

I Am The Resurrection And The Life

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[0 : 00] If you could turn with me then to John's Gospel, chapter 11, and we'll read again from verse 25.

John, chapter 11, verse 25. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die or she die, yet shall he or she live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

Do you believe this? And that pointed question that Jesus asked Martha, we can ask ourselves tonight, do you believe this?

That Jesus is the resurrection and the life? The quest for immortality continues.

[1 : 17] That's always been a quest ever since human beings emerged on our planet. I'm told that there are small jellyfish which continually renew their stem cells, thereby staying young.

And of course there are many studies, when you get to my age you get interested in things like this. There are many studies going on that are looking into what causes cells to age and whether they can interrupt and stop that aging.

I see a few smiles among a certain age group of people here. Then there is the cryonics, which is freezing the body in the hope that one day it can be reanimated and become immortal.

But on the other hand, psychologists talk about something called death anxiety.

Death is the great leveller, isn't it? death is the great leveller, isn't it? Death is the great leveller, isn't it? Think of our late queen. Now I never read this, but it wouldn't surprise me at all on the day that the queen died, perhaps some homeless person died.

[2 : 51] Perhaps you have asked, as I once did, or even asking now, is this all that there is to life?

Now I was born and brought up in Clydebank and when I was about 19 or 20, I was working in Singer Sewing Machine Factory in Clydebank that had 4,000 employees.

And I remember walking home from work through Clydebank, through the main street, which I knew since I was a young lad, and I saw this hearse passing me.

And I remember thinking, is that all that there is to life? Blood, sweat and tears. Is that all that there is to life?

All this effort that we put in? And it ends in a wooden box. Well, listen to this great statement and this great claim of Jesus Christ this evening.

[4 : 16] I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in me, though he die, yet shall live.

For those of you that have heard my previous I Am sermons, this you might have remembered as number five.

And I'm sure that you'll agree with me that these are astonishing claims of Jesus. Jesus said, I am the bread of life.

He said, I am the light of the world. I am the door through me. If anyone enters in, they will find salvation. I am the good shepherd that gives his life for the sheep.

I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth and the life.

[5 : 22] I am the thine. These, as somebody has said, these are claims that are claims of a madman or they're claims of the Son of God.

I am going to be speaking about two things from this passage. Martha's faith and the claim of Jesus Christ to be the resurrection and the life.

But just to ease our way into it, I want you to, I want to set the scene and I want to mention two things about setting the scene.

The first thing I want to mention is love. In verse 3, yeah, verse 3 of chapter 11, I want you to note these things that I'm going to share with you.

Lord, he whom you love is ill. In verse 5, now, Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

[6 : 54] Jesus wept. In verse 36, Jesus wept, so the Jews said, see how he loved him.

To love is to make yourself vulnerable. to love is to open yourself to pain because when you love you form attachments and bonds, close attachments and bonds.

And that is the reason that you become vulnerable. Perhaps those that you love don't reciprocate that love or perhaps they disappoint you.

And I just want to say this. John tells us in his letter that we did not first love God but that he first loved us.

And because he first loved us he made himself vulnerable. And that vulnerability is graphically seen as he hangs on the cross.

[8 : 32] But the second thing I want you to notice just this is a scene of grief a scene of death and a scene of loss as well as a scene of love.

But it's not perhaps only about the death of Lazarus. Look at verse 2.

It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair whose brother Lazarus was ill. John doesn't tell us about that until the following chapter about the incident of Mary anointing the Lord with that ointment.

Why is he telling us it just now? Verses 47 to 48 verse 53 so from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

Isn't it ironic and paradoxical that as Jesus is on his way to raise Lazarus he's also on the cusp of the cross.

[10 : 18] there's so much irony in this account of Jesus raising Lazarus the one who stands there and says I am the resurrection and the life the one who later will call Lazarus from the grave is the one himself who will taste death for every man woman boy and girl.

I want to look at Martha's confession of faith and partly I'm motivated to do this because of the you know throughout my Christian life I've kind of got an impression sometimes that Martha is the Cinderella of the two sisters and that Mary is top top more than Martha and I hope to redress if there is an imbalance there maybe some people might think that's exaggerated to say that but anyway I hope by the end of this sermon that you will have a higher opinion of Martha now the first thing that Martha does is verse 20 so when Martha heard that Jesus was coming she went and met him she went and met him

Martha couldn't wait to meet Jesus in the hour of her need she reached out to him she took the trouble to go to where he was and she couldn't wait until he came as it were she knew that he was coming but she was desperate to go out and meet him and I simply want to ask this question I ask it to myself and I ask it to people here Jesus came once into this world and died for our sins and died that we might have life more abundantly and that we might as

Colin was talking about this morning get those chains off us and be liberated from that life that I was talking about that I thought when I was walking home in Clyde Bank and enter into the life of Jesus Christ is coming again would you be like Martha and go out to him and have him as your saviour in verse 21 Martha said to Jesus Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died now that in itself I think tells you something as well about Martha's faith there's biographical statements in all the gospels that I might be paraphrasing a little that says thousands came to

Jesus and he healed them all Martha was so aware of the great healing power of Jesus Christ and if for no other reason she's articulating her strong faith in Jesus here Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died now just in the passing I've had a lot of experience in supporting bereaved people and of course when you listen to the stories of bereaved people something that comes up is if if if if you had been here my brother would not have died what's she doing she's recognising the power and the value of the presence of

[15 : 20] Jesus Christ and I wonder in our hour of need are we like Martha and do we recognise the value of his presence verse 22 this is a remarkable state of a statement of Martha here and I'm going to read verse 21 again Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died but even now I know that whatever you ask from God God will give you let's just read that again that's quite an astonishing statement but even now remember she knows Lazarus her brother is dead and she knows he's been dead for four days and that's significant because there was a belief at the time that the soul didn't fully depart from the body until the fourth day and in a sense the soul kept checking for the first three days that the person was really dead she knows her brother is dead she knows it's four days since he died and yet she said

Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died but even now I know that whatever you ask from God God will give you what do you think that means but even now I know that whatever Jesus you ask of God God will give it to you so there's a debate among some of the commentators is there an indication here that she she has realized that Jesus might in fact be able to still raise her dead brother some of these commentators say no because she says later on when Jesus goes to the tomb Lord you know what you doing he's been in the tomb four days and she says we'll see in a moment that

I know that he'll rise in the last day but well what do you make of it is this a kind of reaching out reaching out trying to clutch hope in a hopeless situation even in the midst of the starkness of this situation that she's in and the pain and the grief she still finds something to be able to say I'm going to reach out I know that he still can do something is that how we react when we're in those situations verse 24 Martha Jesus said to her your brother will rise again Martha I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day you know isn't it wonderful that in

Jesus' day there were those people we read Daniel who because the kind of atmosphere that was around in Jesus' day was we're in the last days and Martha was well aware of her future hope hope and I just want to ask you are you well aware of your future hope of course the entire New Testament that the environment and the air that the entire New Testament breathes is that Jesus is just around the corner in his second coming and of course I realize that it's more of a challenge for people like you and I because 2000 years have passed although remember 1000 years is with the Lord as a day it's like two days since

Christ rose but still she had that hope do you hear what she said I know he will rise at the last day good on you Martha you've got your hope there are we able to look at Jesus in the eyes so to speak and say the same as Martha I know that I will rise in that day that you come and then finally in verses 26 and 27 now the reason I'm mentioning verse 26 it's just the last words Jesus when he said when he responded to her when she said I know that I'll rise in the last day Jesus says I am the resurrection and the life whoever believes in me though he die yet shall he live and so on and then he said do you believe this and she goes yes lord and we praise

[21 : 22] Peter Caesarea Philippi whom the men say that I am Peter who do you say I am you are the Christ the son of God listen to Martha's confession here yes lord I believe that you are the Christ the son of God who is coming into the world I want to ask everybody here this evening do you believe that I mean do you really believe that see when the New Testament especially the gospel writers speak about believing they use an intensive preposition which means believe into and it really means that you're not simply intellectually believing you're not simply understanding a proposition it means you're entrusting your entire life and destiny to

Jesus Christ and this is where Martha is right now at this point in this gospel yes Lord I believe you are the Christ the son of God who is coming into the world I would nearly say that that's even more impressive than Peter's confession of Christ why do I say that because she's seeing it in the tremendous pain of grief and loss in the face of intense sorrow and grief now unfortunately our time has gone on so rapidly but let me try and just for the last five minutes or so move on to this second thing that I want to explore with you

Jesus' comment I am the resurrection and the life first of all notice the I and notice the I'm the present tense Jesus is saying Martha the future is here right now Martha the resurrection that you're talking about in the future is inseparable from me it's not some kind of world event only I am the resurrection and the life now if you look at these two terms resurrection as Jesus is articulating them here and life what would you say is the the bigger word here the word that takes in the other one you don't need to grapple with it I'll tell you it's life John John had told us in the magnificent hymn or prologue of chapter one as he introduced us to Jesus in his pre-existent state and as he told us that this Jesus who he called the word was in the beginning with God and that he was God and that he was with

God and that he tells us that in him was life going back to that Clive Bank thought I thought is this the only life life and what Christianity is saying to people today and to you and to me it is not the only life this bio life or biological life is by no stretch of the imagination the only life Jesus offers an abundant life Jesus said I have come that they might have life and they might have it more abundantly indeed every single one of the I am claims of Jesus are concerned with life the life of God and the soul of a human being the eternal life that characterizes

[26 : 53] Jesus and that only he can offer and that is why he is saying I am the resurrection and the life just think of what he said in the first I am statement I am the bread of life of life I am the light of the world but John had told us at the very beginning of the gospel that he is his life is the light that lights every single human being so he is already the source of life in terms of John's thinking and in terms of this gospel I am the way the truth and the life by me if any man enters into the door he'll find salvation which is life I am the way the truth and the life I am the vine that's about the life coursing through is

Jesus Christ your life Paul could say the life I now live I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me John uses the term life in the way that the other three gospels the so-called synoptic gospels use the phrase the kingdom of God as I close then I want to just say three things we're taught from the Bible that we're fallen human beings the human race is a fallen race it's a flawed race it's a race that has lost its spiritual compass it's a race that is groping in the dark it's a race that is cut off that is spiritually dead in terms of the life that God wants to offer it and if any human being asks the question what do

I do where do I go to get this life that transcends tremendously bio life if you like the answer is Jesus Christ he's the one Jesus one said to one of the great religious leaders called Nicodemus this is in his gospel John's gospel as well in chapter three Nicodemus you must be born again you need to move to another plane you need to move to the plane of this life that I offer secondly as we close is Jesus Christ your future hope as well as your present hope do you think about his coming do you long for his coming do you pray for his coming again death for the

Christian is the moment when we pass from this material world into the heavenly world of redeemed spirits awaiting the redemption of our bodies I spoke or at least mentioned the irony and the paradox and we will close and we will close and we will close with that isn't it remarkable that he who said I am the resurrection and the life probably about a week later was hanging on the cross tasting death for you and for me and then three days later bursting asunder as I think one of the hymns that we sang the grain and triumphing over it that he might be our lord and our king and our redeemer there's two I am statements still to go so I hope that you'll be around when we get round to being able to bring those last two

I am statements but let me just say to you that every one of them are identifying something about Jesus Christ and every one of them are in one sense facets or aspects of his qualities that qualify him to be our redeemer Jesus Christ our Lord may he bless those words to us Amen