

I am the Resurrection

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Date: 28 October 2014

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

The things that we have just read took place was probably around about February, perhaps less than two months before our Lord died, maybe much closer.

It was near to the time when he would go to Calvary to lay down his life for sinners. And the Gospel of John takes us to the little village or town of Bethany.

And there it tells us there was a dying man, Lazarus. And the text that we have just read emphasizes to us that there was a problem that everyone felt.

But it was the problem that Jesus was not there. In fact, in chapter 10, we are told that Jesus was miles and miles away.

[1 : 43] And so the sisters, Martha and Mary, the sisters, they send a messenger and they call him to come.

And the text tells us that he delayed. When he received the message, he did not immediately come. He waited. He delayed two more days. And by the time he reached the place, Lazarus had already died.

And he had been buried. And he had lain in the tomb for about four days. He had died. And his sisters had been weeping and mourning his loss.

When he comes to them, both of them say to him, one by one, Lord, if only you have been here.

[2 : 49] If only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But he comes. Maybe it is four days too late, but he comes.

And he is shown to the place of the grave, the cave. And you heard it. He says, take away the stone. And he stands before that grave and he prays to the Father in heaven.

He prays. But he prays not for his own sake, but for the sake of those around him. And then, he issues the great summons, Lazarus, come out, come forth.

That is what John tells us happened at that time. That is the story of the raising of Lazarus.

Now, secondly, this evening, we are told that this event had a purpose. There was a purpose to all these things.

[4 : 01] In the next chapter of the Gospel, John tells us that this was a sign. It was a sign. In fact, John presents to us something like seven miracles, and in each case, he tells us that these miracles are signs.

When our Lord turned the water into wine, when he raised or rescued the nobleman's son from death by speaking a word, he was in Cana, the lad was in Capernaum, just the word was enough, and he recovered in that moment.

And there was the walking on the water, and the multiplying of the loaves, and the giving of the blind man his sight. And these are some of the signs that Jesus did.

And John calls these miracles signs because they do two things. first of all, they point to Jesus.

And secondly, they teach us about him. The signs that Jesus did point and teach. In the first place, they point us to Jesus Christ.

[5 : 27] They send us to him, and they say to us, behold him. look at the Son of God and see his glory manifested.

When he turned the water into wine, the disciples, we are told, saw his glory, and they believed in him. And the first thing that this event does, this raising of Lazarus, what it does for us is it says, put your gaze upon Jesus Christ, fix your eyes upon him, look at the glory of the Son of God.

But the second thing that they do, is that these miracles and this sign, they give us understanding of him. They teach us about him.

They do not just point to his glory. They do not just say, look at him. But they tell us something about him. and we are told in this gospel that these signs are written, Jesus did these things, all of it, so that we might believe in him.

That is why they were done. And you know that in the next chapter we are told that this particular last sign had a major impact upon the people who saw it.

[6 : 56] many believed because of this sign. It was as if this was the last great announcement of him before he went to his deep humiliation at the cross.

His enemies cried out in despair, the world has gone after him. Such was the impact of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

And so John brings us to Bethany. He shows us the raising of Lazarus. And he tells us this was a sign that Jesus did.

It shows us the glory of the Son of God and it teaches us something about him. Well, what does it teach us about Jesus Christ?

I believe that the essential lesson that this whole event teaches us is found in verses 25 and 26 of the chapter.

[8 : 01] Jesus speaks to Martha these words. I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live.

And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? I believe that in those words the crux of this sign is conveyed to us.

I am the resurrection and the life, proclaims our Lord Jesus. I want you to notice what Martha was thinking.

Martha was facing her brother's death and she was already thinking about the resurrection of the dead. And when our Lord Jesus comes and speaks to Martha, she says to him this, she says, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

I know that. He may be in the grave now, but I know that one day there is a day when the grave will be opened and he will rise. In the resurrection on the last day or at the last day.

[9 : 24] But our Lord Jesus comes back to her with these words and really he is saying something to her bigger than what she currently understood. Martha, you are looking at the last day and rightly, you are expecting the resurrection of the dead at the end.

Yes, so you should. But there's something else that you need to know tonight. It is, I am the resurrection and the life. Jesus is drawing her eyes back from a future day to himself.

And really what lies behind this is this, Jesus is really saying to her that if you have me, you have life. It is not something that you must wait for one day, you have it.

And I think, you know, if we are sick, if you and I are ill, and we call for the doctor, and the doctor comes to our house, the doctor can give us medicine, and we can have the medicine, medicine, and he can leave.

And we don't need the doctor because we have the medicine. But it's not like that with Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ does not come to us and leave a package labelled life.

[11 : 06] Our Lord Jesus must come to us and must remain with us if we are to live, life. Because he is the life. The life is not simply something that he gives to us, he gives us himself.

And I think that's the underlying message that he is trying to show Martha and Mary and the Jews. If you want eternal life, you must have me.

if I leave you, eternal life is not yours. He is not like the doctor who leaves the tablets and goes. He is the one who comes and stays because he is the resurrection and the life.

And I think that the teaching here is not that he gives life, but that he is life. And you know, this is such an important lesson, this is such an important meaning to this sign.

If you think about it, we already know our Lord was miles away, miles away, but we know that he could have spoken the word.

[12 : 25] He did not need to make the journey. He could have commanded that Lazarus should live from miles away. He had already done that before.

Lord, I am not worthy for you to come under my roof, speak the word, and my servant will live. He could have spoken the command from far away, and Lazarus could have lived.

Yes, he could have spared Lazarus from dying. We could turn around and say, Lord, surely, surely, you could have spoken the word five days or six days before, and Lazarus need not have died.

And this is very striking, isn't it? Because we are told clearly in the text that our Lord loved Lazarus. Lord, the message was, Lord, the one you love is sick.

And we are told that he loved Martha and Mary. And this makes us ask the question, well, if he loved them, why did he put them through that hard experience?

[13 : 37] Why did he take such a hard road when he could have spared them days of weeping? He could have spared Lazarus the sickness and the death.

Who knows what that death was like? We don't know. But since he loved them and yet didn't spare them, it must have been necessary, needful, that they should go through it.

And surely it was needful that they might learn this one thing, that he is our life. Surely he came to them to show them that they needed him if they were to live.

Why was it needful for this to happen? Well, we can answer this. It was needful, at least, for our faith. It was needful that we might know that you and I must possess Christ if we are to have life. You notice what he says to Martha? He says, he who lives and believes in me will never die. Will never die.

[14 : 52] somewhere else it's written that those who believe in Christ have passed from death to life.

It's not something that will happen in the future. It is something that has already taken place if you are united to Christ by faith.

It's no wonder he comes and in the gospel of John he comes and says, I, I am the bread of life. I am the bread of life. He comes again and he says, I am the true vine.

And the branches, if the branches are to live and bear fruit, they must abide in me. There must be a connection which is never broken. when we read this section, we see our Lord face to face with the last enemy, death.

death. And the Bible tells us that men and women pass their lifetime in fear of death.

[16 : 23] The Bible describes death as a veil or a cloud or a shadow, a veil cast over all nations.

I would be fairly confident that most of us here have come into some contact or other with death.

And we can think about this death that took Lazarus and we can go further and we know that the Bible tells us that it is the wages of sin.

The wages of sin is death. And the contemplation of death not only fills us with fear, but it reminds us of the awfulness of sin in the sight of God.

God. It is a convicting blow that God should impose upon Adam and his posterity this sentence, you are dust and to dust you will return.

[17 : 41] sin. And we have to stop and we have to see our Lord in the face of that tomb.

And we have to hear his command. And we have to stop and think about this one who vanquished death.

how did he vanquish it? How was this great power and victory in his hands?

Well, the Bible paints a picture of Christ as the victor over death. It reminds us that he is so different from us in this respect that whereas we are sinners, he is righteous.

He has lived that righteous life. And in him there was no cause for death. In him was only righteousness.

[18 : 50] Not only that, but we are also reminded that he did die. Though he was the righteous one, yet he did submit himself to death.

And when he did that, he took the sins of his people upon himself. And he took away the cause of death in his own death.

We are sent to the cross of Christ every time. The difference between death and life is Jesus Christ who laid down his life for the sheep.

death. When he took our sins upon himself, he took away the cause of separation from God.

The promise of God, their sins and their iniquities, I will remember no more. That promise was confirmed in his death. As far as the east is from the west, so far as he removed our transgressions from us.

[20 : 01] And then removing the barrier between us and God, then he could give us the baptism of his Holy Spirit. He could send forth the Spirit into us that we might live and live.

He says, I am come that they may have life and have it abundantly, more abundantly. Well, let me come to a conclusion tonight.

I have taken you to Bethany and to Lazarus' tomb. I have taken you there that I might ask you to look again at Jesus Christ. Look at him who has conquered sin and death for those who trust in him. And I would say to you that if you desire life tonight, then you must possess Jesus Christ. You must make that your chief goal, to possess him by faith.

And I present him to you as the one who is the resurrection and the life. And I tell you tonight that he graciously calls you to him.

[21 : 14] The scriptures from one end to the other echo the voice of Christ. Come unto me. Come unto me, you who labor, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Whoever is thirsty, let him come and drink of the waters of life. Jesus Christ comes and with the most compelling, gracious kindness, he says, sinner, sinner, you are going to die, and you are going to pass before the great judgment seat of God.

And you dare not go there alone. You dare not face the judge of all the earth alone with your record of sins and your corrupt heart. Because you will die the second death.

When the day of resurrection comes, you will rise to condemnation. and he says to you, that is your plight, if you are outside of Christ.

But he says, come to me. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

[22 : 30] And tonight, when the word of God is being preached, and every night like this, when God is presenting his son to you, he is saying to you, here is life, here is my son, come and take him, take him by faith.

That is the call of the gospel. As Christ was ascending, he said to his disciples, go and preach the gospel to every creature. And that is the good news.

Without Christ, we perish eternally, but with him, we are safe eternally. We have passed from death to life. I have come that they may have life and they may have it abundantly.

Now, one more thing before I stop. Tonight, we have read about one resurrection, the raising of one man.

And Jesus says in this time, he says, these things are happening that you might see the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified before you.

[23 : 42] And the raising of Lazarus brings great glory to Christ and glory to God. And I ask you, imagine for a moment the glory of the resurrection on the last day when all the graves will be opened.

And the mighty host, the army of the redeemed, all of us here and spread throughout time and the world, when our Savior comes, we will stand together, imagine for a moment, anticipate the shout of glory that will accompany the last trumpet.

And yet imagine the cry of despair of those who heard about Christ in their lifetime and turned their back on him.

We are told every eye will see him and those who pierced him will mourn. but those who have looked for him will rejoice.

And I pray that every one of us here will be among those who are looking for his appearing, having trusted in him for the forgiveness of sins and for the gift of everlasting life.

[25 : 17] I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he die, yet he will live.

Amen. Let us listen to