left the ruins of their cathedral in place. They cleaned up the rubble, but they didn't tear down the stones that remained standing. They left the broken walls in place and then built their new church right next to it.

When they built the new cathedral, they installed a huge glass wall. Etched into the glass are large figures, four feet wide and ten feet tall – images of saints (i.e. believers) and angels rejoicing in heaven. Why a wall of clear glass? Because outside that wall of glass stand the ruins of the old cathedral. As you look through the glass, you see what remains of the bombed-out church. Those ruins are a picture of the broken world in which we live. Yet, to see the ruins, you must look through the glass that is etched with saints and angels. As you look through that wall of glass, you see the rubble in whole different light. When we look at this broken world, we see it through the light of the promise of heaven. And that view changes everything. It helps us to focus our attention of the future glory that awaits us in heaven itself. When we do that, we can't but help rejoice and be glad. May we rejoice along with the Apostle Paul: **"And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words."** Amen.