

“Your work is not worthless.” During the winter, the squirrels run around at our Disciple Garden with what look like two inch little balls in their mouths and often bury them in the ground. Inside these little balls there is a shell and then inside that, some fatty, soft flesh that we call a walnut. If you hadn’t seen it happen, you would never guess that this little ball when buried in the earth will transform into a tree that can be taller than 100 feet and more than 4 feet across at the trunk. The little seed is not like the tree that will be born from it. The tree, which will come after the seed, has a very different shape and body. But for that new body and tree to be born, the seed must die and be buried in the earth.

Paul tells us that this is what the resurrection of the dead is like. Our current bodies of flesh and blood, will be planted in the earth in death and from them a new body will be born. Our current bodies that decay will give birth to new bodies that do not decay. Our current bodies that are driven by a soul, will give birth to new bodies that are driven by the Spirit. Our current bodies are the seeds of our new bodies that will be born in the resurrection of the dead.

Our world tells us that our current bodies are all we get. **“You only live once”** is the constant and ever-present motto of our world. And because **“you only live once”** you better make the most of it. **“Live your best life”** is what we are told, over and over. Social media has become a place where people post all about their lives, competing in a sense to see who can live their “best life”—pictures of family activities and vacations and food and drink and new purchases fill social media spaces. There was a similar motto and attitude in Paul’s day, **“Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.”** People would just spend their lives fulfilling their appetites for food and drink, making themselves and their flesh happy and content—the purpose of life in their eyes was to simply enjoy it while you can. And such a sentiment goes back to the beginning of humanity and Civilization. Even in the time of Noah, before the flood washed everyone away, people just lived to “eat and drink,” trying to live their “best life” in pleasure and self-indulgence.

But King Solomon, the richest and most powerful king that Israel ever had, realized at the end of his life that this was all just a waste. Solomon had lived the “best life” any human could ever imagine. Thousands of women at his disposal, more wealth than anyone could ever spend, the best food and drink from around the world. And all Solomon could say as he approached death, depressed and miserable, was, **“All is vanity”** — **“everything is empty and meaningless.”** All of our indulgences in food and drink are nothing. Careers are nothing. All our buildings and technologies are nothing. All of our nations and organizations are nothing. All of our achievements, awards, and reputations are nothing. As Jesus teaches us, **“Not one stone will be left on another.”** That is because, as Paul says, Jesus is coming to **“abolish every ruler, authority, and power.”** The whole world of men and Civilization will be demolished and torn down to nothing.

But so will death—it too will be abolished. Death does **not** have the final word that we think it has. If we would just look around at the creation around us, we would see that reality. Every year, every day, every moment the creation goes through death and life cycles. Death never wins, it is never final—life is always being born out of death. This is the way our Creator has ordered and made his beautiful creation. Life is not just about you and this fleeting lifespan of yours. There is much more to life, so much more to come—even for you.

Therefore, Paul says to us, **“Be careful what and how you build.”** As the processes of death and life press on, only certain things will be preserved, much will be destroyed—permanently. Some people will waste their lives building things that are just going to be permanently destroyed. They will worry about their career, house, possessions, wealth, and reputation. But the fire of the Lord’s judgment is coming, death is coming, and it will destroy these things completely—they will be turned to dust and they will never rise again. But the works of the Creator’s creation, the works of love and self-sacrifice, will be purified and saved through the fire, through death—they will rise again and be preserved in the resurrection of the dead. So if we are focused on the work of Christ, the work of love, Paul says to us, **“Your work is not worthless.”**

Your life and body are a seed. There is more than just this life, there is the **“life of the age to come.”** As Jesus tells us, **“Only if a seed falls into earth and dies, does it produce much fruit.”** If your life, this life in this body, is going to be meaningful and purposeful, then you need to lay it down and plant it. Paul says, **“Every day I die.”** Every day Paul planted the seed of his life and body, giving his flesh and blood in service to selfless love for the Creator and his creation. This is what Christ did for Paul. And so Paul did this for others. And now we are called to do the same. We need to stop running away from death. We need to stop fighting death. It is part of the journey. It is not the great monster we imagine, it does not have the power we think it does. Life always wins, life always comes forth from death because the Creator’s all-powerful Word chooses life and speaks life into existence. The Lord always brings resurrection. Death is conquered, under the feet of our Lord Jesus, we must not fear it any longer.

What are you building with your life? Are you building things that will last, things that will be preserved through death into resurrection, into the **“life of the age to come”**? Or are you building things that have no eternal future, things that will be nothing but dust? What are you doing with the seed of this life and this body that the Lord has given you? Are you **“living your best life,”** selfishly squandering the seed of this life for yourself and your moment to moment pleasures and enjoyment of eating and drinking? Or are you saying “no” to your flesh and actively planting your body in love, dying everyday for the selfless ways of forgiveness, mercy, generosity, and love?

If you squander the seed of your life, selfishly trying to protect it and hold onto it and get the most out of it for yourself, then it will decay and turn to nothing but death—and your very soul will be lost in the process. But if you plant the seed of your life in love, then, yes, you will suffer and die, but in the process you will produce great fruit and a new creation at the resurrection will be born from you. If you love and lay down your life, then **“your work is not worthless.”**

The squirrels run around all winter gathering seeds. The ones they eat for themselves are lost forever. But the ones they plant and leave in the ground are transformed into trees, into new creations. Long after a squirrel is dead there stand hundreds of giant trees that they planted during their busy and short lifetimes. Their **“work is not worthless.”** The Lord takes their small labors and transforms and resurrects them into new life. May we be like the squirrels. Plant the seed of your body today and everyday in selfless love for the Creator and his creation. Lay down your life and die for others as Jesus has laid down his life and died for you. If you do, then **“your work is not worthless.” Amen.**