

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia! Well, that's all well and good, but some may ask, "So what?" Some skeptics may scoff, "Even if for the sake of argument, some Jewish rabbi rose from the dead two thousand years ago, what does that have to do with me? Nobody has been raised since. People don't just rise from the dead! Christ is risen! So what?"

As we answer this question, I couldn't help but reflect on the Winter Olympics as they close out in Beijing. Many of the competitions were of a race in nature: whether it be on skates, skis, or sleds. In keeping with the spirit of a race, as we ask why you should care Christ rose again, we wholeheartedly say, "3. Christ is risen! On your marks!"

Whether you're a skater, skier, or on the bobsled team, the command "on your marks" forces you both to look down and look forward. You have to look down to see where you are standing and that you are indeed standing on the marks. Incorrect starting position could disqualify you from the race.

In our Epistle text, Paul starts with some bad news. "**By a man came death... In Adam all die.**" In other words, as you look down at the ground on your feet, you need to understand that that's where you're headed.

Martin Luther opened one of his most famous sermons with this paragraph, "The summons of death comes to us all, and no one can die for another. Every one must fight his own battle with death by himself, alone. We can shout into another's ears, but every one must himself be prepared for the time of death, for I will not be with you then, nor you with me" (AE 51:70, Invocavit Sunday 1522-03-09).

We can try to hide death. We can deny it. We can dress it up with cute names. But I always remember the off-handed comment of one of my agnostic friends in high school. Agnostics either don't know what happens after death, or believe that we cease to exist. He said, "I don't like to think about what happens after death, it's just freaky to think about not existing." Yet denying death is as foolish as a speed skater refusing to check her footing before the race starts. If she isn't on her mark, how can she even know if her race will even count. An offset racer doesn't win gold medals.

But racers don't stare at their feet the whole time. They look up. They look to the goal. Paul doesn't only talk about the death that is common to mankind. He adds, "**By a man has come also the resurrection of the dead... in Christ shall all be made alive.**" "Christ is Risen! So What?!" Christ rising from the dead means that He has already won the gold. He is the first to cross the finish line.

And this is what Paul talks about. Yes, you are going to be raised from the dead. As surely as Jesus Christ rose from the dead, so will you also. "**But each in his own order... The last enemy to be destroyed is death.**" Even before the race starts, the bobsled team already has the finish line in mind. Death is simply the

harrowing hairpin turn right before the finish line which is eternal life with Christ Jesus.

“Christ is risen! So what?” The skeptic continues, “If eternal life is the destination of Christians, why even try in this life? Wouldn’t it be better to die today and spend eternity with Jesus? What are Christians even here for then?” To that we respond, 2. Christ is Risen! Get set!

As some of you may know, one of my hobbies is curling. Lately my family and I have been watching Olympic curling and enjoying how easy the Olympians make it look.

Each player on the curling team takes turns launching 44-pound stones across the ice. They follow the direction of their team captain on the other side of the sheet of ice who sets his or her broom head on the ice to act as a target for his or her teammate.

When it’s my turn to push the stone, in order to focus, I think to myself that there’s nothing else in the whole world but the broom head on the other side of the court. I get set as I crouch down and then I push myself and the stone in the direction of the broom head.

We as Christians orient ourselves on our marks, that is, understanding that our death is coming, yet also looking to Christ as the one who rose and will raise us from the dead. We get set as we then keep our eyes and hopes on this reality. A famous Christian one said, “If Christ is risen, nothing else matters. And if Christ is not risen—nothing else matters.”

Christ is risen, indeed! So what? This reality changes how we live. The resurrection becomes the broom head toward which we crouch down, ready to spring to at a moment’s notice.

This is what Paul is saying in verses 30–34. Live your life hanging on the promise of the resurrection. Paul put his life on the line for the Gospel time and time again. He faced death on a regular basis! Opponents to the Gospel would scheme against him and seek his failure.

Don’t live your life like the world that’s just looking for the next paycheck, the next round, or the next high. Don’t live in fear, acting as this life was the only one to live. By no means engage in self-destructive behavior, but as Christians we don’t need to hide in fear.

Paul doesn’t mince words, **“Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.”** Some of the people in the Church in Corinth denied the resurrection. But even more than that, we say “so what?” to the resurrection when we live as though this life is all there is. We say “so what?” to the resurrection when our bad company corrupts good morals. We say “so what?” to the resurrection when eat and drink for tomorrow we die.

Get set! Orient yourself toward Jesus. Look to Him as the Resurrection and the Life, and act as though He's the only one that exists. Live your life in such a way that you'd be toast if Jesus *didn't* rise from the dead.

We have a confirmation Sunday, and that's the point of confirmation. One of the questions the confirmands will be asked is, "Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?" The confirmands can joyfully and gladly make this profession of faith knowing that death is not the end. *That* is what it looks like to be oriented towards Jesus, and that orientation only happens as the Holy Spirit works in us through His Word.

Yet the skeptic drones on, "Christ is risen! So what?" "**How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?**" To which we reply, "1. Christ is risen! Go!" On your marks, get set, go! There wouldn't be much of a race without the "go" part.

So too, there wouldn't be much of a resurrection without a body. Yet that brings all sorts of questions from skeptics. If the Olympics proves anything, it's that there's all kinds of bodies. The slender frames of figure skaters, the muscular hockey behemoths, and then there's the men's curling team rocking the dad bods.

What kind of body will I have in the resurrection? Will I have my 18-year-old varsity football body? Will I be like a model on the cover of a magazine? What about those who died as children? What about those who died in explosions, fires, or at sea?

Rather than getting into the nitty gritty, Paul uses the illustration of a seed that is planted. "**And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.**" Just as a sunflower is as different as a sunflower seed, so to will the resurrection body be. Yet at the same time, we need not worry because God is in control, and He'll give you a body as He has chosen.

Christ is Risen! On your marks, get set, go! And this is where the rubber meets the road, folks. "**So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.**" I've been here less than four years and I've presided over 13 funerals. I've been at the bedside of those who were dying. Even just this week, I've read this passage before the casket lowered into the ground.

The resurrection matters because you matter. The resurrection matters because your loved ones matter. The resurrection matters because Jesus loved you so much that He didn't want to leave you to die in your sin. You have eternity waiting for you. CHRIST'S RESURRECTION READIES US FOR OURS. On your marks, get set, go!