

I AM the Resurrection and the Life

John 11:1-44

Key Verse 11:25-26 “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

Today’s opening question is: Are you ready to face death?

Think about how death is portrayed in our modern culture. In movies, action heroes routinely kill people, and we often see death treated as part of the entertainment. In *The Odyssey*, for example, violence and death are part of the story. In video games, we fight monsters and enemies, and when our character dies, we simply hit the restart button and keep playing. Over time, these kinds of depictions can make death seem almost trivial—as if it were no big deal. But that creates a false sense of security. Death is not trivial. Death is real.

We are surrounded by it. We have wars in which men and women fight and die. We have fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and friends who succumb to terrible diseases. Death is a part of life. It happens to all of us. And yet, we spend much of our lives trying not to think about it. We convince ourselves, *It won't happen to me*. We take risks we shouldn't take. We place our confidence in medical science, hoping that somehow death can be postponed indefinitely.

But the reality is that we all have an appointment with death—an appointment to leave this life or to watch someone we love leave this life. That is one of the reasons John 11 is so important. In this passage, we are confronted with the reality of death. Lazarus dies. His sisters grieve. His friends mourn. Jesus Himself weeps. But the story does not end at the tomb.

In today's message, may we be willing to face the reality of death so that we might also embrace the reality of the resurrection. This message will be divided into three parts. Part 1 is *It is for the glory of God*. Part 2 is *Do you believe this?* And Part 3 is *Lazarus, come out*.

PART 1 IT IS FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Mary and Martha appeal to Jesus because Lazarus is dying. Jesus assures them that Lazarus’s sickness is not ultimately for death, but for the glory of God. It sounds hopeful. Jesus is going to do something. But then look at what happens next.

Let’s read verse 6, “So, when He heard that Lazarus was ill, He stayed two days longer in the place where He was.”

Jesus doesn’t come right away like Mary and Martha asked Him to. Why? Think about how Mary and Martha must have felt. Their brother is dying, and Jesus—the one person they know can save him—decides to stay where He is. Does this mean Jesus doesn’t care? Far from it. Jesus’ delay was not a sign of indifference. In His sovereign will, God would use their suffering to reveal His glory and to show them more clearly who Jesus really is. Jesus intentionally delays going to Lazarus, knowing that Lazarus will die. Look at what Jesus says in verses 14–15: “Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

Did you hear that? “For your sake I am glad.” Jesus is not glad that Lazarus died. He is glad for what He is going to accomplish through Lazarus’s death—for the sake of His disciples and their faith. Look at the disciples. They are afraid to return to Judea because the Jews had just tried to stone Jesus. Then, when Jesus tells them that Lazarus is sleeping, they misunderstand Him and think Lazarus will simply recover. They don’t understand what Jesus is doing. Jesus wants them to confront death because Jesus wants to teach His disciples, and, you and me, what it means to truly believe in Him—even in the face of death. Jesus isn’t simply trying to make their circumstances easier. He is strengthening their faith.

Many of us are guilty of having a superficial faith. When life is going well, when our families are healthy, when our finances are secure, when everything seems to be under control, we say, *“Of course I believe. Of course I follow Jesus.”* But what happens when the answer doesn’t come? What happens when Jesus doesn’t show up when we expect Him to? What happens when the sickness doesn’t go away? When the loved one dies? When the prayer seems unanswered? That is when the genuineness of our faith is revealed. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:6–7 that we may be “grieved by various trials,” so that “the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Jesus allowed the disciples to walk through this trial because He was preparing their faith for something greater. He doesn’t always give us immediate comfort. Sometimes He allows us to walk through suffering that we don’t understand. Not because He doesn’t love us, but because He loves us with a deeper purpose. He wants a faith that doesn’t depend on everything going right. He wants a faith that can stand even when everything goes wrong. And when we see the glory of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, we can have the faith to believe in Jesus even when facing sickness and death. And now John brings us into the middle of that trial. Lazarus is dead, the family is grieving, and Jesus has finally arrived.

PART 2 DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?

Jesus arrives after Lazarus has been dead for four days, and Mary and Martha are now facing a future without their beloved brother. The house is filled with people who have come to mourn with them. Martha hears that Jesus is coming, and she immediately goes out to meet Him.

When Martha sees Jesus, she says, (V21-22) “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.”

Notice what Martha is saying. There is grief in her words, but there is also faith. “If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Martha knows Jesus could have prevented this. But Lazarus is dead. It’s been four days. The situation has moved beyond what she thought Jesus could fix. And yet she says, (V22) “But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” Jesus responds, (V23) “Your brother will rise again.” Martha answers, (V24) “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”

Martha believes in the resurrection. She believes that one day, at the end of the age, God will raise the dead. But notice where her faith is focused. She’s looking toward the future. And then Jesus says something that changes everything:

Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Let’s read that together. “I am the resurrection and the life.”

Martha is thinking about the resurrection as something that will happen someday. Jesus is telling her that the resurrection is not merely an event—it is a person. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

Jesus continues, (V25b-26) “Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”

Then Jesus asks Martha the most important question: (V26) “Do you believe this?” Jesus is drawing her beyond simply believing that there will one day be a resurrection. He is calling her to trust Him now – in the present. Martha knows Jesus could have prevented Lazarus from dying. She knows there will be a resurrection someday. But Jesus wants her to understand something even greater: He has authority over life and death right now. And this is where John 11 speaks directly to us. Have you ever thought your situation was too far gone for God to help? Have you ever thought, “*If God had acted sooner, maybe things would have been different. But now it's too late.*”? Maybe you've made choices that have left your life in a mess. Maybe you've lost a relationship that you desperately wanted to save. Maybe you've failed in ways you don't know how to recover from. Maybe you're carrying guilt, loneliness, fear, or hopelessness. Maybe you've prayed for something for so long that you've begun to wonder whether God is listening at all. And perhaps, like Martha, you believe God can help *someday*. You believe in heaven. You believe in the resurrection. You believe that Jesus will ultimately make all things right. *Someday*. But what about right now?

Let's read verse 25, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.”

Jesus isn't merely promising Martha something He will do in the distant future. He is revealing who He is. He is life in the midst of death. He is hope in the midst of hopelessness. He is present even when we don't understand His timing. Look at verse 25 again. Listen carefully to what Jesus says: “Though he die, yet shall he live.” Those words are for you. Yet shall *you* live. But ask yourself, *how* shall I live? John 1:4 says, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Jesus is not merely someone who gives life. He is life. When we believe in Him, Jesus fills us with the Life of God right now. It's a life in Him. A life filled with the faith, courage, strength, and hope that comes from Him – a truly abundant life. And that promise changes everything about how you and I should live today. That doesn't mean every problem will immediately disappear. Lazarus still had to die. Martha still had to experience four days of grief. But Jesus was there, and Jesus had not lost control. So, ask yourself: Is whatever you're going through too great for God? Is your situation too far gone? Has too much time passed? Have you made too many mistakes? Is your problem too complicated? Is your pain too deep? Jesus asks you the same question He asked Martha: “Do you believe this?”

Not simply, *Do you believe that there will someday be a resurrection?*

Not simply, *Do you believe that God exists?*

But do you believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life? Do you trust Him now, even when you don't understand what He is doing? Martha responds, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

That is the faith Jesus is calling us toward—not a faith that says everything will always go the way we want, but a faith that says, “Jesus, I don't understand this, I don't know what You are going to do, but I know who You are. And I trust You.”

Mary's grief brings Jesus face-to-face with the pain of death. Jesus does not remain distant from human suffering—He enters into the sorrow and weeps with those who mourn.

Let's read verses 33–34, “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.’”

And then we come to one of the shortest and most powerful verses in all of Scripture: “Jesus wept.” Everyone was weeping. Mary was weeping. The people who had come to comfort her were weeping. And when Jesus saw their grief, He was deeply moved and greatly troubled. The language here tells us that Jesus was profoundly shaken by what He was seeing. Death had entered this family. Death had broken relationships. Death had brought grief, sorrow, and pain. And notice something important: Jesus knows what He is about to do. He knows Lazarus is going to come out of that tomb. Jesus knows that death will not have the final word. And yet Jesus weeps. Why? Because Jesus is not indifferent to our suffering. He doesn't stand outside our grief and say, *“Don't worry about it. Everything will work out.”* He enters into our sorrow. He feels the weight of what death has done. He sees Mary crying, He sees the mourners crying, and He weeps with them. That is incredibly important for us to understand. Sometimes we think that because we are Christians, we shouldn't grieve. We know there is a resurrection. We know there is eternal life. We know that death is not the end. But that doesn't mean death doesn't hurt. It doesn't mean we don't cry when someone we love dies. It doesn't mean we don't become frightened when someone we love is sick. Jesus knew Lazarus was about to rise, and Jesus still wept. I understand something of that fear as a father.

When my oldest daughter, Claire, was two years old, and, COVID was still very much in the news, she became very sick. She had a fever between 103 and 105 degrees for almost a week, and my wife and I were terrified that she might have COVID. We took her to an immediate care clinic, where they told us her oxygen level was low. Suddenly, they were moving us into another room to X-ray her lungs. My wife was pregnant and couldn't be in the room, so I had to take Claire myself. I remember holding my two-year-old daughter's tiny hands while they took the X-ray. She was scared, and I was trying to keep my face calm and reassuring even though I was terrified. I've seen my fair share of things, but standing there holding my daughter's hands, not knowing whether she was going to be okay, was one of the most frightening experiences of my life.

And all I remember doing was praying silently over and over:

“God, please let her be okay. If she has anything, whatever it is, I'll take it. Give it to me. Let me carry it.”

Thankfully, the X-ray showed nothing. We later learned that the oxygen reading had been taken incorrectly, and Claire was okay. I remember the relief I felt. But that experience helped me understand something about the anguish of watching someone you love suffer. When you love someone deeply, their suffering becomes your suffering. And that's what I see when I read, “Jesus wept.” Jesus is not distant from your suffering. When you cry, He is not indifferent. When you grieve, He is not annoyed. When you are hurting, He does not stand far away from you. Jesus is present with you. But Jesus does

more than enter into our suffering. He has the power to overcome the very thing that causes our deepest sorrow: death itself.

PART 3 LAZARUS, COME OUT

In these verses, Jesus demonstrates His absolute authority over death by raising Lazarus from the dead. Let's read verses 41–42, "So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that You sent Me.'"

And then Jesus cries out with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come out!" And what happens? "Out came the man who had died, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face wrapped around with a cloth."

Lazarus is alive! Think about what just happened. Jesus didn't perform some kind of trick. He didn't revive a man who was barely alive. Lazarus had been dead for four days. His body was in a tomb. His sisters had mourned him. People had gathered to comfort his family. Lazarus was dead. And Jesus simply said: "Lazarus, come out." And death had to obey. This miracle reveals God's glory. It confirms Jesus' identity and authority. And it calls people to believe in Him. But there is something else we need to understand. Death is real. And the pain of death is experienced by those who are left behind. Lazarus wasn't standing outside the tomb thinking about how terrible death was. Mary was. Martha was. The disciples were. His friends were. The dead no longer experience the pain of this earthly life. But the living experiences the loss. That's what makes death so painful.

When I was 20 years old, my father took his own life. My brother and I found him hanging in the basement of our old house. It's been 18 years since then, but I still remember it. I could tell you how the room smelled. I could tell you where the light bulb hung. I could describe the sound your steps made on the concrete floor. The image is burned into my mind, and I carry it like a spiritual scar. At my father's wake, there were so many people who came. Close family. Distant family whom I had only seen a handful of times. Even people I didn't know. I remember sitting in a chair while people kept coming up to me saying things like, "*I'm sorry for your loss.*" At some point, I tuned it all out. I remember sitting there in front of the casket, just thinking. Thinking about everything. Thinking for the sake of thinking. Trying to detach myself from the reality that I was sitting in front of the casket of my dead father. Because that's what death looks like. Death looks so final. It looks like the end of all things. It looks like a horizon that we cannot see beyond. And that's why the words of Jesus mean so much to me.

Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" I believe this. I don't agree with the choice my father made. But I do know that he had faith in Jesus. And because of that, I have hope. Hope that death is not the end. Hope that the grave is not the final destination. Hope that I will see my father again. I believe this. And that is why I'm here giving you this message. Because death is a part of life. Death is not a trivial matter. We don't get a restart button. We don't get a continue. Some of us in this room have already lost people we love. And for those who haven't—one day, you will.

I'm not telling you that to frighten you. I'm telling you because John 11 tells us that we need to be prepared for the reality of death and the reality of the resurrection. When the time comes, I want you to hold on to Christ. Because Jesus has already demonstrated that death does not have the final word. Earlier, Jesus described Lazarus as having "fallen asleep." And when the disciples misunderstood Him,

Jesus plainly told them that Lazarus had died. Why use the language of sleep? Because from Jesus' perspective, death is not the end. Jesus can wake the dead. And that is exactly what He does. But Lazarus's resurrection was only temporary. Lazarus would eventually die again. Jesus was showing us something greater. He was showing us that He is the resurrection and the life. He was showing us that death does not have the ultimate authority. And He was pointing us toward the day when He Himself would rise from the grave and defeat death forever.

That is why Paul can write: "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." That is the hope of the Christian. We don't deny death. We don't trivialize death. We face death. But we face it knowing that Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life. Death may take our loved ones from us for a time. Death may take us from this earthly life.

But death does not have the final word. Jesus does.

Jesus allowed Lazarus to die so that God would be glorified when Jesus raised him from the dead. And through this miracle, Jesus calls us to believe—not simply that He can raise the dead, but that He Himself is the resurrection and the life.

Let's read our Key Verse 11:25-26 "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Let us Pray.