

There's Going to Be A New Normal

1 Corinthians 15:41-57 • 2020-04-12 • Easter Sunday



There's been a lot of talk recently about a new normal. That is to say that the way we once did things will no longer be the same for many people. The world-wide pandemic could have been far worse, many argue, if it weren't for the steps taken by many people. For some, they will be glad when it is just all over and life can get back to normal. But others point out that life will never actually be the way it used to be. They say that the impact of the pandemic will be lasting on business, lifestyles, and change everyone's way of life. And that's likely true. You are already hearing of things you'd probably never would have thought of. McDonalds is doing delivery. Churches are meeting in their parking lots. Companies like GM might still be in business, but employees have to follow many new rules and even the manufacturing line has been altered to prevent the spread of illness. Certain policies make life miserable, ranging from the very heartbreaking. "you can't enter the ICU right now to the less severe, "you can't pass around donuts at work anymore."

So, yes, it is probably true. Life won't be the same as it was before the pandemic. People are tossing around the phrase "a new normal." You'll just have to get used to the aftereffects. A new podcast on a major news network is starting up called "the new normal." Change isn't always bad, but so many of the changes are rather disheartening. We want life to go back to the way it was without a pandemic or the fear it brings. We want businesses which we frequent, and which serve us to run the way they always did. Most of us probably don't want such a new normal and all the changes the pandemic brings. But it's not the end of the story. There is going to be another new normal. That's what we consider today as we read the closing verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Christ is risen. There's going to be a new normal.

One thing that everyone seems to be keen on reporting is the rate of death that the pandemic has in various countries. It seems that everyone is paying attention to how much risk of death is floating around. There's so much mystery about a new illness and we want to know what our chances are of getting sick, and what our chances of survival are if we do get sick. There's nothing more disruptive to normal life than death. But that's where we all need to step back and take in the sobering reality of our situation. Things like illness, war, food shortages, overrun hospitals, mass fear, and isolation are all just symptoms of a greater problem. This world is under the curse of sin. Whenever we experience these things, we are made to remember that the curse of sin is actually our normal existence right now.

And it really, in the end, doesn't matter what the rate of infection is with any pandemic. The mortality rate for being human is one hundred percent. Everyone is going to die because everyone is covered in guilt and sin. And this is an illness we could never escape because it is passed on from our parents. We receive it, we live in it, and we die in it. Sin kills. And it does so because the sinner deserves justice from God. Our real problem has always been our sin and the sting it brings, death.

We might win an occasionally victory over illness. But we could never devise our own lasting victory over death.

But there's a new normal coming! Jesus, the Son of God was born into this world cursed by sin. Only he was different from the rest of us. He had no sin. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, he was without any inherited sin. And as the true Son of God he committed no sin at all but lived a perfect and holy life. He was far from normal.

Yet he died an agonizing death on the cross. He did this not because he deserved it, but for us. And when the payment for sin was complete, he gave up his life. His body was placed in the grave.

The Scriptures had foretold all these events. Jesus had foretold it to his disciples. When the women came to the tomb on Sunday morning, they did not find the body of Jesus. An angel reported the good news first "Do not be afraid! I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here. He has risen, just as he said."

What those women and Jesus' disciples needed to realize was that there was going to be a new normal! Death was the old way. But because Jesus died and rose again life would never be the same again. A new normal is promised to come.

The apostle Paul says that change will come suddenly for us. *“Listen I tell you a mystery.”* He doesn’t mean something that is confusing. He means something which you would never imagine if someone hadn’t told you about it. It is something which God has made known. Far better than any world-health report or news briefing, it is the Word of God to assure the whole world. *“We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet.”*

Death is just a sleep. We will not remain in death. A new normal is coming. And when it comes it will be so sudden that Paul says it will be *“in the blink of an eye.”* A day is coming when all who have died with faith in Christ Jesus will be changed. Paul says, *“we will all be changed.”*

The change that’s coming is this: the dead will be raised imperishable. It will be a new normal. Right now, we live in fear of pain, hurt, and decay. We strive against the process of aging and are taken aback every time we face the loss and pain that accompanies death. But the new normal will be new bodies raised back to life as imperishable bodies. No more hurt. No more decay. We will go on living forever. Time will no longer be marked by aging. Time will no longer cease to matter at death. We will never age or die. Paul gives the picture of *“putting on”* the new normal the same way that one puts on a new garment. Our perishable bodies will be putting on the new imperishable self. Right now, we put on personal protective equipment like face masks. At the sounding of the last trumpet and the return of Christ, we will put on new bodies. And we’ll never need any personal protective equipment because those new bodies will never perish.

When this all happens the new normal will have begun! The prophecy in Scripture will be fulfilled in which death gets swallowed up. Isn’t that a comforting picture? The very idea that death would be conquered and devoured by life!

When those women left the tomb the first Sunday that celebrated the resurrection had to know that a new normal was on its way. They left in a hurry filled with fear and joy. What would life be like now that Jesus was alive again? What would it mean for them? They weren’t exactly sure, but it did bring them joy mixed with uncertainty.

The apostle Paul writes to remove all uncertainty about what the new normal involves for the Christian who lives in resurrection joy. *“Listen, I tell you a mystery. We will all be changed.”*

Jesus resurrection was the first great change. His body restored to life is now a glorious body and he lives forever. We too will leave the sleep of death and will put on the garment of immortality. These perishable bodies will be clothed with the imperishable. We will see the new normal begin as death is finally devoured up by life forever.

There is a new normal coming. But it’s not one that is surrounded by new limitations and fears. It’s not a new normal in a fight against death. It is a new normal in a victory over death.

And that new normal is the victory which is ours through Jesus Christ, the living one.

When the women left the tomb, they saw the risen Jesus. It says they fell down and worshiped him. *“Don’t be afraid.”* He told them. Can’t you just picture him saying. *“There’s going to be a new normal.”?* A new normal without fear and without death. That’s something to talk about.

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

Look, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴But once this perishable body has put on imperishability, and this mortal body has put on immortality, then what is written will be fulfilled:

Death is swallowed up in victory.

⁵⁵*Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory?*

⁵⁶*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! (1 Cor 15:51-57 EHV)*