

# I am the resurrection and the life

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[ 0 : 00 ] With Easter Day behind us and John 11 open in front of us this morning, I want to speak today! I want to speak today about having confident hope in the face of death.

! Talk of death is relevant and personal for us all. Firstly, of course, we're surrounded by it. Lives cut short unexpectedly and tragically. Long-term illnesses into old age leading to death, obviously. This week on the TV, the Pope lying in his open coffin with thousands filing past and then his funeral. I think of the past year at St John's and those whom we have known. A long-term elderly friend now no longer with us. Colleagues alive one day and dead the next. Or a precious daughter dying suddenly.

Or relatives sometimes far away deteriorating and passing. Living in the midst of death as we do, many of us carry a weight of grief for those we've loved who are now gone.

Secondly, obviously, not only are we surrounded by death and grief and sorrow, but death will come to us, too. For I will one day die, as will you. And the truth is, in the face of this unavoidable destiny, we as a human race find ourselves powerless and helpless, which can be so, so scary.

[ 1 : 35 ] I read an interview quite a while back, what I've learnt by Alex James, bass player with Blur. Growing your own food is fantastic, therapy can really work for men, etc. Last comment, I am terrified of dying.

And yet this morning, with the resurrection of Jesus behind us and John 11 open in front of us, we should see that the God who made and loves his world offers people like us real, confident hope, because he offers life to dying, grieving, scared people. And he does so through the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's purpose in the events of John 11 is spelt out by Jesus at the beginning of the chapter. A man named Lazarus, you see this, verse 1 was ill, and he was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

And this Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay ill, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. And so the sisters sent word to Jesus, Lord, the one you love is ill.

And when he heard this, verse 4, Jesus said, this illness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory, so that God's Son may be glorified through it.

[ 2 : 57 ] So what will happen here in John 11 will show and display the splendour and glory of God. And through it, God's Son will be seen for who he is. And God's purpose for us through these verses is that we believe.

In verse 14, speaking to his disciples, Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.

So for the disciples then, and for you and me today, we are meant, through the events of John 11, to see Jesus in all his death-defeating glory.

And as those in the midst of death, we are then meant to believe in him, meant to run to him, and place our trust in him, and find in him eternal life.

Now there's three things I want to say this morning about Jesus Christ from John 11. Here's the first. In the face of death, see firstly the glorious humanity of Jesus.

[ 4 : 10 ] Did you notice, as it was read to us, Jesus' relationship with Lazarus and his family? Very simply, again and again, all the way through, he loved them.

Scanning through what takes place, in verse 3, the sisters sent word to Jesus, Lord, the one you love is ill. When he heard this, Jesus said, this illness will not end in death, it's for God's glory, so that God's Son may be glorified through it.

And then we're told, now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. They're not a random family. Lazarus isn't just a bloke that Jesus will zap with divine power. He tells the disciples in verse 11, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up.

These are family friends whom he loves. Later on, as Jesus approaches the tomb weeping, the Jews remark, See how he loved him. And it is this love that sees Jesus so deeply moved and troubled, As he comes near to their grief and Lazarus' tomb.

Over the page in verse 17 onwards, Jesus arrives in Bethany, he meets and talks with Martha, Who then goes and calls Mary, and both sisters come to Jesus. And in verse 32, when Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, She fell at his feet and said, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

[ 5 : 41 ] When Jesus saw her weeping, And the Jews who'd come along with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. Deeply moved is not just sadness and empathy.

Jesus is moved with a deep indignation and anger. As someone has written, Angry with the sin and sickness and death in this fallen world That wreaks so much havoc and generates so much sorrow amongst those he loves.

He asks, verse 34, Where have you laid him? Come and see, Lord, they replied. And verse 35, Jesus wept. Do you know this?

Did you know how Jesus responds in the face of the death and grief of those he loves? This is so important. The humanity of Jesus.

He isn't a kind of Buddha figure. He's not remote and detached from our suffering and grief, Kind of sitting serenely, unaffected. Jesus doesn't pretend to be unmoved, Must be strong and carry on.

[ 6 : 58 ] Jesus doesn't laugh in the face of death. Nor does he live in desperate denial, As though death is nothing at all, It does not count, I've only slipped away into the next room, All is well.

No, it isn't. He feels love. And he grieves. And he cares. So important, this.

I've mentioned this before in church on Sundays. I remember speaking at the girls' school quite a few years ago now. It was just a week after a 15-year-old pupil Had been crushed to death in a horse riding accident.

And the school children were gathered in the hall And her friends were in shock and holding one another And crying. And I was asked to say something. And it wasn't the place for many words at all. But I did say, And I wanted to acknowledge, That what had happened was just awful.

And shock and anger and confusion and tears come, Because death is a horror. And it should not be. And I wanted the school children to know, And I said that they weren't alone in this, But that God the Son himself Wept at the death of one whom he loved.

[ 8 : 11 ] He has stood in our shoes. He stands with us, Moved and troubled. He knows that death should not be as we know. He is so gloriously human, Jesus.

He is like us. Except, Except unlike us, Jesus is not helpless.

He can do something about it. Which takes us on in these verses. First this morning, See the glorious humanity of Jesus. Now secondly, Here in John 11, The glorious claim of Jesus.

So wind back again to verse 17 on, Where Jesus arrives in Bethany. And he finds that Lazarus has already been in the tomb for four days. Lazarus is very dead. And Martha comes out to meet Jesus. And there's no small talk. Look, verse 21. 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.

[ 9 : 18 ] And Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again. And Martha answered, I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

What is this common belief between them? Most people in Britain today say, When you die, that's it. That's the end. There's nothing beyond.

Or they say, Maybe she's looking down on you from above. But it's, Can't really understand what that means. There are other beliefs around the world.

Like that we move in a cycle of life and death and reincarnation. Maybe until we reach enlightenment. But God says different. Says it's not like that.

Through the Old Testament and on, God teaches that history is moving in a line towards a final day. The last day. And on that last and great day which will come, all people will be raised from the dead and will face God as judge.

[ 10 : 23 ] Listen to this. Daniel chapter 12, verse 2 in the Old Testament. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake. Some to everlasting life. Others to shame and everlasting

contempt.

Or Isaiah 26, verse 13. But your dead will live, Lord. Their bodies will rise. Let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy.

Your dew is like the dew of the morning. The earth will give birth to her dead. God says and Jesus teaches that the future of all humanity is the day of resurrection to judgment.

That might be new, very new to some of us today. And it's so much to get your head around. But for Jesus and Martha, it's common ground. It's not news at all. He will rise again on the last day.

That's common ground between them. It's not news. But what Jesus says next to her is. Because having spoken together about the resurrection at the last day, now you're meant to hear Jesus' astonishing claim.

[11:33] And verse 25, John 11, right at the heart of John's gospel, Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life.

He's saying, me, the man standing before you, I am the resurrection. What Jesus is saying is, that final day of resurrection is all tied up in me, Jesus, the divine judge and life giver.

The one whose voice will raise the dead on that great day. The judge before whom all will stand on that day. The one who will grant eternal life or eternal condemnation on that day.

It is I, says Jesus. I am the resurrection and the life. Just such a massive, massive claim. Puts Jesus in the league of his own.

The judge of all. Who will bring all of history to a climax for all people. And so if you can picture this, this is true.

[12:43] Every person you and I know, every classmate, every patient in hospital, every resident of Cambridge, every single human being, will one day be woken by him and meet him and stand before him and be judged by him, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it's now because of who he claims to be that Jesus can make these promises. Look. Verse 25. I am the resurrection and the life.

The one who believes in me will live even though they die. And whoever lives by believing in me will never die. So promise number one to all who believe in him.

You will live even though you die. That is, you will die. And you'll be buried or cremated and it will look like the end for you.

Yet on the last day you will live. Having been dead and buried or cremated, you will be raised to life by Jesus.

[13:53] And you'll look into the eyes of your judge and saviour and you'll be blessed and accepted and you will receive everlasting life from the Lord you belong to. See, that is promise number one.

You will live even though you die. And promise number two, whoever lives by believing in me will never die.

That is, for those who bow down before Jesus as their Lord, you receive real life now. Life to the full today with God as your Father who loves you.

And this forgiven, restored life with God now will continue through your days and through suffering and through death and resurrection day and into eternity, you will have an unbroken, secure relationship with God from now and to forever.

Which means in the words of Jesus that you will never ever die. I don't know what you make of that hearing that on a warm end of April, Sunday morning, either for the first or the hundredth time.

[15:06] In part, it's almost too much to take in, I think, sometimes. Like in a society so lost and confused and so worried about where the world and history is heading, such a glorious and clear claim, I am the resurrection and the life.

To a world wracked with death and sorrow. To a culture utterly terrified of death. I'm desperately doing all we can to make life better before we lose our minds and our health and we slip into the darkness.

Such a clear and wonderful promise. You will live. You will never die. I think it's almost too much to be true. And yet here he is, the son of God, speaking to a woman grieving the death of her brother. And he loves her. And he speaks both to her and to us with earnest seriousness, offering us life and saying, end of verse 26, do you believe this?

So the question is, do you? Or will you? Like, will we believe this claim that Jesus is the resurrection and the life?

[ 16 : 26 ] Will we believe that he's the Messiah, the death-defeating, risen from the dead, son of God? Will you believe his promise that those who believe in him will live and never die?

Maybe you say to yourself, even if you've been a Christian for many, many years, this is what I'm meant to believe and I'd like to, and I'd like to believe it's true.

Because I fear death and I long to live, but can I be sure about Jesus? Like, can I really trust that he is who he says he is and that he'll do as he promises to do?

And the answer is, you can. You can trust him and you must run to him and believe in him. Why? Because in the face of death, would you see here this morning three things?

First, the glorious humanity of Jesus. Second, the glorious claim of Jesus. But now thirdly and finally, the glorious power of Jesus who backs up his claims with a public demonstration of his resurrection life-giving power.

[ 17 : 43 ] Everything in the chapter heads for this. We've heard it read. We know what happens. But in verse 38, having spoken with Mary and Martha, deeply moved in spirit and troubled, and having wept, Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb, and it was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance, just like his one would be.

And he said, take away the stone. And Martha said, but Lord, she's the sister of the dead man, by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days.

In the old King James translation, he stinketh. Because this is real. Not fairy story.

Like after four days, a body in a warm climate decomposes. And Martha knows that. She knows the brutal reality of what happens when we die.

What are you doing, Jesus? I don't think she quite means this, but are you taking us for a rind here?

What are you saying? And then Jesus said, verse 40, did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?

[ 18 : 49 ] And this is the climactic moment, because there's no hiding here now for Jesus. Faced with a four-day-old corpse in a tomb, having made such a bold claim, now with the crowd around him and every eye on him, are you going to deliver?

And they took away the stone, which is what they were told to do. And then Jesus looked up and said, Father, I thank you that you have heard me. And 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.

I am the death-defeating saviour sent by God. And when he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, Lazarus, come out. And the dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around the face.

And Jesus said to them, take off the grave clothes and release him, because he's alive. I mean, that is astounding. That is astounding divine power.

Not a random demonstration of something miraculous. But a demonstration and acting out with this one man, Lazarus, of what the risen living Lord Jesus will certainly do in the resurrection at the last day.

[ 20 : 08 ] Because on that final day, he who is the resurrection and the life will speak a word, come out, and all of humanity, those who are in their graves, the dead will rise.

Here, in John 11, 2,000 years ago, with one man, Jesus acted in advance and revealed his power for all to see.

As Lazarus, dead and rotting, hears the dead-raising, life-giving voice of the Son of God, and he cannot but rise to live, publicly, demonstrably, for all to see and touch.

See what this sign is saying to us? Not just a claim. The Lord Jesus has authority over death. The Lord Jesus is able to give life to those who die.

The Lord Jesus is able to give you life, even though you die. And that is because he is the resurrection and the life.

[ 21 : 12 ] He is. And so, verse 45, therefore, many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in him. They believed in him.

Jesus, what we're meant to do is what God wants for us. You and I sit here this morning at the end of April 2025, and we're alive.

And many of us are so, so aware of those whom we love or have loved, who are dying or who have died. All of us, at some point, will experience the kind of heart-wrenching grief and sorrow of Mary and Martha, if we haven't already.

And all of us will die. And all of us will die. And all of us are utterly helpless in the face of death. And all of us will face Jesus Christ as our judge on the last day.

And he, God's son, was sent into our dying world, not just to love and weep, but to live and die and himself rise, conquering death, so that today he might offer us eternal life.

[ 22 : 23 ] You've got to believe in him. You reach out and place your trust in him. You say, Jesus, I need you. I bow before you as my Lord and my God.

And then having believed in him, or having believed in him for 25 years, you've got to stick with him and remain in him. Jesus, I am with you. Because for those who believe in Jesus Christ, you come back to a verse like 11, 25 and 26.

And these promises of Jesus, you can claim for yourself. You can put your name in these verses. Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life.

And Neely and Alan and Sophie and Mark will live even though they die. And Monica and Doug and Josephine and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.

I'm a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. I will live even though I die. And I will never die because of you, Jesus.

[ 23 : 43 ] Because you are the resurrection and the life and I belong to you. I'm going to lead us in a prayer together and then we're going to sing.

Let's pray. Almighty God, how astounding that we dying creatures might live forever.

How astounding that we might live even though we die. We are so thankful and grateful for the Lord Jesus Christ, for his claims and his power.

Thank you that he is the resurrection and the life. Thank you that on the final day he will speak a word and we will rise and face him.

Thank you that on that day all who believe in him will receive everlasting life. Father, please grant us together an earnest seriousness in our faith.

[ 24 : 57 ] May we come to Jesus, hold on to Jesus. May we speak so boldly about Jesus Christ to a dying world that millions upon millions upon millions might know eternal life through Christ or by grace.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.