

Seven Sayings of Jesus: I Am...The Resurrection and the Life

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, June 11th. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my joy to be the pastor here. It's good to be back with you this morning.

And as you may know, I was away, I mentioned this already, attending denominational meetings in Calgary. And so lots of people have said to me, so how are the meetings? Well, that's a good question.

First of all, they're meetings. How fun is that? Not always that fun. But there were emotions shared. There were conversations expressed in those days, but all by people who love God, all by people who are seeking to serve him with all their hearts.

And so are there people with differing views on things? Yes. Are there people experiencing hurt and challenge in serving in the ways that they feel called to serve in their churches?

Yes. Is there a desire to remain as a body of churches, the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada? Yes. Are there challenging days ahead?

[1 : 08] Yes. So please continue to pray for our denominational leaders. These are all people who are essentially volunteers, many of them. Pray for our pastors in churches across Canada, but particularly the CBWC in Alberta and BC and the Northwest Territories.

There are colleagues who are struggling with conversations amongst one another, and so we're all seeking to do God's will. So it's challenging times, and I'll give you a sense of hopefully comfort.

We're not the only ones. So post-COVID, the church is experiencing an identity crisis of sorts, and so this is part of that. This is part of the growth pains of God's church, and I take comfort in the fact that God is still in control, so we don't have to be.

But we do need to continue to be faithful, continue to seek his will, and to seek to follow his lead. So, yeah, I would encourage you to continue to pray for our denomination, for pastors across our denomination and their churches that they serve.

So welcome to each of you this morning, whether you are here in person, Michelle or Connor, you can just kill these spotlights. They're hot anyway, and they're just starting to flicker, so everyone can still see me.

[2 : 36] I'm hauntingly white, so I'm glowing in the natural light anyway. So welcome whether you're joining us in person or we have lots of different channels.

We have the phone line, we have the website, and we have other ways that people connect with us. So hello to everyone, however they're tuning in. So this morning we're picking up in our sermon series Seven Sayings of Jesus I Am this morning, and I'll take a moment for a bit of a refresher.

In this series, we're considering how our personal identity can be anchored in our roles and relationships sometimes, or our skills and our hobbies, or our vocation.

The different things that we are and we do relate to our identity in many ways. So for me to declare I am, start at that at the beginning of a sentence, can mean different things, not only to me personally, but to others who get to know me.

There are people who know me as a dad, or a husband, or a pastor, or a brother, or a son, or all these different things. Some people know me as having a sense of humor.

[3 : 50] Some people know me as very serious. Some people, you know, all these different things are part of who I am. But in this series, we've been considering Jesus' identity. This is the important focus of this series.

What he said about himself in Scripture. So by understanding who Jesus is, better, more fully, then we can begin to anchor our own identity in that, instead of these passing, kind of fleeting ideas of what our identity might be.

So as we've said before, Jesus said quite a great deal about himself, and others said it about him, his identity, his mission, throughout the New Testament.

And then in the Old Testament, prophets talked about the coming Messiah, who would ultimately turn out to be Jesus. So they were speaking about Jesus as well, in the Old Testament.

So in this series, we've been exploring some of the specific ways that Jesus has identified himself in the Gospel of John. And these are all the I am statements, as people often refer to them.

[4 : 59] Because Jesus begins these statements by saying, I am this. So these statements are important to us because they're not just ways of describing Jesus himself, although they are.

But they also serve as a guide for how we can grow in our understanding of him, and then our relationship with him, or our relationship to him. I finished reading a book recently.

It was an audio book, because I listened to it on the way down to Calgary and back. It is called, It's Your Funeral. It's fun. But it's extremely informative.

I enjoyed it quite a lot. It talks about the various aspects of considering and planning for your own funeral. So a different way of looking at it, rather than leaving it up to your loved ones to figure it out based on your will and some other things, this author is suggesting that you can do a lot of this planning in advance.

So it talked a lot about the cultural and world religion perspectives on death, as well as the perspectives on what happens after we die, because they do differ within different cultures and different faith groups.

[6 : 12] So for example, the ancient Egyptians, this is why we have the pyramids, by the way, the ancient Egyptians thought about death as simply moving from a parallel experience or existence into another one where you would still need food and clothing and utensils and spears and weapons and all your treasure, all your worldly possessions.

So this is why when Egyptian tombs are excavated, there are often lots of belongings found in them, particularly the pharaohs. People were stunned by the depth and breadth of stuff that was buried with the pharaohs.

And this is why, because they believed they would need it. Eastern religions, Buddhism and Hinduism, primarily believe in reincarnation. So the suggestion there is that if you don't complete what you are destined to complete in this life, you'll have another shot again.

Now hopefully you don't get reincarnated as a poodle unless you like poodles, perhaps. And I don't say that to be disrespectful because there are perspectives that you could be reincarnated as any other living thing, not necessarily a human being.

The Greeks thought that the soul was immortal and that the body was just temporal. The body was expendable, not necessary.

[7 : 37] So when you died, the soul, your soul would go off into a shadow world of some kind where it would rest. Sounds pretty nice. So as Christians, though, I hope we can recognize that Jesus spoke clearly about the resurrection of the body.

He didn't say, well, your soul is coming to be with me and it doesn't matter. The rest doesn't matter. We're going to consider that this morning because we're going to consider this statement of Jesus where he said, I am the resurrection and the life.

So that's found in John 11, verse 25. That's the fifth I am statement if you're counting. So the story we're going to be looking at this morning should be a really familiar one.

We have talked about it in the past in different contexts for different reasons. But it's found in John 11, verses 1 to 44. Now, don't panic. We're not doing the entire 1 to 44.

We're going to go to about 27. So if you want to turn to John 11, verse 1 to 27, the Bible's in the pew in front of you or you can just listen as I read. And as soon as I say this first sentence, you'll get it.

[8 : 51] Now, a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.

So the sister sent word to Jesus, Lord, the one you love is sick. When he heard this, Jesus said, this sickness will not end in death.

No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it. Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet, when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

Then he said to his disciples, let's go back to Judea. But Rabbi, they said, a short while ago, the Jews tried to stone you and yet you were going back there?

Jesus answered, are there not 12 hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles for he has no light.

[10 : 04] And, sorry, after he said this, he went on to tell them, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I'm going there to wake him up. I'll pause there for a second.

This is another example of Jesus trying to give a description without needing to two by four information to the disciples, but they don't get it.

So Jesus says again, so his disciples replied, Lord, if he sleeps, he'll get better. Makes sense, right? Have a good rest. You'll wake up. Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

So he told them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And for your sake, I'm glad I was not there so that you may believe, but let us go to him.

Then Thomas, called Didymus, said to the rest of the disciples, let us also go that we may die with him. I'll pause there again. Have you ever read that and thought, die with him?

[11 : 12] What does that mean? Well, just a few verses before, we read the disciples are saying to Jesus, you want to go back to where the Jews wanted to stone you? So the disciples are saying, we're going back with him, we're probably going to die with him.

So that's the context there. On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. Lord, Martha said to Jesus, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

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

Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies.

[12 : 25] And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? Yes, Lord, she told him. I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, who has come into the world.

So what's next? Have you ever wondered that? Maybe as you contemplate your own mortality, what's next?

It may surprise you to hear this, but research suggests that many Christians are not actually sure what happens when you die. So despite the fact that they know, may know, should recognize that Christianity teaches that there is life after death, maybe it's fair because the Bible doesn't really give a detailed step-by-step account of what happens, of what's next.

It doesn't say in verse 12 of something, a particular book, you die, this happens next, and then this, and then this, and then this. We are 10-step program people, right?

We are, give me the three main points of this sermon that I need to remember, Pastor Kent. Give me the five things I need to do to have a secure retirement. We are step-by-step people, right?

[13 : 47] And the Bible doesn't spell it out like that. So maybe you even know followers of Jesus, people who have given their lives to Jesus, declared their allegiance to him, and maybe are still kind of skeptical, are still kind of wondering if there is anything else.

There's a reality that in this world, this world, and the world that is to come, there is a veil between them, and that is intentional. We can't merely look ahead and see, okay, this is what happens next because we need to have faith.

We need to trust that what God says, what Jesus said, happens next, will actually happen. I heard a story once about a pastor who spoke to someone that he knew quite well.

He had just officiated a funeral, and he spoke to this gentleman. And the man said to the pastor, you know, I must admit, I think that when you die, that's it.

There really is nothing more. So this man was someone who was at church almost every Sunday, except in the summer, and attended more Bible studies than he could likely ever count.

[15 : 04] He spoke openly of his faith in Christ, of his commitment to Christ, of his belief in Scripture, but on this critical point, his faith seemed to falter.

At some point in his journey, he had come to this materialistic perspective that once a person dies, once the physical body and what we know here ends, that's the end.

I've heard lots of people who would identify themselves as Christians even suggesting that the Indian doctrine of reincarnation may be true.

So they may believe in Jesus, they may believe in the truth of what Scripture says, Scripture makes it pretty clear, but they may think, oh, the grace of God, maybe I get a reboot, maybe I get a do-over.

The Bible doesn't say that. So that perspective suggests, that reincarnation perspective suggests that if you have a good life, if you've lived a good life, if you've been a good person, you've heard that, I've heard that, you may come back in a happier place next time.

[16 : 18] Is that in the Bible? Nope. So that's clearly either a sign that someone has been poorly taught, poorly instructed, or that they may have somehow adopted that Hindu, Buddhist kind of perspective and mixed it in with their belief in Christianity in some way.

So it seems that, now maybe this is you, you don't have to raise your hand, it seems the majority of Christians think that when you die, your soul leaves your body, goes off to an ethereal existence somewhere, of some kind, in heaven, in peace and joy, or in unhappiness and torment in hell.

That's it. Your soul separates from your body, your body is no longer important. And, I have explained to people that cremation is okay because if Jesus made you, if God made you, he can handle reconstituting your body from ashes.

He can handle it. So I think the root of that belief is that there's an immaterial part of our existence that's called our soul, which we believe, that is real, but it can't be seen.

And so, is this too heavy theologically maybe for a Sunday morning in the summer? That's okay. But I think for many Christians, they've come to believe that the soul really is the only important part.

[17 : 50] I'll tell you, when I went to seminary, it was mind-blowing for me to realize the Bible actually talks about God being reunited with his people in our physical form in a new heaven and new earth.

reunited with God in the eternal form in our ultimate destiny is to be reunited in a new earth in new restored bodies.

So I even had the perspective that I guess my body doesn't matter that much. That's what I learned in Sunday school. So there were a lot of people in seminary going, oh, that's what the Bible said.

It actually does say that, that our bodies will be restored. So that's important to recognize because what does the Bible say? Well, it's critical for us to recognize that Jesus and all the apostolic writers accept none of those different versions of reality that we've just been considering.

They don't say we're going to be reincarnated. They don't say the body's not important. They don't say any of those things. Those are all little pieces of what we've come to understand.

[19 : 11] So they spoke of, if you read through your Bible, they speak of the resurrection of the body. They speak of that as being a supernatural gift that is given to believers in Christ.

That is why he died, so that he would defeat death for himself and for us. And as Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, death for the believer means the end of this earthly existence and a new bodily existence in the presence of Christ.

Is that an eye opener for you a bit? Paul doesn't speak simply of the immortality of the soul, but he speaks of the resurrection when we're given a new spiritual body.

It's a physical form. Do you want to check it out? 1 Corinthians 15, 35 to 55, Paul talks about it in detail. The Christian idea, the true Christian idea, is that our body expresses who we are.

It's the outward form of our inner reality. So the Kent that you see standing here, Pastor Kent, whatever you want to call me, this is an outward projection of who I am.

[20 : 35] who my soul, who my inner being reflects. So is this perfect? Nope. Will it be perfected one day?

That's what the Bible says. Maybe taller? That'd be all right. Less prone to baldness, perhaps? Follicular perfection.

See, the Bible doesn't say that either. So the body expresses who we are. It's an outward reflection of our inner reality. An outward reflection of our soul.

So to live with Christ in heaven, hear this, to live with Christ in heaven cannot mean less than what we were on earth. It can't mean that we're just an ethereal form, because that's not what Scripture teaches us.

Scripture teaches us that our mortal bodies, as they exist now, will be perfected. How? We don't know. So this amazing gift of resurrection life is given, Jesus makes it clear, to those who believe and are given that gift of eternal life.

[21 : 49] So Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life. And by life, he means eternal eternal life.

Jesus' interaction with Martha that we heard this morning is ultimately about belief. Can you recognize that? It's not simply belief in what happens when we die, though.

It's belief in the one who has conquered death. He's not saying, do you believe that you will live again? But do you believe in me who makes that possible?

That's what Jesus is asking her. So Jesus is clear that it's about belief in him, as we read together. Jesus declares that anyone who believes in him will live.

Whoever believes in him will never die. And he even pauses to confirm with Martha, do you believe this?

[22 : 52] He asks her. Jesus calls us to believe in him and who he declares himself to be. And it's only by believing in him and ultimately placing all our trust in that belief that we can recognize and realize that ultimate plan that God has always had for his children.

Eternal and embodied life with him. So perhaps you've heard this illustration before. A fish is made to live in the water.

If you put a fish in a tree, it will die. A bird is made to fly in the sky. If you put a bird under the water and leave it there, it will die.

Each of those creatures, each of those creations is made for its own environment. So human beings are given a physical life, a physical form when we are born as human beings.

And that's all we really need to live in this material world, in this physical world. But to be ready for life in heaven, we need to be given a new kind of life which Jesus calls eternal life.

[24 : 13] So it's probably mind blowing for us as modern Christians, I know I've struggled with it throughout my life. This physical world is all we know. This physical world is all we can relate to.

It's largely comfortable and pleasant, right? Mostly, except in the summer. Or the winter. In Alberta. It's pleasant, except if you live in Alberta.

But that's the reality, right? It's that it's largely comfortable, it's largely pleasant, we have unpleasant experiences, we try to cut our hand off by accident, we do things, we fall and hurt ourselves.

But largely, this world that we live in is comfortable, we know it, we can relate to it. So the idea that to believe there's something better that waits for us after we die, either that's super exciting for you, it is for me, or you can't wrap your head around it quite right, right?

So I have to confess that that story that I shared with you before, my own moments of questioning, I have wondered if there's anything more than what we have in this world.

[25 : 27] I've wondered that. Because we can't see, as I said before, beyond that veil. Pretty easy to trust, pretty easy to have faith, if we can see what's coming, right?

There are times, though, my friends, when my soul resonates with something greater. There are times when I feel a connection to God in a deeper way that is just not explainable by this, my physical form alone.

I know, I have confidence that there is something more than this. My brothers and sisters, we need to believe what the Bible says.

believe in who Jesus declared himself to be. What he accomplished through his own death and his resurrection.

We need to believe and stay anchored in those things to keep our faith alive. Fortunately, I won't go into details on these, but one day, maybe.

[26 : 31] I have personal stories and experiences that have happened in my life that have made it abundantly clear to me. me. I know that there is more to this existence than this, just this.

And I also know that Jesus is the only way to enter the fullness of that existence that he has always planned for us. whether you have personal experiences or personal stories in your life that anchor your personal belief in eternal life or not.

The Bible gives us two powerful examples of resurrection, which I believe we can declare to be truth. One we already talked about.

We've looked at the first with the raising of Lazarus. Lazarus. Jesus resurrected him. Lazarus was dead. Lazarus had died and, as we read, been buried for four days.

He was very dead. But Jesus raised him from death. That story is given to us to illustrate the fact that Jesus has power over death.

[27 : 45] We don't have power over death. I've lost too many people to death to think that I could change it. But that power over death that Jesus has, when he declares, I am the resurrection and the life.

A friend of mine that I talked to at our assembly meetings last week, she said, she read at one point, that the English translation actually adds in the thes in the I am statements of Jesus.

That they don't actually necessarily belong there, but they're there to help us understand the English translation. So how about this? Take the the out of that statement.

I am resurrection. I am life. I'm not a resurrection. I'm not a kind of resurrection. I'm resurrection, period.

Even death could not separate Lazarus from his sisters. But only through the power of God in Jesus could that power of death be broken.

[28 : 53] But there's a more important proof. You probably knew this was coming. Jesus' own resurrection. After his death on the cross and three days in the tomb, Jesus was very dead.

He was sealed in that tomb. He was guarded in that sealed tomb. But his resurrection is the most powerful truth and hope that we can have.

That's not just a story that you learned in Sunday school. Friends, that is truth. That is historical fact. Paul quotes all the witnesses to this event.

If you want to look at it, 1 Corinthians 15, 3 to 11. Paul lists by name people who knew Jesus was dead, people who saw him after he rose.

And after this, Paul says, if Christ had not been raised, you've heard me talk about this before, if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is useless. And so is your faith.

[30 : 00] If Jesus has not been raised, us believing in that is futile. Christ has indeed been raised, Paul says. So let's hear Jesus' words to Martha and ultimately every one of us one more time.

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Do you believe this? Martha replied, yes, Lord, I believe. I say this to all of you today and to myself. Do you believe this?

If you declare Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life, if you believe that he is who he declared himself to be, if you have placed your trust in him, then your earthly end is not the end of God's story for you.

Friends, Jesus is worthy. He is worthy of your belief and he is worthy of your trust. He is the eternal hope of resurrection and eternal life for all who believe and place their trust in him.

[31 : 23] Amen? Amen. Amen.