

Hearts Desire - Gain Wise

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[0 : 00] 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 3 to 11. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

Whether then it was I or they, so we preach, and so you believed. Our second reading is from John chapter 11, verses 17 to 44.

[1 : 22] Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 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.

So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 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. Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again. Martha said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?

She said to him, Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world. When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, The teacher is here and is calling for you.

[2 : 25] And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

And he said, Where have you laid him? They said to him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. So the Jews said, See how he loved him. But some of them said, Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, Lord, by this time there will be an odour, for he has been dead four days.

Jesus said to her, Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God? So they took away the stone, and Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

[3 : 37] I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me. When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

The man who had died came out, his feet and hands bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, Unbind him and let him go.

I'm Jake, part of the church family here. Do keep John 11 open. And let's pray as we have a look together.

Father God, we pray, please, that you would speak as we look at your word together. Please help us to see Jesus clearly. Help us marvel at him and rejoice at who he is.

Help us to trust him, please. Amen. Last week, we began by thinking about our world's biggest problem. Brexit, climate change, we settled on death.

[4 : 51] But sometimes we stop at an intellectual level. We don't really like to think about the painful, personal reality of death. Nearly four years ago, we were back in Oxford, visiting Lizzie's dad, Norman, in hospital.

We were staying at the family home with Lizzie's mum on the Friday evening, and we were just settling down for the night when the phone rang. And the doctors said, look, you need to come here now.

So we packed up a few bits, and we drove in, and we spent the next few hours with Norman. We laughed as he told us terrible jokes. We reminisced about good times.

We cried with him. He was very much alive, but slipping away. The pain would come, and doctors would rush in and deal with the beeping machines and do something to sort it out, and then we'd have another hour of time together before it happened again and again.

We sat around his bed for hours as a family, praying and chatting, laughing and crying, and then early on the Saturday evening, he said, I've had enough.

[6 : 12] I'm ready to go. And so then we prayed and we sang as we watched him die. And then what do you do?

What do you say? What are you supposed to feel? We packed up his things. We drove silently back to the house, we tried to sleep, but we cried and we got angry, and we regretted things we had and hadn't said, and then we cried some more, and none of us really slept.

I imagine it's something of how Mary and Martha are feeling in our passage, and so many of us will know those pains. It's the horrible, painful reality of death.

We can solve all sorts of issues and troubles, can't we? But death maintains its grip on our world, on our friends, on our families, and on us.

We're all in the queue. It might be that you feel that all too well this morning. Maybe you're unwell or a bit older.

[7 : 27] But maybe you're in Eagles or Jam, or you're my age, and you just assume that death is miles away. I don't like to be morbid this morning, but we don't know when it will come.

Are we ready to face death? Our culture has no answer. Science has no answer, and a kind of glib sentimentality just won't do.

Is there any concrete hope in the face of death? Yes. And we get a glimpse of it here in John 11.

You see, John could have given us a brief summary of the Jesus raising Lazarus miracle, but instead we get the full story. Why? We saw something of it last week.

Look, this miracle in these verses is so that we might see Jesus' glory and believe in him. It's so that we would have the evidence and therefore the confidence to know we're not fools to trust Jesus in the face of death.

[8 : 37] We really can have life in all its fullness for all eternity in his name. So this morning, whether you're 12 or you're 85, let's look again at Jesus.

There are three things for us to see and enjoy on the back of your service sheet if you want to follow along or make notes. Our first glimpse of Jesus' glory is the resurrection and the life.

Lazarus was ill, now he's dead. Mary and Martha had called for Jesus, but he delayed. And now Jesus has finally arrived, verse 17, and Lazarus has been in the tomb four days.

And Martha hears that Jesus is approaching and goes to meet him. She says, verse 21, 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. Martha hasn't given up altogether, but she is pretty hopeless.

[9 : 46] Jesus, if you'd been here, but you weren't. And then Jesus replies, verse 23, your brother will rise again.

Martha said to him, I know that he'll rise again in the resurrection on the last day. See, Mary's a good Jewish woman. She's expecting, waiting for the Messiah, God's long-promised king, to come in the future sometime and take God's people who are dead and make them alive again.

But Jesus' staggering claim is that that future resurrection, that Messiah, that king, is him. He's the one.

Verse 25, he says to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Standing in front of Martha, it's the Messiah she's been waiting for.

He's the one who will usher in eternal life. It's not that Jesus is, it's not that he just knows the way to resurrection and life.

[10 : 59] It's not that just, it's not just that he's the one who has the kind of access to resurrection and life. Rather, he is resurrection and life.

Life isn't found in some potion or special power. Resurrection and life is found in a person. Into Martha's world of death and decay, Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Now, we were designed to live with God, enjoying life with him forever.

Adam and Eve were the first to enjoy that prospect, but they turned from him, cutting themselves off from him. And what happens if you cut yourself off from the source of life?

You get separation and death. It's an eternity away from God. And if we look around our world, we see all is not right.

[12 : 18] This world is marked by death. Everyone, everything dies. And it's the devastating symptom of a world cut off from God.

So all of us are like flowers in a vase. Beautiful. We look good, and it seems like there's life in us.

But we're actually slowly withering. And we're headed for the bin because we're disconnected from the life source. What we need is to be reattached to the root.

And Jesus, the resurrection and the life, he comes along and he says, I am the root. I'm the life source. Connect to me and have life.

Your beauty will never wither and you will never die. I'll carry you through death into eternal life with me. That's the Jesus standing in front of Martha.

[13 : 24] That's our Jesus. And Jesus' question to Martha in verse 26 echoes to us. Do you believe this?

Do you believe in him? Do you trust him? In 1 Corinthians 15, verse 22, Paul's talking about the resurrection and he says, As in Adam, all die.

So in Christ, all will be made alive. you can live like Adam, you can live like Adam, away from God and you'll face death alone, separated from God forever.

Or you can put your hope in the resurrection and the life and Jesus will usher you in to eternal life with God. who will you trust as you go through death's door?

It's tempting to look elsewhere, but no career, no relationship, no academic success, no house or car can offer you anywhere near what the resurrection and the life is offering you.

[14 : 39] Put your trust in Jesus. He is the resurrection and the life. As Jesus comes towards the tomb and is confronted all the more with Lazarus' death, how will he respond?

And what will he do? Let's see his glory displayed in how he hates death and weeps with us. After her encounter with Jesus, verse 28, Martha went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, the teacher is here and is calling for you.

And when Mary heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Then verse 32, when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, Lord, if you'd been here, my brother would not have died.

When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who'd come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and greatly troubled. Can you sense the pain and anguish as Mary addresses Jesus?

Grief stricken, weeping. And as those around her who have followed her weep too. Jesus senses it and it causes him to be there in verse 33, deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

[16 : 12] It's not just that he's a bit upset. No, his being deeply moved in spirit and greatly troubled carries a real sense of indignation and angst.

He's angry. Jesus looks around and he sees the results of sin and the pain that death causes and he hates it.

Death is an intruder into this world. It's the opposition, the evil enemy and it has taken Lazarus and Jesus is not pleased.

And that is good news because imagine if God didn't care about sin and death. What kind of brutish God would that be?

And it means we're not being naive if we struggle with the horror and pain of death. When God came into our world he hated death too.

[17 : 19] He's not just angry though, he's sad too. He sees the pain of his friends and verse 35 Jesus wept. And look what people say about him as he weeps, verse 36.

So the Jews said, see how he loved him. He's not remote from suffering. He lives the human experience.

He feels the pain. He knows what it is to stand at a friend's grave and mourn with those who are mourning. He empathises with Mary and Martha.

He understands their loss and grief. I've been reading a book recently called The Liar's Gospel. It's a novel about Jesus' life with a twist that paints him to be a liar, to be this cold, aloof, power-hungry, mean preacher man.

And I wonder if that's sometimes how we feel about Jesus. Maybe he's powerful but he's cold and distant. But that isn't the Jesus we see here.

[18 : 36] Jesus here is very much present in the pain. He understands it and he weeps with his people. It's worth pausing there for a moment. Sometimes we just need to stop and take stock.

Have we got Jesus right? We need to throw away any caricatures of Jesus that we might have and see the real Jesus.

maybe you've been in the midst of pain and suffering recently. Isn't it a great comfort to see how Jesus responds to suffering people?

He doesn't tell them to stop moaning and crying. He doesn't tell them to man up or put on a brave face. And he wouldn't tell us to just have a stiff upper lip.

No, he weeps with them. He understands their pain and he mourns with them and likewise with us as we grieved for Lizzie's dad. Jesus was very much with us and for us.

[19 : 44] What a comfort to know he understood our pain in the midst of our grief. And it's not just pain, not just grief at death. We'll have experienced all sorts of frustrations and pains in our broken world.

Jesus understands and he is well able to sympathize with you. Go to him in your pain.

We've seen the glory of Jesus in his identity, the resurrection and the life. We've seen his glory displayed in his hatred of death and his compassion as he weeps with us. Thirdly, let's head to the climax of these verses as we see Jesus glory as he displays total power over death.

Some of the Jews in verse 36 said, see how he loved him. But some of them said, could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?

It's a pretty fair observation, isn't it? this healer man, couldn't he have done something about Lazarus' illness? Of course, the irony is that the answer to couldn't he have kept this man from dying is an emphatic yes.

[21 : 09] With a word from afar, Jesus could have saved Lazarus. But then we'd just have another healing miracle and we'd miss out on what he's about to do.

Verse 38, then Jesus deeply moved again, came to the tomb. There was a cave and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, take away the stone.

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, Lord, by this time there'll be an odour, for he's been dead four days. Don't you love Martha's sensible, practical thinking? Lord, he's been dead four days, it'll smell.

Why do you want to see a rotting corpse? It's actually a bit awkward, isn't it? I mean, who goes to a funeral, stands at the graveside and asks for it to be dug up?

But Jesus wants to show Martha something. Verse 40, did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

[22 : 12] So they took away the stone and Jesus lifted his eyes and said, Father, I thank you that you've heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around that they may believe that you sent me.

What is about to happen is to display the glory of God and it's to convince all those around that God the Son and God the Father are in this together.

Jesus wants everybody to see and believe so they can have life for all eternity with him. and so all the groundwork is done they're gathered around the tomb of definitely dead Lazarus and then this is the moment verse 43 when he said these things he cried out with a loud voice Lazarus come out it's either going to be excruciatingly awkward or genuinely incredible isn't it and in the tomb at Jesus words a cold still heart begins to beat again blood starts to flow empty lungs draw in breath signals fire from the brain and verse 44 the man who had died the man who had died came out his hands and feet bound with linen strips and his face wrapped with a cloth amazing could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying absolutely he could but he can also raise the dead man back to life imagine the faces of those Jews who'd questioned in verse 37 stunned imagine if you'd been there seeing all this no one has an answer to death it's doing yet another victory dance and then

Jesus shows up he looks at Lazarus and it's as if he says no I'll have that one back thank you death and to add an exclamation mark death still has Lazarus bound up in his grave clothes in verse 44 but Jesus has them unbind him and let him go to say if you belong to me death has no hold you have no need for grave clothes anymore Lazarus can Jesus back up his claim to be the resurrection the life yes and even more so Jesus returning to Jerusalem to save Lazarus this miracle it causes quite a stir and opens up the way for his own death but not just his death his own resurrection and so he stands in front of us this morning in John 11 this Jesus he's the one who will and now has smashed through death defeating its power as

C.S. Lewis put it Jesus has met fought and beaten the king of death the words of the song we'll sing in a minute are so brilliantly apt eternity is won for me by heaven's eternal king Jesus has landed the knockout blow against death and now the coffin has an exit if you trust Jesus Lazarus resurrection is just a picture of your own Jesus will call your name and wake you from death as if you were only sleeping Jesus is why we could grieve with hope as we sang hymns and watched Lizzie's dad die Jesus is why Norman could say with confidence I'm ready to go now and Jesus is why

[26 : 41] Norman's funeral was such a hope filled celebration there is concrete hope in the face of death his name is Jesus Christ in him we have a God who knows what it is to grieve and knows what it is to die but more than that we have a God who has defeated death so that verse 25 whoever believes in him though they die yet shall they live anyone who hopes in Jesus can have great confidence in the face of death he will carry you through death's door and into eternal life with him forever that is hope for us whatever life brings and that is hope for our broken world we have the only answer to death all of us here

Christian or not all the people out there every one of them we all need to see Jesus for who he really is see his glory and put our hope in him and if you've never done that before please would you do it today let's pray father thank you so much that we get to see Jesus in your words we get to read of him and see him in action thank you that we get to see his glory on display thank you that he is so full of compassion and love thank you that he's beaten death pray that as we sing in a moment we would know those words to be so deeply true within us that we would face life and death with certain hope in

Jesus amen years be to thank you people and you and hear