Today we jump back into the final installment of our sermon series on the third article of the Apostles Creed. We started off talking about the importance of Christian unity in the larger church, talked about God inviting us to participate in the wonderful ministry of reconciliation which starts at forgiveness, and then we talked about the importance of unity in individual churches and how if Jesus prayed for it, it is something we should take seriously. Today we will talk about the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. And we will be talking about it in terms of what does knowing about the resurrection and life to come enables us to do today.

Let me start with a story about myself. When I was younger I always wanted to play football, however, my mom would not allow me to play because my cousin and brother played and they were always hurt, so my mom was trying to protect me. One day I finally wore her down and got her to agree to let me play football after we moved, which was going to occur after my eighth grade year. And so when I got to high school at New Canaan CT, I ran to the coaches office on the first day so that I could play. I loved it and had a good time, and so when it came time for my senior year, I made the decision to not go home for the summer.

I decided that I would stay with my host family because I went away from home for school and would train with my teammates all summer and get ready for two a days in the summer. Now I hated long distance running, I hated sprinting, I hated running period and to sign up for a whole summer of it was a tough decision. But I was able to envision the possibilities of a state championship after making it to the playoffs as a junior and the hopes and dreams of that ring was enough to cause me to sacrifice a nice relaxing summer at home full of moms amazing home cooked meals. I exchanged the comforts of home for running and training in the summer heat all because of my hope that we would win a state championship.

There are times in our lives when we will go through some sort of hardship because we know what the future holds if we can make it through this short period of time. We go through years of vigorous studies so that we can make it in the field that we are passionate about. We take on student loans for the opportunity at an education. Parents go through the long sleepless nights of raising a new born because of the future joys that come from love. Athletes train every day to hone their craft for the hopes of getting better every day and becoming the best. We cut down on entertainment in order to splurge on something big that will bring us joy.

This is not unique to us, its very biblical. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is said to be God’s “hall of faith.” Thrillingly, it chronicles a variety of marvelous examples of Old Testament faithful obedience, which are intended to encourage us in our Christian lives. With reference to this matter, the author declares:

“Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of the faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:1-2).

Jesus endures the cross because of the joy that was set before him which to me was making a way for us to be children of God. Jesus able to see the end result endures the cross the most horrible torture device created, made to dish out the most pain possible.

I believe that we too are called to do the same. I believe that knowledge about the resurrection and after life is imparted to help us weather the storms of life and keep moving forward. The book of revelation is thought to be written to a group of people who are experiencing intense, extreme persecution and so God gives john a vision of the triumph over evil by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and then a glimpse of heaven to reinforce the central theme of the letter which is endurance, perseverance, and hope that is founded in the victory of the cosmic war between good and evil, God and Satan.

I believe that God gives us a glimpse of heaven and the life everlasting where there is no more tears, no more heartache and the tree of life on either side of the river of life because it instills hope, it empowers the followers of Christ to be able to say, I will forfeit the comforts of this world for the sake of the Gospel. I will take a stand for God

How else could you explain this from the Hebrews chapter 10? Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

There are two things that stick out to me. One that people were imprisoned for the Gospel. And the second is amazing, that there were those who knew that their property would be confiscated and yet gave them up because they knew they had better lasting possessions.

 I believe they knew that this world was fleeting and that standing up for God was most important in their lives. That the hope and faith they had that they were marked and sealed with the cross of Christ and co heirs with him and baptized into his life, death and resurrection empowered them to do that which may seem foolish in some peoples eyes.

There is power in the resurrection and life everlasting not just for that future time. There is power in that knowledge for today. Knowing the end result sets us free to live into our calling. Knowing the end result emboldens us to take a stand for our beliefs.

If it were not for Jesus we would not have this hope. If he is not the first born of the dead, if he does not die and get resurrected there is no hope for us. But because we know that there is a life after death. Because we know we will see our loved ones again. Because we know that God has the victory. Because we know that our bodies will be perfect. Because we know that there will be no more pain and misery. Because we know that nothing will get in the way of our worship of God. Because we know that we have an eternity with Jesus. Because we know that there is no second death. Because we know we will be raised up from the grave and are washed by the blood of the lamb we have hope, we have power, we have freedom, we have possibilities.

The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting is a promise that we can cling onto as a life jacket when things get tough. When we confess the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting it’s not just a theological statement, it is a statement of our hope. It is a statement of our strength, it is a statement of our ability to embrace and endure suffering for the sake of the Gospel.

So I end with this, what will the knowledge of the end result of Gods victory power you to do?