

Jesus Is the Resurrection and the Life

John 11:17-54

Jn 11:25-26. **Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”**

This morning’s passage is about the last and greatest sign recorded in John’s Gospel. This is the most powerful event in Jesus’ public ministry before his death and resurrection. We are studying this one event in two lessons. Last week we studied part 1 with Lazarus in the tomb. After hearing about Lazarus’ sickness, Jesus said, **“This sickness will not end in death. It is for God’s glory that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”** Even though Jesus loved this family, he stayed there for two more days. In the meantime, Lazarus was dead. Then, Jesus said to his disciples, **“for your sake I’m glad I was not there so that you may believe.”** They already believed, but what more should they believe about Jesus? Likewise, many of us have already believed the resurrection. Why then do we need to hear the message on it again? What kind of faith does Jesus want us to have?

Today, we’re going to see Lazarus come out of the tomb. Jesus reveals that he is the resurrection and the life. Jesus alone has power over death and the grave. So what? Jesus wants us to meet him in his fullness here and now. Being in lock step with the purpose of John’s Gospel, I pray that through this passage, we may all believe that Jesus is the Son of God and have eternal life in his name.

1. Jesus is the resurrection and the life here and now

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had already been dead for four days. Lazarus’ body was already in the tomb and started decomposing. He was dead, very dead. Any hope for healing was over. Funeral rituals were going on, since the mourners stayed for 7 days. Many friends came to comfort Martha and Mary. There was a huge crowd including professional mourners, wailing loudly. (They would eventually become the eyewitnesses of today’s powerful event.)

Jesus came to this grieving family, but he was very delayed. When Martha heard about Jesus’ coming, she went out to meet him (while Mary stayed at home.) Martha said to Jesus, **“If you had been here, my brother would not have died.”** It sounded like a mild rebuke: “Jesus, where were you when we needed you most?” Jesus loved this family. But when Jesus didn’t come to help in time, it didn’t look like love. “Why didn’t

you show up in time? It's too late, Jesus." But there is no such thing as "too late" for Jesus. Jesus works according to the Father's perfect time. Despite her disappointment and sorrow, Martha confessed that she had not lost all hope for her brother.

How did Jesus respond? Did he excuse his delay? No. Instead, he promised her, "**Your brother will rise again**" (23). She answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (24).

Martha took Jesus' word as a common consolation among those Jews who believed in the future resurrection. According to the Old Testament, all of God's people rise at the last day. Also, Jesus said in John 6:39-40, "**I will raise them up at the last day.**" In this sense, Martha was a good Bible student who believed in the general resurrection that will happen one day, way down the road in the future. (This is biblically and theologically correct.) But that's not good enough. It was a misinterpretation. Jesus is talking about a fundamental truth, upon which the future resurrection itself hinges.

V25-26: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

This wonderful word of Jesus is pretty familiar to us. Many of us memorize it. What is amazing about it? Note that Jesus didn't say, "I will raise the dead in the future," but, "**I am the resurrection and the life.**" Jesus himself is the resurrection and the life. This reveals Jesus' identity and authority. First, Jesus is the resurrection. Experiencing the death of her brother, Martha was looking for the great day of resurrection coming at the end of the age. She was looking for an answer in the future. But Jesus was saying, "*I AM the arrival of that day. Open your eyes my daughter, I AM HIM. I am the one you are looking for.*" This means that Jesus is the Messiah who has power over death and the grave. Jesus is the very ground of the future resurrection hope. Therefore, Jesus said, "**the one who believes in me will live, even though they die.**"

Further, Jesus says, "**I AM the life; whoever lives by believing in me will never die.**" Jesus is the author of life. "All things were created through him" (Jn 1:3). "In him was life" (Jn 1:4). "As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will" (Jn 5:21). Believers in Jesus may undergo physical death, but the life that comes from Jesus cannot be destroyed by physical death. In fact, believers in Jesus will never experience spiritual death. How is this possible? It's because believers are united with Jesus who is the resurrection and the life.

How can we be united with Jesus? It is by believing in him. In verses 25-26, the word “to believe” occurs three times (8 times in chapter 11). Apart from Jesus, we are in the sway of death. Apart from Jesus, death is the end of everything and everything is meaningless. Why should we struggle to accomplish anything in this world? “Why should I live, why wish for anything, or do anything? Is there any meaning in my life that the inevitable death awaiting me does not destroy?” (Leo Tolstoy). But when we believe in Jesus, we have a life that cannot be destroyed by death because Jesus guarantees resurrection life. When we believe in Jesus who is the resurrection and the life, we can experience eternal life already here and now. What we need is to pay attention to the person of Jesus and live in a personal relationship with him.

When difficult problems arise, we can easily become obsessed with problem solving. We are sometimes pushed beyond our limits. We may feel that the problems are killing us, and we are tasting death because of our problems. That is the very moment we need to cry out to Jesus. Jesus wants us to personally know him and experience the power of his resurrection. Whatever struggles we are experiencing, Jesus is the answer. Jesus wants us to see this. He asks us, **“Do you believe this?”**

How did Martha reply? **“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world”** (27). “Yes, Lord” is always a good answer. Though she did not fully understand what Jesus said, she confessed as much as she knew. She got the point. This is what Apostle John wants us to confess. Now, Jesus guides this confession of faith step by step to help us understand what it really means. It is not enough to make statements of faith. While we can make an excellent confession of faith, Jesus wants us to also fully experience it in our practical lives.

2. Jesus, the Son of God, weeps with us and for us

After making her confession of faith, Martha, the activist and organizer type, took another action. She went back to call her sister. We see Mary processed her grief differently from Martha who said many words. As soon as Mary came to Jesus, she fell at his feet before expressing her helpless cry. Interestingly, her opening line was identical to Martha’s, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Mary was questioning Jesus’ love. She was sobbing loudly, overwhelmed by sorrow. People who came along with her were also wailing. In Jewish public mourning, professional mourners and musicians were generally engaged to assist the family in expressing grief.

When Jesus saw them weeping, **“he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled”** (33b). Other versions translate like this: **“He groaned in the spirit and was troubled”** (NKJV); **“He was intensely moved in spirit and greatly distressed”** (NET Bible); **“A deep anger welled up within him”** (Message). In short, Jesus was profoundly agonized. When Jesus approached the tomb, he could no longer control himself, and verse 35 says, **“Jesus wept”** (the shortest Bible verse). John chooses a different word (*dakryein*) for Jesus’ tears than a word he used to describe the wailing of Mary and the Jews. It was rather a silent weeping.

We may wonder why Jesus groaned and burst out into tears. Jesus was not grieving over the loss of Lazarus, because he had that situation in control. He is almighty. He is the resurrection and the life. Why did he experience this strong emotion? Was it because of his empathetic grief? There is no doubt that Jesus always empathizes with those who weep. Yet most scholars agree that this strong emotional upset is more than human empathy or grief. Being fully God and fully man, our Savior weeps with us and for us. His tears are a manifestation of his great love for us. This reminds us of the same Jesus who was deeply agonized at Gethsemane, battling for us (cf. Chrysostom). It is the way in which he gives life to us, that is, by the way of his own death.

Death is our most formidable enemy; it is the wages of sin and intrusion into God's original order. Death terrorizes us. Our Savior is God incarnate who entered our world to bear our suffering, sin and death. Our God is neither a stone, nor a deistic god who is apathetic and aloof in heaven. As Isaiah prophesied, Jesus was **“a man of suffering, and familiar with pain”** (Isa 53:3). The evil of death that brought such havoc on his loved people caused his strong emotion of anger. The power of death had crippled everybody around the tomb. Not one person believed that Jesus would do what he was about to do. Jesus is deeply saddened by the pain we feel. He weeps with those who weep, because he loves them. I remember how I wept when my father was battling terminal cancer. I wept because of his suffering. I wept because he came to his Savior so late at the end of his life. Yet I was also greatly comforted because of Jesus. **“Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering”** (Isa 53:4). In the face of suffering and death, often people doubt God’s love. But Jesus can comfort those who are in sorrow because he went through sorrow. Jesus can comfort us because he defeated the power of sin and death. A god who never wept could not wipe away your tears. But Jesus did. So, he could say, **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted”** (Mt 5:4). **“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore”** (Rev 21:4). Praise Jesus who weeps with us and for us!

3. Jesus displays his power of resurrection

In verse 37, the Jews raised questions regarding whether death was stronger than Jesus, even though he performed a Messianic miracle, opening the eyes of the blind man. After groaning once more, Jesus came to the cave tomb with a stone laid across the entrance. Here, Jesus gives three commands: “Take away the stone,” “Lazarus, come out!” and “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.” To experience the glory of the Son, we must listen to Jesus’ words.

Jesus said, “**Take away the stone!**” (39). But Martha protested, “But, Lord.” She didn’t say, “Yes, Lord.” It was because the dead body had already begun to stink. In Palestine, dead bodies began decomposing rather quickly because they were not preserved. Not expecting a miracle, Martha was more concerned about smelling a horrible stench. Death stinks; it's not a bouquet of roses; it's not something flowery.

But what did Jesus say? “**Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?**” (40) Jesus challenged Martha that believing was her responsibility. It is Jesus who raises the dead. He came to conquer sin and death. To see the glory of Jesus, one thing is essential: Believing in Jesus’ word. To have resurrection faith is not natural; feelings of doubt and uncertainty will constantly attack us. But Jesus says, “**Did I not tell you?**” We must fight back based on the word of the Lord! For all of us, when we seek the glory of God, we must first believe! As you undergo an adverse situation, don’t be consumed by your situation, but focus on the word of Jesus. Jesus challenges us to believe in his word and take away the stone. Jesus intentionally involves people in his miracles to help them learn faith; in this case, he let them move the stone. We cannot bring the dead to life, it’s not our job to do so, but we can remove the stone. We should first remove the stone of despair and prejudice that is blocking us from taking the leap of faith.

At Jesus’ command, the stone was finally removed (11:41a). Then, Jesus prayed publicly, giving thanks to the Father for hearing his prayer. He did so for the benefit of those standing around the tomb of Lazarus (41-42). It was for them to believe in Jesus, the Son of God.

After his prayer, Jesus called out in a loud voice, “**Lazarus, come out!**” (43). Why did Jesus call out in a loud voice? Lazarus lay dead anyway. I believe that it was for the people there, including the loud mourners, to hear clearly.

What happened at Jesus’ command? The dead Lazarus came out, wrapped from head to toe, and with a cloth around his face. Jesus’ power of resurrection was displayed. As

someone said, if Jesus had not precisely called Lazarus' name, saying, "come out!" he may have emptied the whole graveyard. Finally, Jesus said to them, **"Take off the grave clothes and let him go."**

Lazarus was raised. With this, the glory of God's Son was revealed. As a result of this dramatic miracle, many believed in Jesus. But others reported to the Pharisees who called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. Shockingly, instead of rejoicing at this miraculous sign, they were rather concerned about their power and decided to kill Jesus. Massive evidence was given but they refused to believe! When people do not believe, it's not because of lack of evidence, but because of their love for darkness.

Now Jesus showed that he has the power over death and the grave. The raising of Lazarus is not the resurrection in a full sense of the New Testament. Yet the raising of Lazarus is more than mere resuscitation; it is a preview of our own resurrection. Now, how does this apply to our lives today? Shall we go to the graveyard, dig out coffins and wait for a miracle? No. Of course, God can raise the dead today if it is his will. There are real testimonies about this such as in the recent movie, *"Breakthrough."* However, the point of this last sign in John's Gospel is to reveal the Son of God. We need to ask: Who is this Jesus to me today? Do we know what a wonderful Friend and Savior we have? Apart from Jesus, this world is like a funeral; death would be the final word for everything. But because of Jesus, death is not the final word. Living in this world, we often go through the valley of suffering, tears and problems. But we don't need to be afraid of death. Through all of this, we meet Jesus, the resurrection and the life.

All people of God testify about this. After his father's sudden death, P. Kevin used to live under the shadow of death. But when he met the risen Jesus, his life completely changed through the resurrection hope in Jesus. My missionary life has been a challenge one after another. While studying in Germany, I was often humbled and overwhelmed with many hurdles, becoming anxious and sometimes angry. Through all this I came to depend on the power of Jesus' resurrection. I hold on to my life key verse: **"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death"** (Php 3:10). In the midst of a busy schedule, every time I intentionally connect with Jesus three times a day, his resurrection life revives my heart. Meditating on John 11, I experience Jesus' love and vision for us.

What issues are you struggling with? What elements of death are present in your life? Is it sickness? Or your marriage or job or your Bible students or your children or ministry? We are praying for the revival of our church, yet the power of death can plant in some a

bleak view of our church ministry. Without resurrection faith, our vision becomes narrow and small. Without resurrection faith, we may easily despair, complain and compromise with this unbelieving culture. In order to live a victorious life, we need resurrection faith. God is still working among us. Thank God for this week's Bible school with 6 messengers and 29 who share their testimonies as well as music servants.

Now, Jesus is inviting all of us to participate in his resurrection and life. This victory is guaranteed by Jesus' power, not by our own performance. He weeps for us and fights for us. He died for our sins and by the power of his resurrection, he conquered death! He alone forgives our sins and he alone rose to eternal glory. By believing, we are connected with Jesus. His resurrection life will revive us to live extraordinary lives. What kind of stone is laid across your grave? Roll away the stone by faith! When Jesus calls, **"Come out!"** the dead will rise. All children of God will hear his voice, **"Come out!"** We'll hear Jesus saying our names. We'll come out, shouting, "O death, where is your victory! O, death, where is your sting!" We can come out because Jesus is the resurrection and the life. May God bless each of us to live with the power of Jesus' resurrection!