

## **April 20/25 Leaders' Guide - 1 Corinthians 15 "Christ: First-fruits of New Creation"**

1. The Jordan river flows from the fertile slopes of Mount Herman down to the grave yard of the dead sea proclaiming a truth we all know and yet wish it were not so – all of life leads to death. What aspects of that reality most grieve you as you reflect on your life? Our world?

*Here are some of the reflections Tim gave, by no means exhaustive, that may help you navigate this question as a group.*

*We see it the mirror as the years tick by – and open the medicine cabinet to be met with the cocktail of pills that are meant to keep things in order just a little longer – all of life leads to death*

*We see it around us as there comes a time where we attend more family funerals than weddings – and then those funerals are of friends - contemporaries – all of life leads to death.*

*We see it in our relationships – the twinge of sadness when we remember the one who was once so close - now no more – the details of what drove us apart may be foggy – but we know there's likely no way back – all of life leads to death.*

*We see it in our hopes – our dreams – the hope we had for our career – what we would accomplish for the sake of others – now drudgery – a pay-check - the plans we had for retirement – and then that trip to the doctor – a diagnosis – a prognosis – all of life leads to death.*

*We see it in the news – in politics – astounded that out of all the options considered - they were the best choice? – or power twisting one's motives toward self-serving gain – our hopes in our leaders never fully realized – all of life leads to death.*

*We see it in our world where unchecked human consumption is ravaging a planet – the dire predictions of an earth made inhospitable to human life – declining biodiversity the canary in the coal mine – all of life leads to death.*

*The river Jordan flows – from the lush slopes of mount Herman to the salty grave of the dead sea - revealing a truth we all know and yet wish it were not so – all of life leads to death.*

### **Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 20-22a**

2. (22) In Adam all die. What were Adam's actions and what implications continue to impact the human race?

*Adam – the first human - created in the image of God – given a glorious task – our created purpose – to steward God's good creation – to as a mirror reflect the goodness and glory of God and bring life and flourishing to all*

*Adam though - makes a disastrous choice – to live life not in step with God’s way – but rather in step with his own way – setting the trajectory for every subsequent human creature – where we worship other things – other gods – and reflecting their nature out into the world we bring not life - but death...*

*In Adam all die – all sin - says Paul - Do all die? – of course – the death rate has always been the same - 100% - one death for every one life – do all sin - of course – each and every one of us have a nature curved in on ourselves – each and every one of worship things other than the living god – each and every one of us say not Gods way – my way...*

### **Read Ezekiel 47:1-12**

3. Ezekiel has a vision of a new river flowing through Israel. What is its source? What is its impact?

*This river’s source is not Mount Hermon – but the temple – that place of sacrificial death – water begins to trickle out from underneath the altar – growing deeper and deeper – wider and wider – trees begin to sprout on either side – a desert begins to pop and pulsate with colour and life – the river winds its way down to the dead sea – and instead of going down to death – this river brings life to death – life to the dead sea – the language harkens back to the creation story – evocative imagery of a landscape teeming with life – this river flows – from the temple – from the place of sacrificial death – proclaiming a different story – thank God - a story of a death bringing life.*

### **Read 1 Corinthians 15:22b-26; 50-58**

4. In an agrarian society they would hold their wealth in seed. At planting time they would literally plow all of their wealth, all of their hope into the ground. With that first ear of corn, first grain, first fruit it was a time of great joy and feasting for it was the first taste of an actual future, the guarantee of more to come. What do you think Paul is meaning by calling Jesus’ resurrection the first fruits?

*That his resurrection is the first taste of new life – the guarantee that there is more to come.*

*It means that Jesus’ risen body is a “prototype” of our risen body.*

5. In Christ we will all be made alive. The greeks had two words for life: bios and zoe. Bios is where we get our world biology, biological life. All of us have bios but not all of us have zoe – the life of God, the life his spirit, the life of his future kingdom breaking into the present. What impact does this risen life of Jesus have on us as we receive it by faith now?

*As we receive his risen life by faith, the life of Jesus, the life of the coming kingdom the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of new creation comes into us to transform us from the inside out. This means that we begin to take on his nature, begin to live out the way of his future kingdom now.*

*There might be wisdom here in reading the quote Tim gave from C.S. Lewis' Mere Christianity to put some flesh on the promise the resurrection gives us now:*

*He writes - You see - the command - Be ye perfect is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. He is going to make good His words. If we let Him—for we can prevent Him, if we choose—He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness - that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what He said*

6. (23) Upon his coming the dead in Christ will be raised. The Corinthians had asked Paul 'with what kind of body will I be raised?' How would you answer that question?

*Not one like we know now – replies Paul – for the perishable has to put on the imperishable – the mortal has to put on the immortal – it is a profound mystery – but if you want a living example – look at Jesus – the first fruits – his risen body was physical – he walked – talked – ate – his risen life was material – you could touch – feel – but it wasn't bound by the limits of the physical – walls meant nothing to him – travel accomplished by a thought – with what kind of body will I be raised? It's a mystery – but look at Jesus.*

7. (24) Then at the end he will deliver the kingdom after destroying every rule and every authority, and every power – meaning that everything that mars God's good creation had been done away with. Imagine together what such a future might look like.

*These are some of the examples Tim gave that might help shape your discussion:*

*Can we even begin to imagine? Imagine a world where every single thing that mars God's good creation is no more – no more sin - no more pain – no more disease – nor more sorrow – no more tears?*

*Can we even begin to imagine – a world where every wrong is put right – every evil undone – every injustice satisfied?*

*Can we even begin to imagine – a world now deeply divided by race – gender – wealth – coming together as one before the throne of grace?*

*Can we even begin to imagine? A landscape scared by human consumption – land ravaged by industry – waters polluted by tailings – entire ecosystems razed to the ground – that upon Jesus' return are transformed - extinct animals flourish - blighted skies sing and dance – a marred landscape shimmers with beauty*

*Can we even begin to imagine - human creatures restored to true vocation – God's initial design? – not that creation was perfect and we just had to chill and make sure we didn't mess anything up – it was very good and we were given the task to steward it for its full flourishing –*

*new creation means we'll have a job to do – a work that forever brings us joy – a task that forever matches perfectly who we were made to be*

*Can you even begin to imagine?*

8. (vs. 58) What kind of life does Paul invite us into in light of the truth and reality of the resurrection of Jesus and its wide reaching implications?

*Steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*

*We might expect Paul to say relax, sit back, your future is secure. But he doesn't he says stand your ground and get to work.*

*Much of our lives is shaped by the fear of death – either through a deep anxiety that keeps us from pressing forward or frenetic activity to fill this life with as many beautiful things, pleasures, and experiences for we sense that this life is all there is. In light of the resurrection we need not fear. In light of the resurrection we can be assured that there is something far richer far more beautiful, far more fulfilling in store for us.*

*There is work to do. What is that work? To live in such a way that we are anticipating new creation in everything we do and say and pray.*

9. In what ways was Ezekiel's vision a foreshadowing of Jesus' resurrection and its implications? What does his image invite us to do? and how might we do that?

*Here is how Tim reflected on this image in the sermon to help shape your conversation:*

*In Ezekiel's vision of this river – the Lord invites him to wade out – to allow the river to flow over him – around him – through him..*

*This Easter Sunday we are beckoned to step into the river - to step into the flow of life that comes from the risen Jesus*

*Step into the river that you may pulsate with his life – his zoe*

*Step into the river that when death casts its shadow you may meet it not with fear but with a grief sweetened in hope*

*Step into the river that life might flow through us - as together we imaginatively anticipate the glory of new creation in all we do and say and pray – bringing his life even now*

*Step into the river – that we might be found in Christ – and in Him might have the fullness of his risen life*