

The Lord Who Weeps

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Date: 27 March 2016

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[0 : 00] Good morning and a happy Easter to you again. Thank you for coming at this early hour. It's a great time to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. And many people have already gathered throughout the world this day to do so, and others will continue doing that because this is the occasion that we remember that Jesus was raised from the dead. Unfortunately, some people who will come won't get any further than that. And it is possible to come to an Easter service and just remember the event as great as it was and as certain as it happened. But we must not only remember the occasion, but worship the Lord of the resurrection. The one who states in this text that we've already heard that he is the resurrection and the life. I don't know if you can imagine actually celebrating the event, but missing worshiping the one who was raised from the dead. But that's why we're here. And I hope as we look into this text this morning that we're encouraged, we're challenged, we're brought to the place where once again, we worship the Lord who is the resurrection and is the life. So we're going to return to the gospel of John in the weeks to come and finish a sermon series, the last half of John's gospel. But it's important as we look at this text today just to look at what happened before and actually what's going to happen after. In chapter 10,

Jesus makes another great I am statement that he is the good shepherd and then he equates himself with the father. And the religious leaders want to stone him. They want to put him to death, but not so soon. And actually after Jesus makes this claim or this proclamation that he is the resurrection and life, once again, they plot to kill him. So bracketed on either end of what Jesus is going to do, raise Lazarus from the dead in the midst of this, making this proclamation that he is the resurrection of life. Death is actually on either side of it and right in the middle of it is death as well as life. So let's look at this. There's just three things I want to share with you this morning about this text. It'd be really helpful if you turn to it as well. It begins on page 897.

These three things, just the first thing, that Jesus pronounces death and then Jesus proclaims his great identity. And third, then he gives us a preview of things to come. I'll say that again as we come through this passage. So the first thing, Jesus pronounces Lazarus's death.

This is in a text that comes right before the one that was read by Susan. What happens is Lazarus is ill and his sisters send word to Jesus of his illness and Jesus accepts this news of Lazarus's illness. And as the word of Lazarus's illness comes to Jesus and his disciples, Jesus then makes this statement that Lazarus is not only ill, but he is asleep. His disciples contradict him.

And then Jesus interprets his own word for them and he equates that Lazarus is asleep with actually Lazarus's death. In doing so, Jesus pronounces Lazarus's death. Jesus doesn't cause death. Jesus doesn't predict it. He pronounces it. And death is what it is. It's an evil. And there is nothing good about death. There's nothing good about Lazarus's death. And today in the world in which you live, death is denied. It's dismissed. It's minimized. It's managed as well. But we all know that it's inevitable. It's inevitable. Death is guaranteed.

[3 : 58] This death is the consequence of sin. And you know from Genesis chapter 3 that Adam and Eve disobeyed. They rebelled. They rejected God's word and his will. And so God then spelled out the consequences for them. He didn't just suggest consequences.

And when they chose that fruit from the forbidden tree, they were reminded of the warning. And God didn't offer them options. He remained true to his word.

And what God did was pronounce death at that point. Genesis 3, when we read that, we see that when they rejected God's will and his word, there were three consequences. One for the serpent, one for the man, and one for the woman. And there were actually two curses. One upon the serpent, the second one actually on the ground. But there was one pronouncement. And that pronouncement was death. And Jesus pronounces death again.

He says, Lazarus was dead. Look with me at chapter 11, verse 14. Then Jesus told them, his disciples, plainly, Lazarus has died.

And he goes to add on, and for your sake, I am glad that I was not there. And he gives the purpose of this death so that you may believe. And then he says, but let us go to him. He pronounces Lazarus' death. And it sets in motion grief and weeping and wailing and some wondering as well.

[5 : 41] And Jesus knows Lazarus' illness and death. He knows the causes of it. He knows the purpose of it. This death, which is the fruit of sin. This death, we all know, which is the judgment of God. So that's the first thing. Lazarus pronounces the death. I'm sorry, Jesus pronounces the death of Lazarus. But Jesus then goes on to proclaim his identity and work when he says, I am the resurrection and the life. And so Jesus goes to Bethany. And Jesus, on his way to Bethany, about two miles outside of Jerusalem, we're told. And also, if we look at a map, Martha goes out to meet Jesus and she pours out her thoughts to him. She says, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now, I know whatever you ask from God, he will give you.

Martha is not the only one who says this later. Mary says the same. And there's some Jews, all of who kind of intend something differently. But we'll stay with Martha for now. I think Martha is expressing faith. She's sharing an observation, but she knows that Jesus can do something about this.

And there's an exchange between Martha and Jesus. And Martha expresses that she has an understanding, an appreciation, yes, even a faith in this future resurrection that Jews believed in. The Pharisees believed in this future resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees, of course, did not. There was conflict between the two. And that's why the Sadducees were sad, you see, because they didn't believe in a resurrection. But Jesus states then that Lazarus will rise again.

And then he goes on to proclaim that is Jesus's identity. He has something else in mind other than what Martha has in mind. And Jesus proclaims, he says, I am the resurrection and the life. And he makes a clear declaration about this, this proclamation. And it's not a declaration of intent, though he has intention. But it's a declaration of fact.

[7 : 53] He identifies himself with the great I am, as he has already four times before this, and will two times after this as well. But this fifth time, he says, I am the resurrection and the life. This great proclamation, not just a claim, but a proclaim, a proclaiming of who he is and what he can do.

Well, John writes in his gospel then, so that through belief, sinners may have life in this one who is the resurrection and the life. And Martha believes Jesus is the Christ. She says that, she admits, she confesses that he is the Son of God in verse 27. Look down with me at that verse.

She said to Jesus, yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world. When he asks her, do you believe this about him and what he's come to do?

But does she really understand? Does she really appreciate? Does she completely accept that he is the resurrection of life? And what will bring her to that belief? And so, Jesus is building on this, what he's proclaiming that he is resurrection of life. And life throughout the gospel of John is a key theme right from the beginning. In chapter 1, verse 4, John says that in him, in Jesus, in the word, was life. Chapter 4, verse 14, when Jesus encounters the woman at the well, and he's talking about the springs of living water, he says that those who believe in him will have eternal life.

Chapter 5, Jesus talks about resurrection for the first time, and he says that the Son gives life.

Chapter 8, before this one in 11, he says, I am the light of the world.

[9 : 43] Those who believe in him will have the light of life. 34 times at least the word life is used in association with Jesus. So it's this great buildup to this chapter 11 where Jesus proclaims, I am the resurrection of the life. And he's saying that we can have life in him from Jesus who gives life, who has life, who has life, because he is the resurrection and the life. And that means death isn't greater or more real or natural than life. And that's why Jesus follows up his great proclamation with these words in verse 25. He says, I am the resurrection of life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

It's a great promise, isn't it? You might say it's the promises of promises of all the affliction and suffering and adversity we face with death that's always there. There is this promise of life for those who believe and will not die. Suffer the penalty of sin, which is death. Yes, go through it physically, but never that separation ultimately and eternally because of who Jesus is and what he's done.

Death is rendered impotent through belief in Jesus, who is the resurrection of life. The reality of death is a fact, but death's penalty becomes powerless. Life in Jesus, that is us in him, then overthrows this death. And this is the gospel according to John. Well, Jesus then goes on from

there to give us a preview of things to come. When Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, he practices what he proclaims. And if anyone were to say to Jesus, you say you are the resurrection and life, prove it, though no one said that. Jesus is not to be challenged and doesn't have to rise to anyone's occasion. But nevertheless, Jesus then goes to raise Lazarus from the dead. Calvin stated it like this, that Jesus strode like a champion into victory. After four days in the grave, after Jesus is weeping, as he approaches the tomb, Jesus even gets agitated. He's moved by death. Jesus gives us a preview then of things to come. He practices what he proclaims. He proves his identity and he shows the power of his word, like the word that created the cosmos out of nothing. The word of the one who is the resurrection of life shows the pattern of his practice of resurrection and life. So Jesus speaks the truth.

And then Jesus shows, he demonstrates, and he signifies this truth when he says to Lazarus, Lazarus, come forth. And so after Jesus's tears, after his agitation, he takes action.

As if to say, when saying, I am the resurrection life, I am who I am. I will do what only I can do and nobody else. Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life, and I resurrect and I give life.

To close then, finally, Jesus fulfills the purpose of God. Greater than the preview of Jesus's own resurrection, and ours too, is the purpose of God that's fulfilled in Jesus in this scene, and then in the one to come that was read later from John chapter 20. Jesus fulfills God's will in Lazarus's death, and he fulfills his will as the Father raises him from the dead.

[13 : 56] Follow me then with this great purpose that's fulfilled though. Go back to chapter 11, verse 4. John records, This is about life.

It's about life. It's about life. It's about life. It's about life. It's about life. It's about the glory of God. And Jesus knows that, and he wants us to know that, and he wants to know where our actually belief leads. So that when we actually believe in the one who is the resurrection of life, and who was raised from the dead, we know actually the glory of God.

And so we'll sing today about the resurrection, but we worship the Lord, the Lord of glory, who was raised from the dead, and who issued this question to Martha that day, and he issues it to all of us as well, because as it's recorded when he says to Mary, sorry, Martha, everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

And then he asks her this, as well as us. Do you believe this? Does she believe?

[15 : 24] Do we believe? Do we believe not only this, but do we believe this man? Do we worship him this day? And I speak to you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.