

Our Victory Is the Mystery!

A sermon based on 2 Corinthians 15:51-58

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

“Where do you think Dutch Schultz buried his treasure?” “Did a UFO really photobomb a NASA video?” “Is there actually a ghost haunting the Liverpool Medical Institute?”

Every so often, we hear titles like these in the news. We, along with much of society, have a fascination with getting to the bottom of every problem and solving every mystery. There even used to be a show on TV, called *Unsolved Mysteries*, where they would take you through old cases of a wide spectrum of events that hadn't been solved yet in order to let you, the viewer, see if you can put the pieces together and find the solution.

And sometimes, there are just things in life that we can't figure out, mysteries we can't solve. Well, in our lives, there's a mystery we can't solve...not on our own. Today, we're here to celebrate Jesus' Easter victory, but we're also here to solve a mystery. The mystery is our victory.

At least, that's how the Apostle Paul, the writer of our verses from 1 Corinthians, started out his writing. He had a mystery to solve. It's one people have been wrestling with for generations. Do you know what it is? It's this: what happens when this is done? What happens when this life is over? What happens when we die?

Yeah, I know, death is all too common in our world today. You'd be hard-pressed to find someone whose life hasn't been touched by death. It's so common, and yet, we so do not like talking about it one bit, especially our own deaths. But no matter how much you or I might try to avoid the topic, we won't be able to avoid the inevitable. We can't avoid death.

So, back to the mystery. What's after death? What will happen to us in the afterlife? “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 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. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.”

There you have it, mystery solved! We don't know for sure what heaven will look like; we just know that's where we want to be when this life is done. We do know it won't just be an eternal sleep. We will change. Our bodies will change. We will never perish again. We will be immortal. We will be perfect. We will have victory in heaven!

That is great news! But maybe you're like me and still not so sure we've completely solved the mystery of the afterlife. I mean, we know we have eternal life in heaven. But what we haven't solved is how we're getting there. Because, here's what's not a mystery. In order to get to heaven, God demands perfection. You know what that means? Not a sin. Not a single sin. We can't even have so much as a white lie on our record.

Now those requirements, there's really nothing unclear about them. The problem is, though, how many of us can meet those requirements? How many of you can go through the day without having one bad thought about someone else? How many of you have never sworn, cursed, taken God's name in vain or even just said something that wasn't appropriate or was offensive to someone else? How many of you

could say you've never outwardly committed a sin? And if you could, would you be able to say the same about in here, in your heart? The truth is, God tells us we need to be perfect in order to get to heaven, and none of us can do that. The Bible tells us, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

We sin. That's no mystery. Because we sin, we deserve death. That's no mystery. Sin is the sting of death. It's the point of the spear that pierces us, wounds us, and kills us.

Death has destroyed the mightiest of kings and emperors. It has broken into every home and has taken its toll of every human family. It has robbed every one of its victims of all their earthly possessions. It has filled this world with futile tears and helpless groans. It has snatched away for all eternity the hour of repentance that could have saved the godless, and it has inflicted pain on even the greatest of God's saints...There is no masking its ugliness nor wishing away its awesome power.

Despite all his little victories over disease and mortal injury, man still has no sword to slay and no shield to ward off this cruel and hungry monster. On our own, we would only succumb to death's overwhelming power and be slaughtered in an eternity of hell.

The real mystery is why can we be confident about our place in heaven when we fall well short of God's requirements for eternal life? We are powerless against sin and death, but to one foe they both must yield. Paul writes, "Death has been swallowed up in victory." The King of kings has vanquished the king of terrors. As God's Word tells us, our Savior "has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

"Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The mystery is God's grace. The mystery is God's unconditional love for us who so unworthy and so underserving. The mystery is that in spite of our sinfulness, we have the eternal victory of sin, Satan, and death.

But the solution? Jesus. Jesus did what we can't do. He lived perfectly, in his thoughts, in his words, and in his actions. He was able to do that because he is God. But for us, God died. Jesus died on the cross in our place, suffered the punishment of hell in our place, and in his grace, he forgave all our sins.

But the story didn't end there. Three days later, Easter came. Now, that day was a mystery...at first. The disciples heard the tomb was empty, the stone had been rolled away, Jesus was gone. At first, they didn't all know what had happened. But we do. On Easter, Jesus rose. He came back to life. That was the victory! The final enemy, death, fell with barely a fight on Easter morning when Jesus rose from the dead.

The solution is Jesus. It's really that easy. Jesus lived for us, Jesus died for us, Jesus rose for us. Jesus took away our sin and canceled its guilt by suffering its sting in the our place, and now death can no longer claim the us as its victim. Jesus has won the victory!

And that means we have victory...not just now, in this life, but also in life after death. The death that appeared to conquer and to doom our bodies to decay will know its utter defeat when in the resurrection God's believers, when we will break death's chains and our bodies will be rendered imperishable and immortal.

All of that, Jesus' victory, his life, death, and resurrection, we celebrate today.

Now that might be the mystery. Why Easter today? We're 6 months away from the actual holiday, give or take a couple of weeks. But we know what Easter means. It means life. It's all about the resurrection...Jesus' for us, but also ours some day for eternity. Jesus lives today, and that means today, even 6 months away from Easter, we know, we can celebrate the life we have in him. Every day, we can celebrate that eternal victory. And that's really not a mystery. God loves us, always has, always will. And for us, that means death has no sting. Death has no victory. We do!

The unsolved mysteries of the world. The brightest minds may wrack their brains, trying to solve them, but there will be some they just may never be able to. But the mystery of our salvation and eternal life in heaven? We don't have to go too far to find the answer for that one. It's all right here. Jesus loves us. In his love, he lived, died, and rose for us. Today, we celebrate that victory. Every day, we celebrate our eternal victory. And for that victory, we praise our Lord and Savior in unending praise. He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.