

I Am the Resurrection

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[0 : 0 0] All right, well, we're back in the story of Jesus told by John, and we made it out of chapter 10, and now we're into chapter 11. If you have a Bible, please open it up to chapter 11.

If you forgot your Bible, there's some in the seats right in front of you, the little black ones there. There'll be some passages that I don't put on the screen because they're longer chunks that we'll be reading today.

So I encourage you to follow along if you're able. Well, last we heard, Jesus was nearly stoned and arrested in Jerusalem.

And we heard that Jesus left Jerusalem. He went to the other side of the Jordan where John had been baptizing in the earlier days. And the people began coming out to him when he was there, and many believed in him.

And at some point, we're not exactly sure when somebody arrives to meet Jesus with a message for him. I'm reading from John chapter 11, verse 1.

[1 : 0 6] 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 sisters sent word to Jesus, Lord, the one you love is sick. So a messenger arrives and brings this news about Lazarus, that he's sick.

And up until now in the story, we haven't even heard anything about Lazarus or his two sisters, Mary and Martha. But Luke has already told us that in his gospel, that Jesus had met Mary and Martha on one of his many journeys down to Jerusalem.

There was a small village just outside of Jerusalem, about two miles out, called Bethany. And as Jesus was passing through there, Luke tells us that Martha opened up her home to Jesus.

And it was probably then that he first met Mary, her sister, and probably also Lazarus, their brother. It was quite possible that their house became kind of a regular stop-in for Jesus as he would go down to Jerusalem for the festivals that happened each year.

[2 : 2 2] And it seems that Jesus had a special bond with Lazarus, the brother of these two women. Enough that when they sent word to Jesus, they said, Lord, the one you love is sick.

And of course, it makes sense why they sent word to him, because after all, he is very well known for healing people of sicknesses. Verse 4.

When Jesus heard this, the message, 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.

Mark these words of Jesus well. This sickness will not end in death. So Jesus declares what's going to happen in the future for Lazarus with his sickness.

Not only that, but he states the purpose of the sickness. He says, This sickness is for God's glory, and specifically, so that the Son may be glorified through it.

[3 : 3 5] So this sickness somehow is to bring praise and glory and honor to Jesus, God's Son.

God has a good purpose for Lazarus going through this, suffering through this. Lazarus doesn't know that. Mary and Martha don't know that.

And even Jesus' disciples, who have just been told this, probably don't know it either. Let's consider for a moment what the disciples probably heard and understood as Jesus said this.

He said, This sickness will not end in death. So the disciples, how else would they understand these words but that Lazarus would not die from this sickness?

Verse 5. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

[4 : 34] So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. And then he said to his disciples, Let us go back to Judea. But Rabbi, they said, A short while ago, the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going to go back?

Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.

After he had said this, he went on to tell them, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up. His disciples replied, Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.

Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, Lazarus is dead, and for your sake, I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.

But let us go to him. Then Thomas, also known as Didymus, said to the rest of the disciples, let us also go, that we may die with him. So Jesus, upon hearing of Lazarus' sickness, decides to stay where he was two more days.

[5 : 59] And the disciples are probably not too worried, because after all, Jesus said, this sickness will not end in death. In fact, the disciples were probably relieved to hear this. They're probably thinking, whew, I thought for a moment there, that we were going to have to go back, to Bethany, right near Jerusalem.

But then two days later, Jesus says, all right, time to go. We were going to go down to Judea. And the disciples protest. Are you out of your mind, Jesus?

Like, we were just there, and they tried to kill you. You remember the stones in their hands? You want to go back there? You can't be serious. It's not safe. Finally, in verse 11, Jesus tells them the news, and the reason that they're going back.

He says, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I'm going there to wake him up. And you can't really blame the disciples for misunderstanding Jesus here. They're taking his word literally.

If he's sleeping, he'll get better. Eventually, he'll wake up. We don't have to go down to Bethany for that. Well, finally, Jesus makes it plain to them.

[7 : 14] In verse 14, he says, Lazarus is dead. And for your sake, I'm glad I was not there, so that you may believe.

Lazarus is dead. But you said, Jesus, just a few days ago, that this sickness would not end in death. What's going on here?

Did you get it wrong? Maybe we should have gone down when we first heard about this, and then you could have healed Lazarus. But now it's too late. Thomas is especially cheerful about it.

He's like, oh, oh, great. Let's all go down there so that we can die with Jesus. Maybe it would have been a little easier to slip in and heal Lazarus and slip out while he was still alive.

But now that Lazarus is dead, there will be the funeral. There will be the mourners, everybody who knew him. And we're just bound to end up in another situation like we did last time we were down near that neck of the woods.

[8 : 19] And they're not going to kill just you, Jesus. They're going to kill all of us too, says Thomas. What really struck me in all of this are these two statements of Jesus.

I'll put them up on the screen back to back so you can see them both together. This sickness will not end in death, says Jesus. And two days later, Lazarus is dead.

I think there's a lesson here for all of us. Sometimes as we're following Jesus, things won't always go as we expect them to. In fact, things may go the exact opposite of what we're expecting and hoping for.

We may look at what God has said about something even in his word and then look up at the situation right in front of us and just say, why does it not match up? This sickness will not end in death.

And yet, Lazarus is dead. Jesus, what's going on here? God, why is this happening to me when your word says, fill in the blank.

[9 : 38] God and his son, Jesus, have a way of deliberately doing things in order to teach us to trust. God, I'm glad I was not there to heal him is implied, says Jesus, so that you may believe.

Believe what? Believe my word. Believe me. I said, this sickness will not end in death. So this is not really all about Lazarus and it's not about the disciples feeling safe or comfortable.

This is about each one of them, even Thomas, learning to trust Jesus even when they don't see or understand, even when what Jesus says to them doesn't seem to make sense, even if they don't feel safe.

Maybe you find yourself in the same kind of place this morning where you look at your life or you look at a situation in your life and you're wondering, God, Jesus, where are you in the midst of this?

How can you let this happen? Maybe you've even been praying for something but it's not been happening. Could it be that God may yet answer your prayers but that in the meantime He wants you to surrender your heart and simply trust Him with this?

[11 : 10] I couldn't help but think of that old song, Trust and Obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. And as I was thinking about that, I got looking at this and just really realized trust and obedience, they really need to go together, don't they?

Thomas is ready to obey. He's going to follow Jesus wherever he goes, he's going to go down to Bethany but his comment reveals what's really going on in his heart.

It's the trust part, the believing part, believing what Jesus said earlier that's missing. Thomas, don't you remember what Jesus said last time you guys were in trouble?

He said, I give my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. Are there some situations or things going on in your life today that you need to simply trust Jesus with?

Verse 17, on his arrival Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now 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.

[12 : 39] When Martha heard that Jesus was coming she went out to meet him but Mary stayed at home. So Lazarus has been dead for four days now. I don't know what day Lazarus died on but to help us feel this let's just imagine we're grieving with the family.

Imagine he died on a Monday. It's now Friday. John tells us that already many had come to Martha and Mary to comfort her, them, in the loss of their brother.

Lazarus' body is already in the tomb so a significant part of the funeral proceedings are already over and finally they get word that Jesus the one that they had sent for and hoped might make it before this is coming is soon to arrive.

Martha decides to go out to meet Jesus and Mary stays at home with the guests and Martha reveals what she's been hoping all along.

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.

[13 : 58] There's grief here. Martha's heart is broken. She's just lost her brother. I don't want to read too much into her words but surely there was longing that somehow Jesus could have come sooner and that everything that she's just lived through in the past week had never happened.

If only you had been here you could have healed him just like you always do with everybody who comes to you who's sick. Just say the word just touch him he would have been well.

Even in her grief she expresses such great faith in Jesus power to heal. And then she throws in this somewhat surprising statement. She says now it's difficult to know what to make of these words.

We might think that she's gently hinting that Jesus could raise Lazarus back to life from the dead. But probably not with what she's about to say next. She's not looking for that for a long time.

Or we may wonder if Martha is tactfully asking why Jesus did not pray and ask God to heal Lazarus when he first heard the word of his illness.

[15 : 18] Whatever she means one thing is clear. She seems all the more to be expressing her complete confidence in Jesus. It's as though she's saying I still believe I still trust that you that you have that special relationship with God and that God will grant your every request.

In other words none of what's happened with my brother in the past week lessens my faith in you. This is amazing. Where the disciples fail to trust Jesus Martha's unwavering trust in Jesus just shines.

My brother's dead and I still believe in you Jesus. God didn't grant me what I was asking for my brother but I still believe that he will do whatever you ask him.

Verse 23 Jesus said to her your brother will rise again. Martha answered I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

here again we see faith from Martha. She really does have faith in God. Here's a woman who's been grieving for days and right now she's saying yes I believe that my brother Lazarus will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.

[17 : 00] we don't really know what her understanding of the resurrection or the last day was. We know that some Jews believed in the resurrection and others like the Sadducees did not but whatever Martha knew about it she believed that this was not the end for her brother.

but I'm guessing that what Jesus said next probably took her breath away. I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day Jesus said to her I am the resurrection and life.

let those words sink deep into your soul. I am the resurrection and the life says Jesus.

I am the one who gives life. I am the one who will raise your brother back to life from the dead on that day. That event that you just mentioned the resurrection that's me.

That's me who will be at work. That's me making alive. I wasn't here when Lazarus departed but I myself am the one who will bring him back to life.

[18 : 19] I am the dead razor. I am life itself. Jesus goes on.

He says the one who believes in me will live even though they die. And whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?

Jesus makes two more statements here. First, he says, the one who believes in him will live even though they die. Quite literally, the one believing in me and if ever he should die, he will live.

So in this first statement, Jesus doesn't say that those who believe in him will not die. But that if ever they do, they will yet live. How can this be?

Jesus is talking about resurrection. He's talking about raising those who believe in him back to life after they die. Do you remember what Jesus said back in John chapter 6 verse 40?

[19 : 30] He said, for my father's will is that everyone who looks to the son and believes in him shall have eternal life and I will raise them up at the last day.

So not that we will not die, but that we will have life again after death. The second statement Jesus makes is this, whoever lives by believing in me will never die.

Quite literally, all those living and believing in me will not ever die unto the ages. Depending on your translation, you might be thinking that it's kind of a contradiction here.

In one breath he's saying that if you ever die, you'll live. In the next breath he's saying you'll never die. Which is it? But I don't think we should really pit these things against each other.

I think Jesus is simply talking about a sequence. Whoever believes in me will have life after death because I will raise them back to life. I am the resurrection and that life that I give them at the resurrection will last forever, never to die again.

[20 : 43] Do you believe this? Jesus asks Martha and Martha's response is this. Yes Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God who is to come into the world.

Again we see a beautiful faith from Martha here. All you've just said Jesus, I believe it. You are the Messiah. You are the Son of God.

You are the one who comes into the world. So Jesus gave Martha the ultimate words of comfort. Lazarus is dead, yes, but Lazarus in another sense is not dead.

This is not the end for him. And it doesn't need to be the end for you either, Martha. Everyone who believes in me will live forever after they die and I raise them again.

Verse 28. After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside.

[21 : 56] The teacher is here, she said, and is asking for you. When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house comforting her noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, Lord, if you had been here he would have been deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

Where have you laid him? He asked. Come and see, Lord, they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, see how he loved him.

But some of them said, could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying? Mary, it seems, felt the same as Martha, only when she finally meets Jesus, we see that she's probably grieving even more intensely.

John says that Mary fell at Jesus' feet. And the first thing she says to Jesus is the same as Martha. If only you had been here, Jesus, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.

[23 : 27] And then John tells us that Mary wept. The tears were flowing. But what's truly touching in all of this is Jesus' reaction to it.

Seeing the grief and the sorrow of Mary and the others with her, John tells us that Jesus was deeply moved and troubled in spirit.

The words behind these in the original language are very strong. Intense emotion welled up inside of him as he saw face to face the pain and the grief and the sorrow of his dear friend Mary and all the others.

So much so that Jesus himself broke down and started crying. he wept. And it wasn't for the loss of Lazarus as we'll see in a moment but for the anguish and the grief felt by his dear friends.

The pain and the brokenness that they were experiencing because of the death of Lazarus. He cried enough that the Jews who were there paying their respects noticed and remarked whoa he must have really loved Lazarus a lot.

[24 : 49] He's really feeling it right now. But now let's read how the story ends. Verse 38 Jesus once more deeply moved came to the tomb.

It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. Take away the stone he said but Lord said Martha the sister of the dead man by this time there's a bad odor for he's been there four days.

Then Jesus said did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God? So they took away the stone.

Then Jesus looked up and said father I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here that they may believe that you sent me.

When he had said this Jesus called in a loud voice Lazarus come out. The dead man came out his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around his face.

[26 : 06] Jesus said to them take off the grave clothes and let him go. Amazing. The one who moments before claimed to be the giver of life the raiser of the dead the resurrection and the life proved that it's true by raising Lazarus from the dead.

One of the most spectacular miracles of Jesus an amazing display of power one of the greatest signs that Jesus ever did that he really is the one that he has been claiming to be.

I would have loved to have been there to see this. If I could pick any one miracle to go back and just witness it myself with my own eyes this would probably be it.

To see Lazarus stumble out of the tomb. To see the utter shock and amazement of his sisters. To see the tears of grief and sorrow change into tears of joy.

Joy like few ever feel in this world. If there's any miracle of Jesus that I would see this would be it. The reaction of the people who had just earlier been to his funeral seen his dead body laid in the tomb now completely in shock murmuring to one another what just happened how can this be we saw him he was dead and now he's alive this doesn't happen well it just happened today because the one who is the resurrection and the life is here among you let's notice a couple details of this wonderful miracle how does Jesus do it first notice this prayer of Jesus to the father he prays out loud so that everyone can hear I'm not even sure that we have the whole prayer written here it's almost like we just start listening in mid conversation to what

[28 : 14] Jesus is saying to God he says father I thank you that you have heard me heard me in the quiet of his own heart I'm not sure was he talking to the Lord about raising Lazarus or asking the Lord to raise him through him we don't know we just kind of come in on this but he thanks the father for hearing his prayer and then he tells the father that he's never had any doubts about whether the father hears his prayers but that he's saying this out standing here and listening might believe that the father sent him I think those words are key this is the big issue with Jesus he's been claiming this almost unbelievable special relationship with God for quite some time now to work together with

God to have unprecedented authority given him from God to be one with God to have the father in him and to be in his father he's claimed to be sent from heaven by God to speak the words of God to do the works of the father and so Jesus signals in this moment in this prayer for everyone to take notice pay close attention to what he's about to do and then he calls out to Lazarus and notice how Jesus calls to him Lazarus come out not a question not a statement not an invocation but a command a command he commands Lazarus to come out of the tomb this is the authority of Jesus on display and this is amazing who else can command the dead and they hear and they listen and they obey they come back to life

I am the resurrection and the life says Jesus whoever believes in me will live even though they die and whoever lives and believes in me will never die let me ask you what Jesus asked Martha do you believe this do you believe this let's pray father in heaven we thank you that you have made it absolutely clear that Jesus is our savior that he is the one we thank you that you have given us hope beyond the grave forever if only we put our trust in you what an amazing gift thank you for sending Jesus Jesus thank you for willingly coming laying down your life for us we praise you we love you we ask that you would give us courage to speak about this glorious truth even this very story for the people that we know and love who don't know you we pray this in

Jesus name amen