

Week 4

Last week we discussed sleep through the lens of Redemption, where God used community to restore relationship between humanity and God and humanity with itself. This week we consider sleep as moving us towards the New Creation. To do so, we will be looking at 1 Corinthians 15.

Paul exhorts the Corinth community to prepare for life forever with Jesus into which earthly death ushers the mortal faithful. But verses 17-18 hinge this jubilation on the resurrection: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. Then those who have died in Christ have perished.” The second sentence can be translated, “those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” Because of the resurrection, the final sleep does not terminate us, but moves us into a mysteriously new life with God. Though crucifixion is horrible, eternal sleep now ultimately affirms life.

This view of eternal sleep invites us to examine what daily hope covers our sleep. Ideally we’d go to sleep covered by the hope of Jesus’ resurrection power - that our daily dying to consciousness is covered by the hope of resurrection in Jesus. But the ideal is far from the real. Instead of such lofty theological notions, I oftentimes go to sleep covered by my economic status in, ambitions for, and doubts about the earthly realm. I enter sleep more concerned about what I want to accomplish tomorrow than I am hopeful for Jesus’ resurrection power, and I exit sleep not terribly thankful to God for keeping me in the night because I expected the security of my home to do that. Even though I often pray to deepen my awe of God, the fact “thank you, Lord” is never my first thought upon rising signals I have more growing to do in the hope of Christ. If I could ground my sleeping and waking in the hope of the resurrected Christ, how might the rest of my day shift? How would yours?

Sleep’s capacity to transport us to the New World can change everything about life in this one. Sleep is an invitation to remember our baptism – our dying to sin in Christ and being raised in hope with Christ. In view of baptism’s pattern of death and resurrection, sleep can reorient our desire for preservation of our ministries, neighborhoods, and even nation. If the resurrection uses death to affirm life, then we need not grow audiences, economies and militaries infinitely. But given the ubiquity of capitalism and militarism, alternative to these models are hard to imagine. We will need God, and we will need sleep. May we have ears to hear. Amen.

How is sleep helping you hear Jesus’ life to come?

What does sleep invite you to relinquish about dominance in this world?

Prayer: God of sleep, in our laying down and in our rising, grant us the assurance of Jesus. In death and in life, I seek your future. In Jesus’ name, Amen.