

Part 2- I am the resurrection and the life

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[0 : 00] Good evening. If you're turning your Bibles to John chapter 11, we're going to look at the first, we're going to read the first 46 verses. Last time I was up here in September, we looked at John 11, 1 through 16.

We're going to read the chapter entirely, almost as entirely, tonight again to get a picture of what John is saying. But let's take a look at John 11. We're going to look tonight specifically at 17 through 27.

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill.

So the sister sent to him, saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill. But when Jesus heard it, he said, This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister. So when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this, he said to the disciples, Let us go to Judea again.

[1 : 15] The disciples said to him, Rabbi, these Jews were just now seeking to stone you. And are you going there again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.

But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him. After saying these things, he said to them, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I will go to awaken him. The disciples said to him, Lord, if he's fallen asleep, he will recover.

Now Jesus has spoken of his death, but they thought he meant taking rest and sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.

But let us go to him. So Thomas called the twins, said to his fellow disciples, Let us go also, that we may die with him. Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning her brother. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him.

[2 : 20] But Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.

Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again. Martha said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? She said to him, Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.

When she said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, The teacher is here and is calling for you. And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.

When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

[3 : 32] When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, Where have you laid him?

They said to him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. So the Jews said, See how he loved him. But some of them said, Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave and a stone lay in front of it. Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.

Jesus said to her, Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God? So he took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank you you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of people sitting here, that they may believe that you sent me. When he had said these things, he cut out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

[4 : 36] And the man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, Unbind him and let him go. Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.

For some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for your word. And even though this is a long story and there's lots of scene changes and there's lots of things going on, I thank you that your spirit has inspired John to recount these details. I thank you that you have worked supernaturally in John to remember all these conversations. I pray that you would help us as we look at this to see who you are, what you're doing in this world, and help us to be moved to worship you because of that.

In Jesus' name, amen. So when I was up last year in September, we looked at John 11, 1 through 16. We saw that Lazarus was ill and that Jesus had been requested to come and heal him.

But when Jesus heard that he was ill, he waited two more days. We saw that ultimately when he came to raise Lazarus from the dead, it was a catalyst to his crucifixion.

[5 : 59] It upset the Jews so much that people eventually later on in the chapter sought to kill him because he was converting many people to himself. We saw that John wrote this rather long story with an intention that we would believe.

He recorded the details, conversations, and reactions of these people for his readers so that we may believe, and by believing, have eternal life. This week we're going to look at the interaction between Jesus and Martha in verses 17 to 27.

We're going to see those same themes again in this exchange. Jesus is saying he's coming on the scene, and he's coming to, not to the town of Bethany, but he's coming to the area.

And he found that Lazarus has been dead for four days. And let's pick up in verse 21 when Martha encounters Jesus. Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you. Jesus said to her, your brother will rise again. Martha said to him, I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

[7 : 09] Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?

She said to him, yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who is coming into the world. Have you ever written somebody a sympathy card?

Have you ever stood paralyzed in a drugstore looking over words that other people have written, trying to find something that's comforting, something that might be a bit soothing to their pain?

Have you ever stood with somebody as they sobbed on your shoulder after losing somebody close to them? What do you say to somebody who is going through so much pain?

What can you say that would heal someone's broken heart? Words can comfort, but they can't take pain away. You can't say a phrase or two and expect that someone is just going to have sudden peace and relief.

[8 : 07] In this passage, Jesus comes on the scene and is met by Martha and they have a conversation. Jesus talks tenderly to her while also bringing truth to her.

She's just lost her brother. In fact, she just asked Jesus to come to heal him and he didn't. Not only did he not come right away, he waited for two days.

And she hears he's coming and she goes to meet him. She hears Jesus is coming and she wants to be with him. Often the closer we are with people, the more we want them around when we're hurting.

If we're close to somebody, we want them near to hug them. We want to talk to them. We want that person to help us in our grief. I don't know where Jesus is when Martha meets him.

He's close enough to know that Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days, but he's not quite in the town. Verse 30 says when Mary went back to get Martha, Mary went and Jesus was still in the place where Martha had met him.

[9 : 14] So Jesus is still outside the town, not in Bethany and not by the tomb. So take this with a grain of salt. But when I think about this exchange, I've got a picture of Martha meeting Jesus on the road.

Jesus and his disciples are making their way to Bethany. The walking stops as Martha encounters Jesus and his disciples. And the first words that John records her saying are, If you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Jesus' response is somewhat vague. Your brother will rise again. Martha replies, I know he'll rise again in the last day. Jesus finally tells her, I'm the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? Martha replies that she does. If you take a step back, though, isn't this conversation a little bit odd?

Isn't Jesus coming to raise Lazarus? Isn't that his purpose? He's coming back to bring a man to life. Why is he spending time talking about theology with Martha? Why does that matter?

[10 : 24] I think the fact that Jesus has this discussion with Martha and the conversation itself can tell us a lot about ourselves and Jesus and how we interact together as people, but also how Jesus and God interacts with us.

So Martha goes to Jesus even though she wished he had done things differently. She's honest with him. She comes to Jesus in sadness, disappointment, even maybe in accusation saying, if you had been here, if you had come when I called you, if you had come when I asked, my brother would still be here.

The Bible, especially in the Psalms, provide many examples of people coming to God with honest pains and disappointments. Psalm 10.1 says, Why, O Lord, do you stand far away?

Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? Psalm 22.1-2, quoted by Christ on the cross, says, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

[11 : 39] Psalm 42.9-10. I say to God, my rock, Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go on mourning because of the oppression of my enemy? As of the deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taught me, while they say to me all day long, Where is your God?

We can be honest with God. We can go to God with the pain that we have in our lives, but there is a line. We can be honest about our pain, our disappointments, but we can't stay there.

In our example, Martha here moves into faith. She says, I know whatever you ask in the Father God will give you. She says in the end that she believes that he's the Christ, the Son of God coming into the world.

And the Psalms, too, move often very much back and forth between faith and expressing disappointment. Faith. Even in this Psalm 42, back and forth, over and over again, it's, I trust in God.

Why have you forsaken me? I trust in God. And so it's back and forth. We can talk to God about our pain. We can come to him and tell him the things that are hurting us, the things that we find uncomfortable, but we shouldn't talk about God in accusatory or grumbling ways.

[12 : 49] What's the difference? Well, if I come to God and say, I've lost somebody I love. It's really hard. It hurts. I need your help. Versus coming to God and accusing him of not loving us.

Accusing God of being a cruel God. I mean, think of Job's wife, right? What does Job's wife say?

Curse God and die, right? This is too much. I've had it. I don't want anything to do with God.

I'm ready to be done. So, the difference is, if we, where we go with our pain is important. We go to God. We can be honest with him and let his word soften our heart.

I think it's easy for us to look at this passage, especially the conversation we have with Martha here, and kind of gloss over it as part of this bigger story. We look at it and say, you know, if she would just wait a few minutes, oh boy, she's in for a treat.

But, if we step back and put ourselves in her shoes, she's been struggling with this pain for days. She asked Jesus to come and heal her brother and he didn't. Her brother's gone.

[13:52] He's in a tomb. At the moment she's talking to Jesus, 100% of that pain is there. She's fully aware of it. She's fully aware of the loss of her brother.

It's probably all she's thinking about. If you've ever lost a loved one, you too are in that four-day period. You may have prayed and asked God to heal him, heal your brother, father, son, or sister and God didn't choose to.

But now we're in that same period waiting for that resurrection. And you might say, yeah, Paul, that's great, you know, but Mary and Martha got Lazarus back. God's not going to bring my loved one back, is he?

But before you feel too jealous, they did get Lazarus back but he died a second time. He had to go through the pain of dying twice. Mary and Martha, depending on when he died, may have gone through the pain of losing him twice.

What does this conversation between Jesus and Martha tell us about Jesus? We see in this conversation between Jesus and Martha that Jesus is patient.

[15:04] He doesn't get frustrated with their accusations or throw his hands up in the air and say, I'm done. You're not getting it. I keep talking to you about what's happening and what's going to happen and you don't get it.

He doesn't walk away. He doesn't apologize or make excuses. As I thought about this, this amazed me. If you were asked to come to somebody's aid and you didn't and something bad happened, wouldn't the first thing that you say to them be, I'm sorry?

If you had been asked by Martha to come and you could have healed her brother and you didn't, wouldn't an I'm sorry or please forgive me be in order?

God never has to answer to us about why he chooses to do this or that. Jesus doesn't have to make an excuse about why he chose to stay two more days in the place where he was.

We saw last time that he had a reason for that. He was seeking to give glory to God and to show Mary and Martha an even bigger picture of himself. Psalm 115.3 says, Our God is in the heavens and he does all that he pleases.

[16:08] Psalm 135.6 says, Whatever the Lord pleases, he does. In heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. Jesus doesn't need to say sorry or even ask forgiveness because he's done nothing wrong.

Often the things that we think, often the things that God deems best for us are the things that we would rather avoid, things we would like to minimize if we could. But Jesus focuses Martha on himself, not the past and not the future.

Let's look at verses 21 to 23 again. Martha says to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you. Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again. If you had been here, he would not have died.

All the English teachers in here will note that that's past tense. He's saying, she's saying, if I look back and say, in a perfect world, if God had been here, if God had done what I asked, Lazarus would still be here.

[17:26] How many times do we look at hard things in our life, hard things that God brings into our lives and say those two words, if only, if only you had been here, if only you had done this, if only you had done that.

We talked about that a little bit in Sunday school this morning. How often do we look at circumstances and say, if I were in charge, I would do it this way. We want to be God. We want to be the one who's trying to work all things together for good.

We want to be the one who's making decisions and saying, I would like it to be this way. I think a better way to go about bringing God glory or making my life good or making my life easy would be if things went that way.

But when trial and troubles or pain or even death comes, we need to look to our feelings and look to God's truth, not to how we feel about how things are happening around us.

Deuteronomy 29, 29 says, the secret things belong to our God. The things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever. We may do all the words of his law.

[18:30] So, Martha's looking in the past and saying, if I could have just, if Jesus had just been here, things would have been okay. But Jesus reorients her.

The past is gone. She has no control over it now. At this moment, Lazarus is dead. Jesus is here. He said, he reorients Martha. He draws attention to what will be.

He says, her brother will rise again. But what does she do? She hears, your brother will rise again and she jumps to the future. She says, I believe that he will rise again in the resurrection that's in the last day.

Jesus settles it. It's not about how things would have been or could have been if you had been in charge. It's not about just the fact that one day things will be made right.

Jesus says, Martha, I'm the resurrection. Right now, me, here, in front of you. Look at me. Believe on me.

[19:38] And you will see the glory of God. But we get lost too. We get lost gazing painfully into the past or wistfully into the future when the great I am is in front of us.

His word is here for us to read. His spirit is inside of us. God has work for us to do now. God has a job for us to do now.

Philippians 3, 13 through 14. Paul is written to the church in Philippi and he says, Brothers, let you not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and turning forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Jesus wants Martha to understand this. And he's willing to spend time helping her understand.

You've mentioned this already before, but he's not rushing to the tomb.

It's obviously important to him that he spend this time helping Martha understand, teaching her, shepherding Martha. He sees more value in Martha believing this than just having her brother healed or raised.

[20:47] Really, Jesus could have already healed Lazarus before he died. He could have kept him from even getting sick. Jesus could have just rolled on the scene with his disciples, went to the tomb, called out Lazarus and left.

Many of the miracles in the Gospels are such short encounters like that. When Jesus raised the widow's son of Nain, all he said to that widow was, don't weep. And then he went to the boy and raised him from the dead.

But instead of ignoring Martha and her pain, he deals with her before Lazarus. Lazarus can wait.

He's not going anywhere. Martha needs to believe this.

It's more important that Martha gets a better vision of Jesus than to have her brother raised. He's going to make sure that Martha gets it. In this account, John writes what he's written between these two close friends.

But the words of Jesus to Martha are words to us too. John has written these things like he said so that we may believe and by believing have eternal life. Jesus' comfort to Martha is not just her brother will rise again.

[21:54] It's also a revelation of himself to her. He tells her who he is. Martha, I am the resurrection and the life. What does that phrase mean? What implications does that have if that's true of Jesus being the resurrection and the life?

Well, first it means that the resurrection is about who, not when. Look again at what Martha says in verse 24. She says, I know he'll rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

The reply that Jesus gives is a response to her focus on the last day. He's focused on her timing.

Jesus' point is, he is the resurrection and the life. He's all of it.

He embodies it. He's not less than that. He is the one to be believed, to put faith in. Martha may have thought of him as a powerful teacher, as someone close to God, but I don't think she saw him as the resurrection.

As a creator and sustainer of all things, Christ is not just a facilitator of the resurrection. He is the resurrection. Colossians 1, 15 to 20 paints a picture of how a powerful, self-sufficient creator Jesus is.

[23:10] Colossians 1, 15 through 20 reads, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether

thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church.

He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross.

Any resurrection of Lazarus is only going to happen because of Christ. This one, in a few verses, and the one in the future, the final resurrection, are both because of Christ, are both powered by Christ.

All resurrections, Lazarus and ours in the future, are bound up 100% fully in the person, nature, and being of Christ.

[24 : 24] To Christ, what it means to be the resurrection and life, means that time is irrelevant. He waited two days to even leave to see Martha and Mary and raise Lazarus.

He spends time talking to Martha instead of rushing to the tomb. He waits outside the city for Mary to come after Martha leaves. He can raise a dead man now, he can raise him later.

It's the same power. It's the same God. Jesus is saying, hey, I'm the resurrection and the life. I'm the first mover. I'm the one bringing to life what is dead.

Four hours, four days, four thousand years. It doesn't matter. I'm the resurrection and the life. Christ being the resurrection and the life also means that his resurrection secures our own resurrection.

Jesus tells Martha, whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. There's two halves of this passage.

[25 : 28] The first half, whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. It sounds like it would fit Lazarus. He's dead, but he will live. Not just now, but forever.

With Jesus, a new heaven and a new earth. The second half, it sounds like it's for us. Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Those alive who put their faith and trust in Christ will never die.

This is similar to what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3.16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

As Christians, people who put their faith and trust in Christ, we look forward to the day when our body will be raised on the last day when Christ returns.

But we can have confidence because God has united us with Christ in his death and in his resurrection. Listen to what Paul tells the church in Romans 6, 4 and 5.

[26 : 31] We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we should certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. Christ's resurrection secures, purchases, and enables our own resurrection. We're united with Christ in his death and resurrection. The church in Corinth, another church that Paul is written to, has some very wrong ideas about the resurrection. Some people claim to believe in Christ, but they didn't believe there would be a resurrection.

Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 15 that we'd be pretty sorry religious people if the only hope we had was to have a good life and to be comfortable and moral people.

We'd be pretty sorry if there was no real resurrection. That means even Christ wouldn't have been raised. Then in verses 20-24 he reminds them that Christ has indeed been risen. 1 Corinthians 15 20-24 reads But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

[27 : 57] For as by a man came death, by a man is also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. Each do his own order.

Christ the firstfruits, then it is coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end where he delivers the kingdom of God the Father after destroying every rule and authority and power.

sometimes we tend to forget about this coming life in the future, about our resurrection.

We get focused on our job or our health or our finances. We forget that one day we'll all be resurrected. We'll receive a new body. Some of you can't wait for that new body.

Some of you have bodies that seem to require more trips to the doctor than the grocery store. Paul says in Romans 8, 18, I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. I know whenever I get a toothache or when I have my kidney stones, I was definitely waiting for the redemption and revealing of the sons of God.

[29 : 09] D.A. Carson said, I'm not suffering from anything that a good resurrection can't fix. One day, because of Christ and his resurrection, those who put their faith in Christ will be raised incorruptible.

New bodies on a new earth. Poor Lazarus was raised with a normal body back into a sinful fallen world with pain again just like we are every day.

Our resurrection will be better than Lazarus. Lazarus' resurrection is just a trailer it's a preview for what's to come. The real show is coming in a few days when Christ rises from the dead and we, united in him in a supernatural way, will be raised too.

Finally, Christ being the resurrection means that belief in him has eternal ramifications for our life. Christ continues after telling Martha he's the resurrection and the life that whoever believes in him, even though they die, will live.

Everyone that lives and believes in him will never die. Jesus spent time talking to Martha about this and then he asked her a simple question.

[30 : 21] Do you believe this? He's not asking to see if he should be doing this miracle and if she does say yes and he'll do it or not. He's not asking to see if they can still be friends.

Do you believe me? Can we still be friends? Is our theology still in line? He's asking because her eternal fate hinges on her answer. Belief in Jesus is central to the story.

It's central to the Gospel of John. It's central to the entire Bible. What you do with Jesus, what you think about him, what you believe about him has eternal consequences.

John 3.18 says, whoever believes in him is not condemned. Whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the Son, the only Son of God.

John 19.35, he who saw it has borne witness.

His testimony is true and he knows that he is telling the truth that you also may believe. And then we've referenced this already but John 20.31, that these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.

[31 : 32] after Christ's resurrection many, even of the disciples didn't believe. Thomas had a whole checklist of things he would need to see before believing.

I need to see his nail-pierced hands, I need to touch the holes in his hands, I need to put my hand in his side, then I'll believe. Listen to what Jesus responds to Thomas when he appears before them in John 20.

Then he said to Thomas, put your finger here and see my hands. Put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve but believe. Thomas answered him, my Lord and my God.

Jesus said to him, have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed. Believing in Christ is eternal ramifications.

If this man says he's a resurrection and a life but did nothing to prove it, if he didn't have power over the grave, fine. Ignore him.

[32 : 37] Find some other religious teacher to imitate and model your life after. But if this man who says he's a resurrection and a life calls a dead, rotting man out of a tomb and out hops a man bound up and if this man says he's a resurrection and a life after he's put to death brings himself out of a tomb, you better believe in him.

You don't need to put your hands in his sides and know that he's a powerful God who has power over death. John spent time writing these details, remembering this conversation, the places, the reactions with one intent, with one purpose so that you may believe.

The Holy Spirit inspired John to write this story, detailing his interaction with his family so that you would get a better picture of who Christ is. This story isn't about Lazarus, Martha, or Mary.

The story of Lazarus is not about Lazarus. It's about Jesus. It's about him repointing us toward himself. It's about bringing God glory. It's about Jesus giving us just a glimpse of the resurrection, of his resurrection, and calling us to believe.

Jesus' question to Martha, then, is my question to you. He's resurrection and the life. Do you believe this? Let's pray. Lord, I thank you that you and your mercy have given us your word.

[34 : 11] You've shown us even in narrative stories and things that have happened 2,000 years ago of the grace and mercy you have in dealing with us.

