

Death and Resurrection

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[0 : 00] Well, every time we gather as a church, we do so on the ground that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.

! And this is especially true on this Sunday when we celebrate His resurrection.! If Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead, then gathering in His name as we're doing this morning and as we do Sunday by Sunday would be all pointless.

It would make absolutely no difference. But all those who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ have been promised salvation.

But not only salvation, they've been promised that if they die before He returns, they will be raised to the resurrection of life.

Just as Jesus Himself was raised. And on this Resurrection Sunday, I want to look to God's Word to remind us of this great promise from Jesus to His people, to you and I who live in the midst of death.

[1 : 31] I was reflecting just as I was preparing about just the number of us who have experienced death recently or in our lives, whether it's a parent or another family member.

And I think there's no better time for us to reflect upon the promise that is given to us about death than on Resurrection Sunday.

So if you would please turn in your Bible to the Gospel of John, if you've not yet done so, chapter 11. We're going to be reading verses 17 through 27. John chapter 11.

We begin in verse 17. If you have one of the church Bibles, it's on page 897.

Please follow along as I read.

[2 : 47] Now when Jesus came, He found that Lazarus had already been dead in the tomb four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem and 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 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.

[3 : 58] 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.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You, Lord, that You have preserved Your Word over the ages, that it may come to us, and that we may have it and benefit from it.

We ask in this moment that You would speak to our hearts, speak to our hearts as people for whom death is a reality. And Lord, I pray that we would be reminded this morning, those of us who have put our trust in Jesus, that we have a promise.

We have a promise about life after death. And we have a promise that the grave is not the final place for us.

[5 : 17] And I pray, O Lord, this morning that those who do not have this assurance, those who do not have this hope, that they will come to put their hope and their trust in the One who has defeated death, and who holds out the promise of resurrection to all those who put their trust in Him.

Lord, would You speak to our hearts now as we open Your Word. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. The words of Jesus in this passage, which He spoke on the occasion of the death of His friend, Lazarus, remind us that because of Christ's resurrection, believers can face their own death with a confident hope of future resurrection.

And that's the only reason that believers can have a hope that death is not final for them. is because of this promise that Jesus has given to us that death is not final for the one who believes in Him and who dies in Him.

I want us to consider from this passage three statements that Jesus makes that help us to have perspective in the face of death, the death of loved ones and indeed our own death.

The first is a claim that Jesus makes. He makes this claim in verse 25. [7 : 13] The first claim He makes in verse 25 when He says, I am the resurrection and the life. Jesus makes a startling claim some four days after His friend Lazarus was dead.

He was laying in a tomb and by this time His body had begun to decay. And in this account that we are reading we see Martha is the one initiating this conversation with Jesus and she expresses her confidence in Jesus by saying to Him, Lord, if You were here my brother would not have died. And she goes on to say, but I know that even now if you were to ask God whatever you ask God He will give it to you.

Now Martha was saying to Jesus in those two statements she was saying to Jesus expressing that she believes that Jesus has the power to heal. And she was saying Jesus, if You were here when Lazarus was sick You would have raised Him up from His sick bed.

He wouldn't have died. But she's also saying something else to Jesus. She's saying but Jesus now that He is dead I know He can be raised if you ask God to raise Him.

[8 : 45] I know that God will give you whatever you ask Him. And so now she is interacting with Jesus but she is confident about Jesus in a different way.

She is confident about Jesus with regard to His relationship with the Father. She felt Jesus could raise Lazarus from His sick bed if He were present but now that Lazarus is dead she believes that Jesus now has to intercede to the Father ask the Father and then the Father could raise Lazarus from His tomb raise him from His grave.

Look at how Jesus responds to her in verse 23. He says to her your brother will rise again. In verse 24 we see Martha responding to Jesus as any Orthodox Jew would I know He would rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

But she's saying to Jesus but Jesus I don't want Him to raise on the last I want Him to be raised now. And so if you would ask the Father I know He will give you whatever you are asking for.

And it is in response to that statement of Martha it is in response to Jesus recognizing Martha is not seeing Him as the one who is able to bring Lazarus back to life.

[10 : 29] Jesus says to Martha I am the resurrection and the life. I am the one who is able to bring Lazarus back to life from death.

Jesus was pointing Martha's attention away from the Father and away from future resurrection to Him right now in the present. He says Martha I am the resurrection and the life.

Now that is a bold claim to make to a woman whose brother is in the grave at the point of decay and she wants him raised and she is almost pleading that you would pray to your father.

She knows whatever you pray for your father would grant and you saying to her no Martha I am the resurrection and the life. Martha didn't have confidence in Jesus himself to raise Lazarus from his tomb the way she had confidence that he could raise him from his sickbed.

And I think on this resurrection Sunday morning brothers and sisters we need to hear this claim of Jesus afresh. We read in scripture that one day the dead will be raised.

[12 : 12] And we can hold on to that promise that in one day the dead will be raised but I believe that when we consider these words of Martha we need to bring them squarely on the one who makes resurrection possible.

And that is the Lord Jesus Christ not just thinking about the resurrection in a vacuum but looking to the one who makes it possible. Looking to the one who is the resurrection and who is the life.

Looking to the one who when he said these words to Martha he had not yet raised from the dead.

But we now have the experience of Jesus having himself defeated death and having himself been raised from the dead.

And on this resurrection Sunday morning we need to look to the one who is making and will make resurrection possible and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that is the perspective that we need to have concerning our future death. It is the perspective that we need to have when a loved one dies in Christ.

[13:24] See this is different from knowing someone who can do something on behalf of somebody else.

This is knowing the one who himself can do it. Jesus himself is the resurrection and the life. John tells us this was not an empty claim that Jesus made.

He tells us further on in this account as we read on that Jesus made good on this claim that he made to Martha.

In verse 43 we read that Jesus went to the tomb and Jesus cried out in a loud voice and said Lazarus come out. And Lazarus came out with his hands and feet bound with linen strips so wrapped in his grave clothes.

I heard it said that if Jesus had simply gone to the grave and said come out everyone in the grave would have come out but he specifically said Lazarus you come out and he did that was able to do that because he is the resurrection and the life.

[14:47] And so brothers and sisters on this resurrection Sunday I encourage us to renew our hope and our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the resurrection and the life.

As the reason that we do not need to fear death. As the reason that we can approach death with the conviction that death is not final. and Jesus is the resurrection and the life and Jesus will raise up all those who belong to him.

The second statement in this passage comes in the form of a comfort that Jesus offers. In these brief words that Jesus spoke on the occasion of the death of Lazarus he offers an enduring comfort. And here's the comfort that Jesus offers in the face of death. Whoever believes in me though he die yet shall he live and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

Now these words they almost sound contradictory because how can Jesus at first say that people who believe in him die and then go on to say everyone who believes in him will never die.

[16:31] Martha could have rightly objected and said but Jesus Lazarus believed in you and he died. But Martha didn't object to that because she understood what Jesus was saying.

She was not just hearing Jesus at a surface level. She understood what Jesus was saying. What Jesus was saying is those who believe in me even though they die physically and their bodies return to the dust they themselves will never die.

they themselves will never die because they believed in me and I gave them eternal life. I am the resurrection and the life and in the end I will raise their dead bodies to the newness of life.

Brothers and sisters, these are comforting words. They're comforting words if we have a loved one who has died in Christ. As I was preparing I thought of Brother Kelly and knowing that he is present in Jamaica and I think tomorrow or the day after will be attending the funeral of his mother and burying her and knowing that she left a testimony of decades of serving Christ.

These words can mean great comfort and bring great comfort to them as they're reminded that death is not final for her, that she is going to be raised up.

[18:02] The Lord Jesus Christ himself will raise her up. And don't you see the wonderful comfort that God gives us in that?

In the triune God, the person of the Godhead who died and rose again is going to raise up those who believe in him.

God will be God these words are comforting words, they're also disturbing words. They're disturbing because Jesus does not give them to every single person.

He only gives them to a group of people, those who believe in him, those who belong to him. he doesn't offer the same comfort to all people on all religious roads.

He doesn't offer the promise of eternal life and being raised from death in the resurrection to people who are simply good or moral, people who have good habits of attending church and perhaps even praying.

[19:20] No, he exclusively offers this comfort to those who believe in him. And so while these words are comforting for believers, these words should be disturbing for unbelievers.

And they should be unsettling for those of us as well who have loved ones who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ and should be a reminder to us to hold out to them the hope of the gospel so that

they too can come to know the Savior and they too can know this comfort that can be theirs in death.

Jesus does not spell it out here in this passage, but elsewhere in Scripture, the Bible does tell us what the future holds for those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

believe in there is no promise of eternal life. There is no promise of being with God in the new heavens and in the new earth.

No, instead what the Bible says with the same conviction and with the same authority of the promise of eternal life to those who believe is a promise of damnation and separation from God in hell for those who do not believe.

[20 : 49] There is the promise of a resurrection, but it is a resurrection to damnation. It is a resurrection to judgment. All those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will one day, if they die in that condition, hear those tormenting words, depart from me.

And they will go into eternal torment and eternal separation from God. This comfort that is held out in this passage this morning is only for those who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The third and final statement that we find in this passage is in the form of a challenge that Jesus issues. Jesus concludes his words to Martha in verse 26 and he asks her, do you believe this? in the face of the death of Lazarus who is laying in his tomb and decaying, Jesus asked this one who believed he could heal but not that he could raise the dead.

Having said to her, I am the resurrection and the life, he asked her, do you believe? Do you believe this? Do you believe that I am the resurrection and the life? Do you believe that I can and will raise up those who put their faith in me and though they die, they will have eternal life?

[22 : 46] And Martha's response in verse 27 is, yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who is coming into the world.

Martha believed. And brothers and sisters, this is our challenge. Our challenge in the face of death is to believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

He is the one who has come into the world and he has made the claim that he is the resurrection and the life. And he has offered comfort to those like you and me who are surrounded by death, the death of loved ones and who every day are facing and coming closer to the day of our own death.

And the question to Martha is a question to us, do you believe? Do you believe the claim that Jesus makes? Do you believe the comfort that he offers?

in a context like ours where many people have grown up in churches and they have had religious education in schools, it's hard to find a person who would answer and say that they don't believe in Jesus.

[24 : 17] so many would answer this question, they would say, yes, I believe. But in truth, there are some who believe in a reflexive kind of way, they believe in a passive kind of way, but upon evaluation, they don't really believe.

what we believe, we act upon. What we believe is demonstrated in our lives, and even to the degree that in some ways the question doesn't have to be asked.

It is a contradiction to say, I believe in Jesus and then not live for Jesus. It's a contradiction to say, I believe in Jesus and then our lives reflect that we are doing our own thing, we're going our own way, we're living by our own rules, our backs are turned to Jesus.

And what a deception that is to believe that we believe in Jesus and to believe that doing these perfunctory things that we do, I imagine that there are so many who would be gathering in a church on a high point like today and could feel so good about themselves and think that they believe and friends, it is so much more than that.

We don't believe in Jesus unless we are willing to also live for Jesus. Jesus. Maybe you're here and you know enough and you're honest enough to say you don't believe but maybe you want to believe, maybe you doubt, maybe you have questions and that's where you are.

[26 : 23] I would encourage you to investigate the claims of Jesus. If you read the Gospel of John, you'll find that Jesus not only makes this claim about being the resurrection and the life, but he makes other claims.

And so the Gospel of John is a good place to start to read and consider these claims that Jesus makes. And eternal life is certainly worth your taking the time to do that.

But by the grace of God, I know this morning that there are many of you present and online who have come to the place where Martha has come, where you're able to say, yes, Lord, I believe you

are the Son of God.

You're the Son of God whom the Scriptures proclaim to be coming into the world. He has come into the world and you have put your faith and your trust in him. And what a blessing that is to know that the worst thing that can happen to us in this life is death.

And the Lord Jesus has given us a promise that he will raise us up. And what a wonderful promise that he himself has conquered death.

[27 : 46] And he has promised that he, the second person of the Godhead, will raise up those who believe in him and those who put their trust in him.

and they will not be finally lost. And so brothers and sisters, may this promise of Jesus, his claim he makes, the comfort that he gives us this morning, may that ring loud and true in all of our hearts today, especially today as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for this promise, this claim that Jesus makes, that he is the resurrection and the life and those who believe in him, though they die, yet shall live.

I thank you, Lord, for those who have put their trust in Jesus and they know this comfort today. But Lord, I pray for any who are present or listening, watching by live stream, God, convict them of their need of a Savior.

Convict them of the need to know the Lord Jesus Christ and the pardon of their sins and to be reconciled to him. And Father, I pray that like the rest of us and like Martha, they would come to the place where they are able to say, yes, Lord, I believe you are the Son of God who has come into the world.

[29 : 45] Lord, work in our hearts in this way we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Let's stand for our closing song.