

I Am the Resurrection and the Life

John 11:17-45

Introduction: Jesus has been out in the wilderness areas. We would call it the country. There were people and some small villages, but it was far from Jerusalem. He was there because the religious leaders in Jerusalem were trying to kill Him for asserting in word and by action that He was the long awaited Messiah, the Son of God. Both Jesus and these leaders understood this to be more than a religious title. It is a claim to equality with God. It is the bold faced affirmation to BE GOD!

John 10:31-33 ³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. ³² Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" ³³ The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God."

Jesus normally lived in Bethany with Lazarus, Martha and Mary. Accept for these circumstances, He would have been there and both Martha and Mary were aware of that. When Lazarus fell ill, his sisters sent for the only person they knew of who could heal any illness known to mankind. But Jesus was not nearby.....and to make matters worse Lazarus died before Jesus even began His return trip to Bethany.

Before returning Jesus had given His disciples two purposes for the events that were taking place. They were intended to reveal The Glory of God and His Son. Last week we talked about what The Glory of God is. It is simply God revealing Himself to creation so that all can see His perfections, power and compassion.

John 11:4 ⁴ But when Jesus heard *this*, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

Secondly, Jesus said that this circumstance would strengthen their trust in Christ Himself.

John 11:15 ¹⁵ and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him."

We want to stand along the roadside just outside that village as Martha rushes out to meet Jesus. The Scripture was written and brought to life by the Holy Spirit for both of the purposes Jesus just mentioned to the disciples. We too are His followers and it is intended that we should see the Glory of God more fully and that our trust in Jesus should increase as we witness the events today.

John 16:13-14 ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ **He will bring glory to me** by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13 ¹² We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, **that we may understand what God has freely given us.** ¹³ This is

what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

Let's read the account now:

John 11:17-27 ¹⁷ So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning *their* brother. ²⁰ Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. ²¹ Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² "Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world."

It would take an eternity to discover how excellent Christ is, so we will just chip away at it together for a few weeks.

So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days: Here is a vital thing to know about Christ. He is orchestrating the events of our lives and the timing of them. He is not just responding to them. It was Jesus who "compelled" His disciples to get in the boat and go out on the sea without Him. It is similarly Jesus who, knowing full well what was going to happen to Lazarus, went out into the wilderness and then delayed His return for two days. So when the Scripture tells us that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days when He arrived....That was by design.

It is also possible that the mourners were trusting in a common Jewish belief that the soul of a departed hovers around the tomb for three days until decomposition begins. It is then that the soul departs permanently. A resurrection on the first, second or third day might not have had nearly the desired impact.

Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning *their* brother: As we noticed earlier, being in Bethany is almost like being in Jerusalem. He is again within reach of the religious leaders who want Him dead. There were a lot of people from Jerusalem already at their home when Jesus approached the village. Someone came ahead and told Martha, who instead of alerting the guests and her sister slips away and heads out of the village to meet Jesus along the road.

Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died: Martha has faith. I want you to notice this. The disciples had faith in Christ. They left their vocations to follow Him around the countryside with no visible means of support. Peter got out of the boat just because Jesus told him to. They went out preaching in villages just because Jesus told them to. They knew who to ask for help in the storm.

Matthew 8:25-26 ²⁵ The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" ²⁶ He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

They had faith....they just had insufficient faith. They did not know at first the glory and power of who they were with....who they were following.

The same thing that is true of Martha here, is true of us as well. We have faith but it needs to be increased. We trust Jesus with the future, but we are living here and now. Martha says it perfectly. "Lord, if you would have been here my brother would not have died." She even adds..."Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again.": No one can do this like Christ Himself. Martha has expressed real faith in Jesus. She believe that God will give Him anything He asks. So Jesus sets about to do exactly what He intended when He said....

John 11:15 ¹⁵ for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

Jesus tells her something she already believed. In her mind Jesus was telling her the "doctrine" of the resurrection. The Jews believed this. The comforters had probably all been saying it to her for days now. God had told them that at some future time there would be a general resurrection of all men....some to eternal life, others to eternal death.

Daniel 12:2 ² Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.": So Martha says that she knows this already. That is a very long time in the future. It is an orthodox doctrine that she has grown up with. It is a nice theological fact....But if you would have been here my brother would not have died.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life: Now at first blush this may appear to be pretty much the same thing that Martha has affirmed. Her affirmation is like that of millions who will go to Easter services and express some sort of belief in the resurrection. But Jesus uses this moment to take Martha and us to a deeper level of faith. Let's see if we can go there with her.

Jesus says...Yes....there will be a resurrection in the last day....BUT it will depend entirely on me. This is an amazing statement but is sadly overlooked as one of those religious things Jesus said about Himself. Let me say it in the reverse: "**The resurrection is me**" or "Without me there is no resurrection!" It is not just that there is a doctrine that says there will be a resurrection....It is me who creates life, gives life and has total control over all death.

This is where we need to go with Martha. Let me rephrase yet again: It is not the belief that there will be a resurrection that is important. It is total trust in Jesus Christ to resurrect you. It is complete dependence upon Him to resurrect you. Dependence upon

what you believe or what your religion teaches will not give you eternal life. What you believe may be true, but that has no power to make you live. There are millions of people who “believe” in the sense of giving mental assent to the resurrection.

“He who believes in Me will live even if he dies”: Most of us know that we live inside our body. If you lose an arm or a leg, you are still alive because there is an immaterial part of everyman that lives on even when the body is severely damaged. Most men understand this. Jesus just takes this one step further with Martha and us.

“If a man trusts entirely in me,” Jesus says.... he can lose his entire body and still live. The idea of life here is not just being animated like a fish or a plant. It is clearly being in vital life giving connection with God through Christ. If you are trusting in Christ then you are trusting the only source of life in the universe. Even when your body fails you and dies your connection to life is undiminished. This is the afterlife for believers. It is eternal union with the life of God....who is by the way....Eternal.

Life is always what men desire not death. Jesus is the source of that life. Even unbelievers receive their lives from God. Even those who curse God, ignore God, resist God and refuse God have been given their lives from God. It is universally so. God desires good things for His creatures and those things are what we desire as well. We want love, pleasure, comfort, security, joy, hope peace. Almost all men desire these things. They define and embody what men call life and every last one of them is a gift from God. Life is not breathing...it is living and experiencing these things.

“Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die”: In both these statements the idea of life is the same. In the first statement Jesus is speaking of physical death. If you trust wholly in me, He says, You will still have my eternal life even when you experience physical death. The second statement builds on that and expands it. Here Jesus speaks of spiritual death. If life means union with God through trust in Christ and His sacrifice on the Cross then death means separation from God through rejection of Christ and His sacrificial cross work.

What Jesus says to Martha can be restated this way: Anyone who trust me entirely for life will continue to live even when his physical life ends. The person who trust me for life will never experience an end to the eternal life that I will give him even when he physically dies. SO.....Here are the three things Jesus says to Martha....

- Living and me are inseparable. All men live solely because of me and there is no resurrection apart from me
- The person who trust me with their life will continue to live in union with me even after his physical death
- The person who trusts me for life this way will never ever be separated from me...or “never die!”

“Do you believe this?”: This is a question for the ages. DO you believe this. Please notice that this is not about doctrine but about Jesus. DO you believe that I am all this and that everything you hope for is because of me. I am the source of all life. I am the

only hope of Eternal life. I overcome death entirely and I give life to those who trust me alone. Jesus gives eternal and spiritual life now to those who come to him and promised to restore physical life to those same ones in the future.

John 6:40 ⁴⁰ "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Jesus asks Martha and us if we believe THIS! And this is significantly different from believing some doctrines or embracing some orthodoxy or anything else that men do that they hope will put them in standing with God. In Fact...this has nothing to do with a single thing that any person does or can do. It is all about Jesus and who He is and what He does. It is the heart of the Gospel and it crushes the attempts of men to merit salvation. It throws the entire burden upon the back of this one man who is God the Son. How do you respond? How does Martha respond?"

John 11:27 ²⁷ She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world."

Yes, Lord; I have believed: I have trusted you and trusted your words and works. What you say I believe.

You are the Christ: You are the promised savior of Israel. You are my Savior and my hope for eternal life and resurrection. Furthermore I believe that you are....

The Son of God: Not a son of god. There is a sense in which we are all that. God gives life to all men and is therefore in a sense the father of us all. No. She means that she believes His claims **to be** God. **To be** one with the Father and eternally existing. **To be** the creator and sustainer of the world This is exactly what this term meant to the Hebrews. The religious leaders wanted to kill Him for claiming to be The Son of God...

John 19:7 ⁷ The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out *to be* the Son of God."

At that moment Martha gave Him her life and trusted her eternity to Him.

CONCLUSION

Give a sense of finality: Jesus comes into the village for two reasons. To exalt God and put Him on display and to increase the faith of all those who saw Him do it. He begins by opening the eyes of one of His disciples to see how supreme He personally is in all of this. We call this Christ-centeredness. It is not about believing in the resurrection. It is about trusting your life into the hands of the one who resurrects. Similarly...it is not about believing that Christ died on the Cross for your sins. Millions believe this and are lost. It is entrusting your life to Jesus who actually did die on the cross with your name on His mind.

Answer this Questions: The reason we find it so hard to increase our faith is because we can't do it by the means we commonly employ. More knowledge, more activity, more religion. But...here is the good news today. Christ is orchestrating the events of

our lives and putting us in difficult situations in this world so that He can increase our faith. It is His doing. **HE** went to the disciples in the boat and delivered them.

Matthew 14:32-33 ³² When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. ³³ And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"

Ask for a verdict: Increase faith and trust in the true Christ of the Bible will increase our love for Jesus and empower our worship of Him. We will stop thinking so much about our circumstances and think more about the Lord who is in them with us. The one who sustains us in this world and will give us every good thing in the one to come. So....

Romans 8:31-39 ³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.