

Easter's Trumpet Blast Declares Victory!

1 Corinthians 15:51-57

April 20, 2025 (Easter-C)

St. Paul's Lutheran, North Freedom

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—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. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:51-57 NIV84)

In the name of our risen and living Lord Jesus Christ, the Victor over death, dear fellow believers:

Many years ago, when two armies battled each other, the fighting would continue all throughout the day—until they would hear the sound of a trumpet call. That was the signal to stop fighting. The battle was over! One side would retreat, and the other side would gain the victory!

Easter is like the sounding of the trumpet call, signaling to us that the battle has been won! It also serves as a preview of the trumpet call that will signal the end of the world: Judgment Day, the Last Day of the world. Paul tells us that when *“the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised.”* Let's find out more about Christ's victory at Easter, and the coming victory on the Last Day, which tells us that **Easter's Trumpet Blast Declares Victory!**

The enemy that we battle against is death. We know how death entered this world. Paul wrote to the Romans (5:12): “Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.” Talk about a one-sided battle! Death wins out, every single time in this world. Paul tells us that death's weapon is sin: *“The sting of death is sin.”* Like a poisonous dart or a rattlesnake's bite, sin gets into us and death swoops in and conquers, sometimes soon, sometimes later, but eventually always.

Paul adds that there's something that gives sin its strength: *“The strength of sin is the law.”* We might be surprised to hear that. Isn't God's law good? Doesn't it point out our sins? Yes—but the law doesn't prevent us from sinning. In fact, often the law stirs up in our sinful hearts the desire to break that command. Like a “No Trespassing” sign, suddenly we get that urge to say, “I want to step onto that property.” It's like the devil tempting Eve with the forbidden fruit; suddenly she wanted it. So the law points out sin but actually strengthens our desire to do sin.

Our battle against death was for sure a losing battle. There have been so many efforts to stave off death—finding a cure for cancer, preventing heart disease, getting top notch medical treatment and the like—and still invisible viruses and periodic pandemics break through. All the safety devices in the world can't prevent accidents from happening. Killings and murders still happen as a result of the sinful heart. It's no wonder that Paul wrote just before our text, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (1 Co. 15:50). And we are perishable human beings; sin causes our bodies to succumb to aging, aches and pains, the loss of cells, breakdowns in our organs, and finally...death wins again.

But our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, God from God, Light from Light, came into this world and wore our frail, human flesh. He suffered the same pains that we feel. He endured weakness. He was severely tempted by the devil too. Yet Jesus did not succumb to the devil's temptations. On Good Friday, it appeared as though Jesus seemingly lost the battle with the devil and death when he died. He was buried in a tomb from before Friday sundown to the crack of Sunday dawn. The devil and death were ready to give a trumpet blast of victory of their own.

Then, at the crack of dawn that Easter, women came to the tomb as we heard in today's gospel reading. The stone was rolled away, the tomb was empty! Those women on the way back saw Jesus—alive! So did Jesus' disciples later that day. Paul informed the Corinthians that Jesus appeared to more than 500 of his followers at one time—and last of all appeared to Paul himself (1 Co. 15:4-8). Paul declared confidently to these Corinthians, who were talking as though there was no resurrection: "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Co. 15:20). Jesus lives! The victory's won!

What Christ's resurrection means for us today is that our faith in Christ is not in vain. When Jesus died, he made the payment of the sins of the world. God accepted that payment and raised his Son from death to life to prove it to us. That's what makes Easter so joyful—not the Easter bunny, not the Easter baskets and candy, not even the pretty flowers—but the trumpet call of Christ's victory over the grave. Thank God, he *"gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Paul in our text tells us that Christ's resurrection assures us of our victory over death in the future. True, death will have its say, for a while. But: *"Listen!"* Paul says, *"I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed."* Some believers will indeed fall "asleep," (and in Christ that's not a euphemism—death has become like a sleep that we wake up from), but other believers will be alive when the Last Day comes.

That Day will come suddenly: *"In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye."* As quick as an eye can glance away, so quickly there will be the sound of a trumpet from the skies. The Lord and his angels will appear in all their glory! The dead—all the dead, no matter what condition their bodies are in—will rise up from their graves, from dust and ashes—all will meet their Maker. *"And we will be changed."* Here Paul is referring to believers in Christ. At the resurrection, Christ will "transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (as Paul says in Philippians 3:21).

Paul describes that change here: *"For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality."* Earlier I mentioned how perishable our bodies are on earth. Each year we see more wrinkles, we start losing our strength, we get one year closer to death. But this perishable puts on what is imperishable, what won't age or decay or break down—or even die. We mortal humans will become immortal, we will live forever in heaven!

No more death! No more perishing! No more pain! No more sin! Like victors who taunt the losing opponent, we can say, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?", quoting Hosea. When Jesus appears, it will become obvious that *"Death is swallowed up in victory!"*

Easter's trumpet blast declares that victory that we look forward to on the Last Day. Be confident of this, friends: That victory is yours now, simply through faith in Christ. So share this good news! Blast the trumpet: Christ is risen, he is risen indeed, and the victory over death is ours! Amen.