

## **I AM...the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25-26)**

**Readings:** Luke 24:1-12; John 11:17-44

On Easter Sunday we remember and rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
He was put to death for our sins and he was raised for our justification.

Easter is a day of rejoicing, because he who died for us, lives again and someday all those who have died in Christ will rise to a new life in the presence of God.

Now with the raising of Lazarus Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life."

He is not talking about the resurrection in the end of time,  
but he is the resurrection today and the life today.

"I am the resurrection and the life."

That's what Jesus says to us on this Easter Sunday.

Don't forget, this is one of the seven "I Am" statements to be found in the Gospel of John.

In these statements Jesus wants us to think of God speaking to Moses out of the burning bush;  
at that time God identified Himself as "I Am Who I Am."

By using the same expression, Jesus claims divinity,  
He claims to be God's equal,  
He claims to be part of the eternal God-head.

"I am the resurrection and the life." What is Jesus saying about Himself?

Usually, when we think of Easter's resurrection,  
we think of something that happened to Jesus.

We think of Jesus as a patient;  
the doctor – in this case, God – performs the surgery and the patient gets better.

Or, we think of Jesus as a victim – He has no say and choice in the matter;  
the resurrection is something that happens to Him or is done to Him.

This is the way it was with all the other resurrections we read about in the Bible.

The widow of Nain's Son.

The daughter of Jarius

Lazarus commanded to come out of the tomb

Elijah stretching himself three times over the son of the widow of Zarephath  
Elisha the son of the Shunem couple.

All of these people were acted upon by forces outside of themselves and beyond their control.

But Jesus does not speak of Easter's resurrection as something that happened to Him as if He were a patient or a victim.

He says, "I am the resurrection and the life."

So what happened that first Easter?

Did God have to go into the tomb and shake Jesus awake?

Did He have to call Jesus out of the tomb?

Did He have to command Jesus to arise?

When we look at the Easter story we see none of that.

Yes, the stone had been rolled away...

but that was so the disciples and the women could get in rather than Jesus get out.

We see that the strips of linen that were wrapped around Jesus' body were still laying in the exact place Jesus' body had been placed in the tomb;  
so the women and the disciples could see that the body inside of the burial wrappings was gone.

What happened that first Easter?

Jesus did not have to be let out of the tomb.

Jesus did not have to be unwrapped from the burial wrappings.

Jesus did not have to be shaken awake.

Jesus did not have to be called out of the tomb.

His body came back to life.

He passed through the burial wrappings in the same way as He later passed through walls.

He passed through the stone blocking the entrance to the tomb.

Jesus arose.

He arose from the grave in the same way as we rise up from a night's sleep.

"I am the resurrection and the life."

Not – I experience the resurrection.

Not – I am given life.

Do you get the picture.

It is not something He does.

It is not something He experiences.

It is something He is.

Notice, Jesus does not merely tell us about and bring us life, *He is life*.

He not only speaks of and gives us the resurrection, *He is the resurrection*.

Let's look a little closer at the story.

Jesus receives the shocking news about Lazarus, a friend, who is described as the one He loves (vs 3).

Jesus not only loved Lazarus but also Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus (vs 5).

The sisters sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was sick (Jn 11:3).

We can safely assume that Lazarus had more than a cold or the flu.

We can further assume that whatever he had seemed life-threatening.

Yet, when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, Jesus stayed where He was two more days (Jn 11:6).

Why?

If Jesus loved Lazarus and Martha and Mary so much, why did He stay put for two whole days?

Why didn't He rush over to Bethany to be with the family?

Why did He seem so unconcerned?

When we look at the extended passage we realize that the disciples did not expect Jesus to go to Bethany, and Martha and Mary probably shared their attitude.

As verse 8 shows, the disciples did not want Jesus to go anywhere near those hostile Jews who were now seeking His life.

But after two whole days had passed Jesus said to His disciples, "Let us go back to Judea" (Jn 11:7).

When the disciples realized they could not talk Jesus out of this dangerous trip and situation, it was Thomas who said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (Jn 11:16).

In other words, they fully expected Jesus to be killed if He went anywhere close to Jerusalem.

And, as we know, that is exactly what happened.

But the deeper reason Jesus waited is given in verse 4:

"This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

He waited until Lazarus not only was dead but had been in the grave for four days.

Jesus waited because this would best glorify God and Christ.

Jesus waited, because this would best show the truth of His words:

"I am the resurrection and the life."

Now, let me help you visualize the scene when Jesus arrived.

Funerals were a very important part of the culture of this day.

As many people as possible attended these events.

And everyone who could was expected to join the funeral procession.

Deep mourning lasted for seven days, of which the first three were days of continuous weeping, followed by thirty additional days of lighter mourning.

So, when Jesus came to Lazarus' home in Bethany it was during these seven days of deep mourning and when He arrived He found what anyone would expect to find in a Jewish house where someone had died recently...rooms filled with sympathizers.

Well when Martha and Mary learned of Jesus' approach they came to Him and asked a similar question, 'Where were you?'

And I think that, implied in this question, was their belief that it was Jesus' fault that Lazarus had died.

Well, our Lord replied to this question by telling them that Lazarus would rise again.

And Martha said, 'Of course he will...everyone will rise on the last day'.

In essence she was saying,

'Don't give me theological facts, Jesus...I know my brother will rise on the last day...thousands of years from now....but that is not good enough. I want him here now'.

And then Jesus said, 'I am...the resurrection and the life.'

Jesus doesn't say to her, 'Look, you've got your theological facts correct, Martha'.

Instead He says, 'Martha, look at ME! I am God. I have the power over death. I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, even though he dies, will live'.

In other words He was saying, 'Don't put your faith in theology...put it in ME!'

Now, in this I am... statement and the miracle that followed, Jesus gives us the answers for two of the main questions we have about death, and the first is this...

***1. We all wonder....is there life AFTER death?***

People have wanted the answer to this question since the FIRST funeral.

In fact, Job asked it long ago when he said, 'If a man dies, will he live again?' (Job 14:14 )

Well, since as Jesus both said and proved, He is the RESURRECTION...  
then we know that the answer is Yes!

It is possible for us to experience life after death.

On the Friday of Easter we remember that He DIED on the cross for our sins.  
Jesus EXPERIENCED DEATH...and then came back to life...

And because he conquered death, God teaches that we will as well.

In Romans 6 Paul said, 'For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him'.

And, as Jesus promised Martha in verse 25,

'He who believes in Me will live even though he dies'.

So, death doesn't have to be the end for us. If we accept the grace of God, made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection, we can have eternal life.

Even Job realized this.

In chapter 19 verse 25 he said,

'As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last He will take His stand on the earth'.

In other words Job found the answer to this question.

YES...there is life AFTER death.

Jesus, the Redeemer, makes that possible.

Do you remember the most memorized verse of all time?

John 3:16 says, For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish...not die...but....HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE!'

Because of my faith in Jesus Christ, Who conquered death, I, Jim de Witte, will continue to live.

Jesus beat death for me...so to me death is only gain.

It's not the end.

In fact it's really the beginning.

An elderly Scottish preacher was approaching death, and those standing by his bedside whispered, 'He is near the land of the dying'.

Overhearing them, the preacher replied, 'Nay! I'm now in the land of the dying, but I'm nearing the land of the living!'

And each Easter we celebrate the fact that Christ has done this for all believers.

He has changed the meaning of death.

As Paul said, He has taken the sting out of it.

Since Jesus rose victorious on the third day,

the bully known as death can never threaten us again.

There IS life AFTER death.

But you know, there is a second question we all have about death and I think it is this...

***2. We all wonder.....is there life BEFORE death?***

All of us long for lives that are full and meaningful.

We want to enjoy our days on this earth.

Well, is there life BEFORE death?

Again the answer is YES!

For that day in the graveyard Jesus not only said He was the resurrection.

He also boldly stated that He was the LIFE!

But you know tragically there are many people who live lives that are dull and common place... lives that are routine and purposeless.

And this kind of life is not really a life.

Now have you ever felt this way?

As if your life had no real meaning.

If you have you are not alone.

This world is full of people who are asking this question, 'Is there any way to find real joy and purpose in life?' Is there life BEFORE death?'

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ we would say, 'Yes...there is...and it is a life so real that you will refer to the life you lived before you knew this life...as death.'

Look at the way the risen Christ changed the lives of those early Christians.  
He came to people who were so confused that they were going back to former jobs and  
He called them out with a clear mission and message to which they devoted their lives.

He came to people who were frightened, holed up in a room because of their fear, and  
they became bold witnesses...risk-taking people.

He came to a defeated people and changed them into a movement that turned the world  
upside down.

So, if you were to ask those first believers...people like Paul, Peter, John...  
to compare their life BEFORE they knew Christ to their lives AFTER they met Him and  
made Him Lord...

I am sure they would say that in comparison, life BEFORE Christ was more like  
DEATH than LIFE.

You see, without Christ, as the Bible says, we are DEAD in our trespasses and sins.  
But in relationship with Jesus....Him Who is the resurrection AND THE LIFE...  
we truly begin to live and we discover the purpose for which we were created.

I want to finish with a quick look at how Jesus finishes his discussion with Martha.  
He asks, "Do you believe this?"

So, how did Martha respond?

Here are her words: "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who  
was to come into the world" (John 11:27).

If you were to die tonight and appear before the Lord Jesus Christ and He asked you the  
same question He asked Martha, what would you say?

You have two choices.

**First**, you can say, "No, I don't believe that. I don't believe that You are the resurrection  
and the life."

Many people are quite willing to admit that they do not believe that Jesus Christ gives  
eternal life to all who trust in Him.

**Second**, you can say, "Yes, I believe. I believe You are the resurrection and the life. I  
know that You died on the Cross for all my sins, paying the full and complete price. I  
am trusting in You alone. And, since You promise eternal life to all who believe in You,  
I know that I have eternal life. Yes, I believe You are the resurrection and the life."

What about you?

"Do you believe this?"

Do you believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life?

You have only two choices: "Yes" or "No."

Do you believe this?

That's the question Easter asks of each one of us.

I Am the Resurrection and the Life.