

Sermon #1,141 (Funeral Sermon #40): St. John 14:19/1 Corinthians 15:12-22  
4-23-15 (Dale Wedell Memorial Service), Bethany-Princeton MN  
*Hymns: 54, 319, 179, 561*

BECAUSE CHRIST IS RISEN, DALE DID NOT DIE BUT LIVES

**The Text: St. John 14:19; 1 Corinthians 15:12-22.**

**<sup>19</sup>“A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.”**

**<sup>12</sup>Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. <sup>14</sup>And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. <sup>15</sup>Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. <sup>17</sup>And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! <sup>18</sup>Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup>If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. <sup>20</sup>But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup>For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup>For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.**

Lord, this is Your Word and these are Your words. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. We thank You, heavenly Father, that by Your Son’s resurrection we have the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. We especially thank You that because Christ Jesus did not remain dead in the tomb but rose from the dead, because He lives, we can be certain Dale lives also, and will receive the resurrection of his body. Our faith – what we believe about Dale rising again -- is not empty or futile, but it is true and real that we who believe in Christ will see Dale again, because our Jesus rose from the dead. Help us to believe this! Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ, especially you, Roxanne, and your family: Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

It is one of the most wonderful, comforting promises Jesus ever made. It is one of the most important sentences He ever uttered. I said it to Dale on his death bed, as I do at pretty much every death bed vigil: **“Because I live, you will live also.”** But strangely, Jesus uttered that comment and did not explain it.

What does this mean, **“Because I live, you will live also”**? We need to know. Is Dale included in the “you?” Are you and I? If we answer “Yes,” how do we know it is not merely something we wish to be true, but it actually is true? We desperately need the **“you-will-live-also”** to be true! For us! For Dale.

In a sense Jesus did explain it by what He did. He spoke these words the night He was betrayed. He was not speaking about the fact that He was living at that moment. He was speaking of what was about to happen. He spoke this a matter of hours before He died. Then the third day He rose again. So **“because I live”** is speaking of His own rising from the dead. When He says, **“you will live also,”** He is saying that through Christ’s resurrection a person will not die but live, will rise from the dead. But what is necessary first is that Jesus Christ actually rose from the dead. This brings us to the verses from 1 Corinthians 15. Here St. Paul explains what Jesus meant by saying, **“Because I live you will live.”**

There was something going on with the people Paul was first writing to. They were hearing people say that the dead do not rise. This is essentially saying that this life is all there is. We hear people say that too, the atheists or agnostics of our own age. What St. Paul says about this is: **“If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.”** He goes on to say that if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, then **“our preaching is empty”** – in other words, there would be nothing true to preach or teach – **“and your faith is also empty”** – in other words, there would be nothing true to believe. He says that if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, then **“your faith is futile; you are still in your sins,”** that is, you’re still condemned by your sins, which means no getting into heaven. Then he says something that is desperately important to us here today, that if this is so that Christ did not rise, **“then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.”** In other words, Dale would be dead and would have no future, we would never see him again, it would truly be the end of him.

Now if you want to know what sad is, that's sad. As St. Paul goes on to say: **"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."** In other words, without Jesus and His resurrection, life is empty and meaningless. If this life is all there is, then no matter how much fun you have, no matter whether you get all your bills paid or have a good reputation as a good worker, no matter how many friends you have, in the end you will have nothing.

Of course the devil wants everyone to live without seeing this or knowing this. He wants people to think they don't need repentance, they don't need Jesus, they don't need to receive God's forgiveness of their sins. He wants people to not see the urgency. Because then when they die he can laugh at them and tell them what fools they were. He can taunt them for eternity with the knowledge that a million times in their life they could have received what Jesus was offering them, but that, having ignored their need during life, it is too late at that point in eternity for them to have what Jesus promised them, and they are condemned to live for eternity in nothingness, and worse than that, in eternal torment and death.

What I am thankful for today is that Dale received enough time, and enough warning through his sickness and suffering in cancer, to avoid that fate. He had ample warning of his approaching death and the hour when he would meet God face to face. So this business of being **"still in your sins"** at the hour of death, being condemned by them, became an important matter for him to take care of. In the end the only thing that mattered was whether Jesus really was the Son of God, and whether He was risen from the dead. For it is Jesus' resurrection that proves that God accepted His death as payment for everyone's sins, including Dale's every sin. And it is Jesus' resurrection, as St. Paul wrote in Romans 1, which **"declared Jesus Christ to be the Son of God,"** that He really is who He said He is, and all His teachings and all His promises are true. The most important teaching being that He is the Savior, and whoever believes in Him will never die.

Dale said to me, in the presence of family members, that this is what he believed. He believed that he was a sinner. He believed that Christ is his Savior. He believed in the Triune God. He believed that Jesus is risen from the dead and thus all his sins are forgiven.

So the closing words we heard, the words which God the Holy Spirit inspired St. Paul to write, we can with confidence apply to Dale: That **“Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ... For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive,”** this says that by faith in Jesus and His resurrection, by being **“in Christ,”** Dale is not dead but only sleeping. The promise **“in Christ all shall be made alive”** is turned into **“in Christ Dale shall be made alive,”** and Jesus’ words become for us today, **“Because I live, Dale shall live also,”** eternally in heaven.

This is why I do not use the “preceded in death” language. This Christian, Dale, is living. As you remember him, and remember that because Jesus lives Dale lives also, you are confessing your faith that he is still living, but in glory. You are confessing faith in Christ. By this faith – and only by this faith in the risen Lord Jesus – you will live also, and will see Dale again. You may not get to have the warning of your last moments as Dale did, so learn how urgent it is every day for you to receive this faith from God through preaching and His Word, so this life will not be all there is for you but you too will live eternally. Amen!

### **Christian Obituary for Dale Wedell**

Dale Richard Wedell was born on July 11, 1953, in Faribault, Minnesota. The loving God who gave him life also gave him, during his infancy, the gift of adoptive parents Roy and Hazel Wedell and sister Lois in 1954, to care and provide for him in a loving home and family. God provided for his spiritual care at Milaca United Methodist Church, where he was baptized in the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and, having been taught the Word of God, was confirmed in the faith on May 28, 1967. The Holy Spirit, who gave and renewed in him the gift of faith, granted him to depart this world having confessed his own faith in the only true God, on April 16, 2015, when the holy angels carried his soul to heaven. He will await the resurrection of his body when the Lord Jesus Christ returns on the last day with all His holy angels.

God's tender mercies to Dale during his life included joining him in holy matrimony with Roxanne Hamilton on September 5, 1986; giving him daughters Amy (Alen) Streff and Ashley (Ben) Miller; five grandchildren (Zackery, Abigayle, Cadence, Hunter and Heather); his sister Lois (Jack) Fritz; and many nieces and nephews. Blessed be his memory.