

I Am the Resurrection and the Life

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[0 : 00] Do you ever get that feeling where God just seems distant? Martha did. Here's what she said to Jesus when she was bereaved.

She said, Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. And I wonder if any of that resonates with your experience.

I'm guessing you'll know what I'm talking about if you've ever had a bereavement or some other kind of blow, a tragedy, a disappointment.

Something that caused you deep, deep grief and pain. When you were left with that sense of overwhelming bewilderment. Now, not always, but very often in those sort of experiences, God can seem so distant and inaccessible.

This story, and let's remember that it's in John's narrative for a reason. This story is there to tell us a fundamental truth that is at the very core of the Christian gospel.

[1 : 10] And it's this. While our perception might be that God is distant, remote and inaccessible, the reality is quite the opposite. Now, John chapter 11 tells us the story of how Jesus goes on to raise Lazarus from the dead.

Now, I recommend that you read the whole chapter. But right now, over these next few minutes, I want to focus in on the moment building up to Lazarus being raised.

Because it's that part of the story that connects with our experience. See, it's in the brokenness of grief, the sense that God is distant and inaccessible, that we need to hear the story and its message.

In the midst of her grief and pain and brokenness, Martha talks with Jesus about eternal life. Now, at the time, not all Jews believed in that.

It was one of those things that divided the Pharisees from the Sadducees. Martha says she does believe in it. In fact, she goes further. She says she knows her brother will be raised from the dead at the end of time.

[2 : 21] But Jesus goes even further than that. He doesn't say, I promise you resurrection or I give you resurrection. He says, I am the resurrection.

Eternal life is not just some abstract idea. It's not just a piece of doctrine. It's so much more than that. It's something you discover in relationship with Jesus.

Just when God seems so distant, remote and inaccessible, Jesus says, I am here. I am that resurrection. I am that life. There are two important things there that we need to pay close attention to.

The first is that resurrection in the fullest and most complete sense is in the future. That was even the case for Lazarus.

We don't know what happened to him after Jesus brought him back from the grave, but we can assume that he eventually died along with all the other people Jesus healed during his ministry. But this miracle points to the ultimate miracle that we see revealed in the risen Jesus himself.

[3 : 31] Namely, that at the end will come a total resurrection from which, like Jesus, we will never die. That's our future hope, which puts our lives into perspective.

It's what throws out life from the other side of death. But the second thing we need to pay close attention to is perhaps a more subtle thing.

And it has to do with the more practical nitty gritty of how we handle life now, given that we have that future hope. You see, when we talk about future hope, future resurrection, future everlasting life, there's a danger that it all seems so far off out there in the future that it doesn't connect with life right here and right now.

It's one thing to say we're hopeful about eternity, but what about everything that lies between now and then? What about the stuff we're worried about today or next week or whatever? And I think that's what Jesus is talking to us about when he says that he is the resurrection and the life. He talks about living in him and believing in him, not simply in the future, but actually right now. [4 : 46] Remember, the words I am connect things to the present tense. If you're someone who struggles with fear or anxiety, and let's face it, most people do at some point, this gives us a way of dealing with all that.

Jesus's words offer us a way of living in the present moment instead of obsessing over what we're worried might happen in the future or indeed fretting over the past.

Here's how it can work. Whenever you feel like your worries might be getting out of control, just remember that your anxious thoughts are only thoughts.

They're not reality. If you're worrying over the future, well, it hasn't happened yet. The chances are the thing you're anxious about won't ever happen. If you're worrying about the past, well, it's in the past.

And the only thing that's carrying that is your memory. That is your thoughts. Reality is, in fact, the present in which you live right now. And Jesus is with you in that reality right now.

[5 : 52] The one who says, I am the resurrection and I am the life in which you are sustained. The one who raised Lazarus and the one who has opened up eternity for all of us.

He's with you in your present right now. Learning to live in the present and to be in the present takes a bit of effort. It's much easier to default to worrying because by worrying, we generally convince ourselves that we're somehow more in control.

But living in the present is about letting God be in control, depending on him and trusting in him.

There will never be a single moment in our lives when we have no problems.

Life's not like that. Never has been, never will be. Not this side of eternity anyway. I even heard one person say that life is a series of problem solving exercises.

Now, perhaps that's a bit extreme, but you get the point. We'll never be without problems in this life. So it's important that we learn to understand that we're not on our own with those problems, but that we can know the presence of Jesus's resurrection power in the midst of them.

[7 : 07] We don't have to wait until our own resurrection. The risen Jesus is with us right now.

That's his promise right now. That's his word. I am the resurrection and the life.

If only you had been there, said Martha to Jesus. Well, he is here.

It's just one example of a story from the Bible where we see ordinary people like you and me longing to be close to God. But, you know, as John Ortberg once wrote, the story of the Bible isn't primarily about the desire of people to be close to God.

It's the desire of God to be with people.