

Do You Believe This?

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[0 : 00] We'll turn together now to read in God's Word in the Gospel of John, reading in chapter 11. John chapter 11, we're going to take up our reading at verse 17 and read down to verse 44.

The way we take up our reading here is Jesus has already been informed about Lazarus, who was a good friend of his, along with Mary and Martha, his sisters, Lazarus' sisters, that Lazarus was unwell and that they were calling for Jesus to come and to help.

And when we take up our reading at verse 17, Jesus has actually been told and is telling them, as you see in verse 14, that Lazarus has died.

And for your sake, he says, I am glad that I was not there. So that you may believe. We take up our reading then in verse 17. 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.

[1 : 24] 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. And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him.

[2 : 28] 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. And 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.

[3 : 47] 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.

I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on occasion, 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 hands and feet bound in linen strips, and his face wrapped with cloth.

Jesus said to them, unbind him and let him go. And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word.

Before we turn back to look at this passage, we're going to sing again to God's praise in Psalm 16. In the Sing Psalms version, Psalm 16, we'll sing this psalm in two parts.

[4 : 59] Our last singing will also be from this psalm, but we're going to sing from verse 1 to 7 just now, page 16 of the psalm books. Protect me, O my God, you are my refuge through.

I said, you are my Lord, I have no good apart from you. We'll sing from verse 1 to 7 on the tune of Selma. We sing to God's praise.

Protect me, O my God, you are my refuge through.

I said, you are my Lord, I have no good apart from you.

The Godly in the land, for holiness renowned, They are the glorious one in whom almighty light is found.

[6 : 27] Their sorrows will increase, who on false gods rely.

I will not sacrifice to them, their worship I defy.

O Lord, you are my cup and portion sure.

The share that is aside to me, you guard and keep secure.

The land allotted me, is it a place inside?

[7 : 46] And surely my inheritance to me is a delight.

I'll praise the Lord, my God, whose counsel guides my choice.

And even in the night, my heart recalls instructions voice.

Well, let's turn back to a reading in the Gospel of John, chapter 11. We're reading here of Lazarus and Jesus coming to him.

As it would seem almost too late, Lazarus had died. And yet we are reminded here of the great hope that there is in Christ. A hope that we will in many ways remember in this coming week as our people, as we think of Easter week.

[9 : 12] And all that it means is a time for close reflection on these things. It's always a time for it, but perhaps more so even in this week as we hear more of it. And pray that others would hear of the wonderful message of the power of the resurrection.

And as we read here, the one who is the resurrection and the life. We're going to read just a few verses from verse 25, where Jesus is speaking to Martha.

Martha. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

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.

Martha is asked a question. And that's the question I want us to think about ourselves this evening.

[10 : 15] In many ways, it's a simple question, but it's based on a very powerful fact. The fact is that Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life.

He is the one who has power over death, who is able to raise Lazarus from the grave, who we remember as our risen Savior, the one who died on the cross for our sins, but who rose on the third day.

And the question that comes from that is this. Do you believe this? Do you believe this?

Do you believe this? And it's a question for us to reflect on, always at all times, but especially in this week ahead. Do you believe this? All that you hear about Christ and his resurrection.

Emotions are always a big part of our lives. We go through all kinds of different emotions and experiences in life. There are times when we are happy and glad, and there are times when we are sorrowful and sad.

[11 : 24] But what makes a difference to us when we ask, well, what makes you happy? What makes you glad? Or what makes you sorrowful? What makes you sad? There'll be times when we maybe have different answers from one another to what makes us happy and also what makes us sad.

But there are certain events in our lives that will be the same for us all. events that fill us with great joy and events that fill us with great sorrow.

And as you read through this passage in John 11, what emotion does it bring to you, if any? Does it bring any emotion to your heart as you read through these words?

It may be that as you read through this passage, you enter into the experience of sorrow and sadness as you read about Lazarus and his death and the impact this has on Mary and Martha and also the Lord himself and the many friends that gathered around and wept with them.

It's a passage that can make you sad. That's one perspective on it. If we look at it from a human perspective, that is.

[12 : 35] But we can also look at it from another perspective. And that is as we read these words of Jesus when he says, I am the resurrection and the life.

Jesus has these I am sayings in the Gospel of John. And they explain to us things that he is and that we cannot be.

Things that he is for us and that if we put our trust in him, he gives us this hope. And this is one of these powerful I am sayings.

I am the resurrection and the life. And it speaks into the midst of this time of sorrow for our grieving family.

It speaks to them in a powerful way, but they don't even realize immediately just how powerfully Jesus is going to minister to them. But they come to believe.

[13 : 33] Even before they see the power of what Jesus does, they believe. That's the reply of Martha in verse 27. Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ.

And they have this hope, both Mary and Martha have this hope that the Lord can make a difference for them in the midst of their sorrow. And so what perspective do we have on these events here?

And do they affect us? Or how do they affect us? There are many events that happen in this world. Events that when they happen, we can maybe think, it's really got nothing to do with me.

It's got no impact on me personally. That is at first. You think even of events in our world that go on almost week by week at the moment.

You think of what happened in Moscow just now, the great tragedy that unfolded there with so much loss of life. You think of the conflicts going on between the Ukraine and Russia in the Middle East and in other parts of the world as well.

[14 : 46] You think of little things like you hear in the news that ships cannot really get safely through the Red Sea just now because of fear of being attacked. So they've got to sail around South Africa, a much longer journey.

You think of times when you hear of hurricanes affecting the east coast of America. And all of these events are events that we're hearing regularly at times and we see happening in our world, but our attitude can be one of, well, it doesn't really impact me.

That's all happening at a distance in other parts of the world, far away from me and my situation here in Stornoway. But that's if you look at it just from a close perspective to ourselves.

Because if you look at it from another perspective, a bigger perspective, you see that all these things actually do impact our lives. What's happening in the conflicts, the wars that are taking place just now, the fact that ships cannot sail through the Red Sea.

No impact on us? Well, if you look at your shelves in the supermarkets, you look at the prices of food and other supplies, you see maybe foods that you used to be able to get, you can't.

[16 : 04] Or the prices have risen significantly. We've all seen these impacts. You think of a hurricane that hits the east coast of America. America. How often do we start wondering, will we get the tail end of it?

Will it come our direction? At the time, we can think it's far away from us. It doesn't impact us. But actually, it does.

And so as you read through this passage here in John, you can think of it in these two different ways as well. You can think of it, well, this is just something that doesn't really impact me.

This is something that only impacted Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Or it was only for Jesus' day. You can think of it in that way.

Or you can think of it in what it's actually saying to us. That is continuing to speak to generation after generation. And to ourselves this evening, it continues to speak to us.

[17 : 04] In a week when we approach Easter, when our thoughts are turned, directed towards events in Jerusalem on the cross at Calvary and at the empty tomb 2,000 years ago in a far-off land, does that not impact us?

You can think, well, it's got nothing to do with me. But it does. Because the impact of these events comes to us all. They speak to us, not just to Mary and Martha and the loss of their brother.

It speaks to us about the reality of death. But it speaks to us of the reality of Jesus. And it speaks to us of Jesus as He 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. speaks to us about death.

It's more than a question to Martha. Jesus is saying, do you believe this? He's not just saying it to Martha. He's saying it to you.

[18 : 17] He's saying it to me. He's asking that question of us all. Do you see the impact of this event? The death of Lazarus and Jesus calling him out of the tomb.

And how it relates to Easter, to Jesus Himself giving His life for us, dying on the cross at Calvary, being placed in a tomb Himself, but coming out of that tomb, rising from the grave.

Do you believe this? Do you believe that this is for life, for you? So when it comes to our time when we die, these words, as we so often quote them at funerals, these words will reflect our life, your life and mine, that it will be said of us, though he die, though she die, yet shall he live, yet shall she live through Christ.

Why? Because He is the resurrection and the life. There is sorrow in this passage. But there is also hope, hope of glory in Christ, because He is the resurrection and the life.

So it speaks to us of our life and our eternity. And it reminds us, too, of our responsibility to all around us to make this message known, even as we think of these invitations, to think even in light of this passage as Jesus says.

[19 : 56] I am the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this? Well, come and hear about it. Come and see this for yourself.

Come and hear this glorious message of hope, even for the darkest of times. And so there's three points in this passage for us this evening I want to take.

We have first the pain, the pain that is evident here in this passage. Then we have the power and then we have the plea.

The pain, the power, and the plea. There are many kinds of pain that we suffer in life. There are many kinds of physical pains that we suffer.

maybe if you're into DIY, you've hit your thumb with a hammer at some point and you know the pain that that brings. Maybe you're suffering different kinds of pains yourself just now.

[21 : 01] Joint pains, stabbing pains, sore heads. We go through all kinds of physical pain. And when we have these kinds of pain, we want to either take something to help that pain or to do something about that pain being eased for us.

But there are other pains that we suffer as well. Pains that maybe aren't as obvious or even as clear to those around us.

The pain of anxiety, the pain of illness, the pain of grief and sorrow. The pain that the psalm that we sang, Psalm 116, spoke about.

The pains of hell took hold of me. I grief and trouble found. These pains that come our way. But in the psalm as we sang, we saw the psalmist was able to cry out to the Lord in the midst of this.

And there is pain in this passage for us. There is the pain that Mary and Martha were experiencing at this time. The pain of their brother, the one they loved, who was ill, and ultimately who we see Jesus reminding us who had died.

[22 : 18] There is the pain of grief. There is the pain of their weeping as they would go to the tomb. He had been in the tomb for four days before Jesus arrived there.

There was this pain. There was this heartache. There was this sorrow. They loved him. And we are reminded as we read of earlier on in the passage, we didn't read it, that Jesus loved him as well.

In verse 3, so the sisters sent to him saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill. Jesus had a love not just for Mary and Martha but Lazarus too.

They were obviously close. And we read that later on that Jesus himself wept here. So there was this love and what you expect was that maybe Jesus would come running but instead he delayed, he stayed.

In verse 6, you read there when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. How strange. Why didn't he just come immediately knowing Lazarus, his friend, was ill?

- [23 : 31] We are told a little of why in verse 4. But when Jesus heard it, he said, this illness does not lead to death for it is for the glory of God so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

Something powerful was going to come from this. But yet it's in the midst of pain. For in the midst of Lazarus' illness, Jesus speaks and says he has died.

He is dead. But he hadn't come. He hadn't come. And this obviously grieves both Martha and Mary when they say to him, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

does he not care? Has he no compassion in the midst of this? Why is he not rushing to their aid?

Pain brings questions. And the question here is, why, Lord? Why, Lord, didn't you come? Why didn't you help?

- [24 : 43] Even the people around them were saying, could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying? Even the crowd that was aware of this in verse 36.

Why? Does he not care? Well, we're looking at it from a human perspective here.

When we think, why? Why didn't he come? It's a very personal and individual experience, pain and sorrow and grief.

But Jesus is seeing this from a much greater perspective. The perspective of verse 4, that this would work for glory.

This is why he came. This is why he came into this world, that people in the midst of grief and sorrow and pain and sin might know that he is one who is able to deal with all of these things.

- [25 : 50] That's why, as we read through this passage, the cross is looming large in the background here as well. When you think of Jesus' own suffering and death being laid in the grave and rising again from the dead, it's so much clearer for us when we look ahead and see that.

But in the midst of this, this time, it's sorrow and pain. One commentator puts it like this. He says, He, Jesus, knew that only when it was darkest does the light shine most brightly against the backdrop of oppressive darkness of death.

Christ would shine the light of his power on his friend. into this darkness that Jesus seemingly was keeping himself away from, there is a light going to come as Jesus shows what he can do.

And it's a reminder to us that Jesus knows your pain and mine because there is no one of us who can avoid this pain, this pain of grief at some point, maybe even now you know it and know its pain, know the hurt that grief brings.

Either recently, in the last few weeks, even years gone by, we've experienced it or we will experience it. And you know how that pain rises and the grief it brings, the tears it brings.

- [27 : 28] And you can maybe even cry out, God, do you not care? God, do you not know what I am going through? But this reminds us he does.

He does. Because when Jesus says, I am, he is reminding us of the one who knows. When God spoke to Moses, as Moses was called to lead the Exodus, Moses, Moses asked him a question, who will I say that sent me?

God's response is, I am has sent you. The great I am, the one who knows the suffering of his people.

The one who we see in the Gospel of John earlier in chapter 3, speak of the God who knows the pain and consequences of death. death. And yet says, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Pain is real. Grief is real. But how do we respond? Where do we turn?

[28 : 54] Well, here we see the one who has the power over this pain. And that's the second thing we see here. We still have that question, why he delayed, why he put Mary and Martha through this pain, maybe even as Lazarus was ill and he still had his senses.

He was wondering, where is Jesus? He could help. And in these circumstances, it could be difficult to believe that in the goodness of God, in the goodness of this Christ who came into the world, but who seemed to be turning his back in their greatest time of need.

But there was a purpose here. Jesus had his purposes here that we only begin to see as he comes into their midst. many of you will be familiar with the poem, The Weaver's Shuttle.

Part of it says this, Not till the loom is silent and the shuttle cease to fly, will God unroll the canvas and reveal the reason why. The dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skillful hand as the threads of gold and silver in the pattern he has planned.

And that's the threads that you see here. There's the dark threads, the sorrow and the grief that Mary and Martha are suffering. But then you have these threads of gold and silver, of Jesus coming and showing the power that he has.

[30 : 31] The one who comes and says, I am the resurrection and the life. the one who shows the power that he has.

Again, one commentator puts it like this, Christ delayed coming to his faithful, loving followers in Bethany in order to strengthen their love and their faith.

And God can put us through things, things that we don't understand even for a long time after we don't understand, but they are there to strengthen our love and our faith for him.

In John's Gospel, as we're reading through here, this is the last and the ultimate miracle that Jesus performs. And isn't it amazing just how it shows us what Christ himself had come to do.

It's more than just words. words that say he is able to give life. Here we see the power of these words.

[31 : 46] How does he show this power? Well, he tells us again and again through this passage, you have it just to select a few verses, 15, 26, 42.

They all speak about the purpose that the people might believe. Believe that God has sent his son to give us life.

And he shows this power in verse 33. He says, when Jesus saw their weeping and the Jews who had come with are also weeping, he was deeply moved and greatly troubled.

We see power initially is fixed in this emotion, this weeping, this sorrow. But then it comes to the point where he asks, where have you laid him?

In verse 34. He said to him, Lord, come and see. And Jesus wept. And he's in the midst of this, you've got this voice behind him saying, could not he who opened the eyes of the blind have kept this man from dying?

[32 : 58] the sisters who are saying, if you had been here, he would not have died. There's so much doubt, there's so much fear in this passage. And yet Jesus reminds them of his power.

And he says, take away the stone. Take away the stone. And they said, well, he's been dead four days, there's going to be a stench.

But Jesus says, did you not believe that you would see the glory of God? And how he lifts his eyes in verse 41, Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

There is a power of God present here. And then at the end of verse 43, he cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

Lazarus, come out. You can imagine, or even try to imagine, the people around about him. What is he doing? He's been dead for four days.

[34 : 04] Lazarus, come out. Matthew Henry, who wrote a commentary on the whole Bible, he says when he's writing about John's gospel on this occasion of Lazarus' death, he says Jesus had to say, Lazarus, come forth.

Because if he had just said, come forth, then all the dead would have come out of their grave. Because that is the power that Jesus has.

He had to be specific to Lazarus. But that reminds us that a day is coming when the Lord will say, come out, and all the graves, all the dead will rise.

Because that is his power. That is the power that Jesus Christ has. The power that was shown here is a power that we will see one day when he calls every one of us to account before him.

Come out. He'll be calling us out to face the judgment. Do you believe this? Because that is what the scriptures say.

[35 : 25] And the power that Jesus had and cried out come out and says in verse 44, the man who had died came out. He walked out of the grave.

He slit the strips on his body, his face wrapped with cloth, and yet he walked out alive. That is the power that Christ has.

Joni Erickson Tadda, a Christian lady, an author of many books, she was paralyzed in a diving accident. And when asked what her favorite verse is, she often always replies, Philippians 3, verse 10.

What does that verse say? I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.

To you, the reason why Joni Erickson Tadda wants to know it is so much. It's not for selfish reasons, but for the glory of Christ.

[36 : 40] because she is paralyzed. She knows that the power of his resurrection is what will give her new life, new hope.

She said, in suffering, we also die to worry. We die to fear. We die to grumbling about the inconvenience of the weight of our cross.

We die to thinking that Jesus doesn't care. What's suffering? Is she talking about there? Not her own, but the sufferings of Christ and sharing in his sufferings.

She wants to know the power of his resurrection, the power that we see here, the power that says, Lazarus, come out. Come out and live because I am the resurrection and the life, Jesus sees.

He has the power. The final thing I want us to think about is the plea. As we come to the conclusion here, we think of the plea that Jesus gives.

[37 : 57] We know the pain of this situation. We see the power of Christ in calling him out, but we come back to the question. When 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. What is the question? Do you believe this? Martha's reply is, yes, Lord.

I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who is coming into the world. What's your response to that question tonight?

To the resurrection? To the thought of eternal life? What do all these things mean? What does Easter mean? what is the purpose in it?

Is it just a holiday? Is it a time for us to have events in our communities that many few tie into the real meaning of Easter?

[39 : 13] Or is it to remember the one who is the resurrection and the life? The only one who is our hope in death and life.

do we believe in him? Someone once illustrated our lives as a 24-hour period we live, saying it will take us 78.4 years to live that 24 hours.

If we're lucky enough to live that long, each hour represents 3.267 years of life lived. So you're looking at your life as a 24-hour clock.

By 3 a.m., you've lived almost 10 years. When you reach the age of 20 years old, you're at 624 in the morning.

The age of 30, you're just after 9 a.m. in the morning. You seem to have almost the whole day ahead of you. So much time to go.

[40 : 26] At the age of 40, it's just past midday. When you reach the age of 50, you're looking at the clock and it shows the time of 20 past 3 in the afternoon.

You're approaching dinner time in your life. Less than 9 hours remaining in your life on the 24-hour clock. A person of 60 years old is looking at the clock and it shows 622 p.m., less than 6 hours remaining on the 24-hour clock.

It's a striking thought when you think of your life in that way. But it's a reminder how quickly our lives will pass us by.

And where are you on that clock? Because the clock is always ticking. But there's something missing from that illustration.

When you think of our lives 78 years, you're thinking, we've got plenty time. Time to live. Plenty time to go.

[41 : 41] What's missing is the fact that at any moment clock, that clock could stop. Because we're reminded so often in this life that life is never certain, that life is short.

we read in the scriptures so often, our life is but a vapor. Our life is like the grass. Springs up in the morning, gone in the evening.

Our life is very much like that 24 hour clock, always ticking on. Where are we in that time?

our life is but a weaving. The events of this world can seem of little significance to us at times because we seem so far removed from them.

And yet when we look at it in the bigger picture, we see everything that happens in this world as consequences for us. And perhaps we come to the resurrection of Jesus.

[42 : 57] Perhaps we come to Easter time in the thought that Christ died on the cross. And it seems just insignificant to us. It means nothing for us, it means nothing to many around us.

But when we look at the bigger picture, when we are reminded of Lazarus and Mary and Martha and the pain and sorrow, they found themselves in, we are reminded that that is our lives too.

The time comes when the clock will stop for us. And what then? Is Jesus for you the resurrection and the life, the hope for now and the hope for eternity?

Because that is the only way to live. death. What happened in Bethany 2,000 years ago is not insignificant.

Just like what happened at Calvary 2,000 years ago is not insignificant. It's the most important events in this world's history that Jesus showed and reminded us that he has power over our greatest pain, the pain of death, and the consequences of sin.

[44 : 22] He has power that we might live. I am the resurrection and the life. there are the facts.

And the question is, do you believe this? Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we give you thanks for your word that reminds us of your wonderful love towards us, reminds us how our lives are not insignificant in your eyes, that you know our every hurt and pain in us, you knew Mary and Martha's.

And when it seemed like you were so far away from them, Lord, you were preparing things for your glory, that these events would have their effects for many generations and even for our eternity.

We thank you that it was to show your power, the power over death, to call out Lazarus from the grave, to remind us that you are the resurrection and the life.

We pray, Lord, that you will help us even in these days ahead, we may hear so much of Easter and what it entails, that we would remember the greatest and most powerful message behind it all, that you gave your son for this world to give his life.

[45 : 46] On the third day he rose again. He is victorious and help us to find our victory in him. So hear us, Lord, we pray, and go before us now as we ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to conclude by singing in Psalm 16 again in the Sing Psalms, page 17 of the Psalm books.

Psalm 16 on verse 8 down to the end of the Psalm. The tune is Golden Hill, and these wonderful words remind us that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and that we would set him before us.

Before me constantly I set the Lord alone, because he is at my right hand. I'll not be overthrown. Sing these four verses to God's praise. before me before me constantly I set the Lord alone, because he is at my right hand.

I'll not be overthrown. Therefore my heart is glad my tongue with joy will sing my body too will rest secure in hope and we will reign for you will not allow my soul in death to stay nor will you leave your holy one to see the tombs decay you have made

[48 : 28] Lord to me the power of life divine the path of life divine blessed shall I know at your right hand joy from your face will shine shine after the benediction i'll go to the door to my right now may grace mercy and peace God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore amen 2020 that moon will doing you the energy the waters the moon to use to passionbugère ■■■■

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