“***If Christ Has Not Been Raised***” by S. Finlan, at The First Church, Feb. 9, 2025

**1 Corinthians 15:12–20**

12Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? 13If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; 14and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. 15We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. 17If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. . . 19If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

We see in Paul’s letter how important the Resurrection is. Without the Resurrection of Jesus, there is also no general resurrection of the dead, and then “we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor 15:19). Actually he reasons in the other direction: If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not arisen, either, and then our faith is in vain.

How important are the resurrections—Christ’s and our’s—to our faith? Of crucial importance. Our concept of our goal, our destiny, is part of what shapes our hope and our purposes here in this life. The idea that we will go on and be instructed in the next life, that we will be transformed and will grow spiritually, that we will participate in the qualities of divinity—these are central to my worldview and my belief.

I understand human beings to be like children in this lifetime, preparing for the longer and greater life to follow. Our reaching here is rarely fulfilled. In that life, we will touch what we are reaching for. We will blossom there, while we now have barely burst out of our seed pods. The work of this world is important, but it is just a beginning. In Romans, Paul writes “we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God” (5:2), and again he writes “in hope we were saved” (8:24). We were saved in hope here, and we hope for endless progress in sharing in the glory of God hereafter.

Belief in the life promised to us is an essential part of our faith-walk here on earth. We know that this is only the beginning, and that the road goes ever on and on, as J. R. R. Tolkein wrote. When we are weak, then the Spirit helps us (Rom 8:26), and we “abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13).

*Have* this hope then, for eternal life. As Job said, “you would long for the work of your hands” (14:15). God wants to help us grow, to have life and to have it abundantly (John 10:10).