

I AM the resurrection and the life

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[0 : 00] We're continuing our series on John, the Gospel of John, and we go to the point of John 11, verse 1-27.

So I'm going to read that passage first. And let's just pray that God will really speak to us this morning because that is the main deal.

The main deal this morning is God speaking to us and us meeting with God. That's the main deal. So let's read this passage together. Now, a man named Lazarus, not Nazareth, a man named Lazarus was sick.

He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. So the sisters sent word to Jesus. Lord, the one you love is sick. When he heard this, Jesus said, this sickness will not end in death.

[1 : 09] No, no. It's for God's glory. So that God's Son may be glorified through it. Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. Then he said to his disciples, let us go back to Judea.

But Rabbi, they said, a short while ago, the Jews tried to stone you. And yet you're going back there? Jesus answered, are there not twelve hours of daylight?

A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. It's when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light.

After he'd said this, he went on to tell them, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep. But I'm going there to wake him up.

[2 : 16] His disciples replied, Lord, if he sleeps, he'll get better. Jesus had been speaking of his death. But his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

So then he told them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And for your sake, I'm glad I was not there. So that you may believe.

But let us go to him. Then Thomas called Didymus. Said to the rest of the disciples. Let us also go, that we may die with him.

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem. And many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him. But Mary stayed at home. Lord, Martha said to Jesus, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

[3 : 30] But I know that even now, God will give you whatever you ask. Jesus said to her, your brother will rise again. Martha answered, I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies.

And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? Yes, Lord.

She told him. I believe that you are the Christ. The son of God. Who has come into the world. And may God bless his reading to our hearts.

So, do apologize if any of these slides are a bit corrupt. They were done in a rush. So, if I've made any spelling mistakes or grammatical errors, I claim no responsibility for that.

[4 : 38] And Jackie, please don't sack me as a teacher. Thank you. So, let's have a look at this. Slide two, Josh, please.

Yeah. So, sorry if that's a little bit small. Hard to get the font right, isn't it, with these things. Can you see? Everybody see that all right? Yeah? Okay. If you can't, it's tough luck because I can't change

it.

So, where do we start? Lazarus is sick. Lazarus is sick. And the passage starts by telling us that Martha and Mary's sisters sent word of the situation to Jesus.

It also references in verse two that Mary is the same Mary who anointed the Lord's feet and poured perfume over his feet and wiped his feet with her hair.

And it says in that passage that the whole perfume, the whole aroma filled the whole room, the whole place where they were. So, good on Mary. A lot of focus on Mary.

[5 : 41] She's proven to be a good one. Martha, we don't talk too much about Martha. I don't think we talk enough about her having read this. But that's, you'll find that story in John 12 verse 3 if you want to look better.

Sisters sent word to Jesus that the one he loved was sick. First, let's get some content here. Let's get some perspective. This was a highly personal situation for Jesus.

Verse 5 tells us that Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. There's a special bond here. There's a special bond here. A personal bond. A friendship bond. A love bond. Although it's not the first time that an individual has been described as someone Jesus loved.

I can remember John at least. To be singled out individually like this indicates a special bond of friendship and love. Perhaps there was an even closer brotherly bond between Jesus and Lazarus.

[6 : 50] As well. Because the sisters refer to Lazarus when messaging Jesus. The one you love. As if he doesn't love those. The one you love. The special one.

Is sick. Intimating that the sisters considered Jesus was closer still to Lazarus maybe. Now I want to just pause a second.

What would be my response in this situation? What would be my response? My response to his friends. My best friend is seriously ill. One of my best friends.

Somebody really special to me is ill. Yeah. On a purely human level I know what I'd be doing. I'd be jumping in the car. I'd be jumping in the car at the first opportunity and flying over there.

Yeah. Probably instantaneously. And without a thought. And reference to anything beyond my personal feelings. Hold everything else.

[7 : 48] This is more important. I must show my friends how important they are to me. I wouldn't want them thinking that I wasn't bothered about them. About what was happening to them.

I would prioritise. I would prioritise those I loved automatically above those I had no personal or less personal perhaps connection to.

I think it's important we get the strain of what was on Jesus at this point. Because Jesus was human. Fully human as well as fully divine.

And we forget that sometimes about him don't we? We just think he sailed through life. Being God. There was tension there. There was tension there. Second thing I want to say is that Jesus must have had a knowledge of the importance of this situation.

And how to act in it. He shows a foreknowledge or a wisdom I think that can only have come from God. Whether this was an instantaneous revelation of the Holy Spirit's voice or because he'd already had communion and conversation with his father that morning.

[9 : 04] Who knows? We can't really say but the phrase when he heard this suggests that the response was instantaneous. Even if the knowledge behind it had come earlier.

In verse 4 Jesus says this sickness will not end in death. And the key word there is end.

That's the key word. No it's for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it. Now I think it's likely that Jesus was about a day's travel from Bethany.

Okay. About a day's travel. And it's commonly held belief. It's a commonly held belief that Lazarus was probably already dead. Actually.

When Jesus was told he was sick. In the ancient world it was harder to ascertain when someone had died. Because they didn't have things like heart monitors and blood pressure monitors.

[10 : 09] And you know brain scans and what have you. So it was a bit hard to ascertain when people had actually shuffled off this mortal coil to coin a Monty Python phrase.

So Lazarus' death either happened during the messenger's trip out to Jesus. Or maybe even before as the sisters were waiting a few days to confirm the death.

As was the custom. I read that many Jewish people actually considered the fourth day to be when the soul was considered truly gone.

So there's a bit of relevance there isn't there? To the fact that Jesus waited for a few days. I think it's important to note as well that Jesus responds quickly but doesn't act on impulse.

His response is quick but his action is not an impulse reaction. Because his action is always in obedience and accordance to the Father's plan.

[11:21] So how does he respond? Instead of hot footing it over there. Laying his hands on Lazarus and saying, Okay Lazarus be healed. Or maybe even if it wasn't God's will.

Sorry Lazarus. Sorry Mary. Sorry Martha. I mourn with you. I love you. And so and so. Instead of doing that. He reacts in what you would consider an unnatural way for us.

Yeah. Not the way you would think a friend would act. He waits. He waits. I don't know about you. But one of the hardest things about following Jesus is waiting. Yeah. Does that strike a chord with anybody else or is it just me?

Yeah. I find it incredibly hard to wait. We live life at such a pace and in such a hurry. That leaving a request at God's door for answering is something I find extremely difficult.

[12:30] I'm just being dead honest with you. And I've got a situation at the moment. I'm not going to go into details. But I've got a situation at the moment. And I am struggling with it. So please don't think this is somebody up here who's got it all together.

And he's telling you how to do it. Because that couldn't be further from the truth. Couldn't be further from the truth. It's something very, very difficult to leave something at God's door and just trust him with it.

But God's timing is all important. Now let's be clear here. Jesus acting merely as a friend would have responded straight away I think.

That appears to be the most compassionate way. To be there as a close friend either to heal or mourn with the sisters. Surely that's what he should do. But be aware that God has a greater purpose here.

Than just the comfort of a special friend. This is an opportunity. This is an opportunity for Jesus to show that sickness doesn't end in death.

[13:47] Slide three Josh please. In fact for Lazarus in verse four Jesus says most definitely that this will not end in death.

Strange isn't it? Just felt on my heart that I should say to people. Are you in a waiting situation? Is something bad happening to you or a loved one? Or do you just have a situation that seems impossible? A dead situation.

And all you want is a visit from Jesus. All you want is a visit from Jesus. I want to tell you that just because he doesn't seem to be in this situation.

Don't assume that he hasn't seen. Or that he isn't bothered. Or he has more important things to do.

[15:04] God loves you. God loves you. If we're in that situation this morning. All I can say is ask God.

To be glorified in the situation. As you wait on him. We've already had it really I think. Or something similar. In the Lord's prayer. Our Father in heaven.

Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Put it under his lordship. Your kingdom come.

Your will be done. Here. Right now. In the same way as it's done in heaven. Without question.

Without any reticence.

May your will be done. And then get on with the business in your life. Where you are. Be assured he loves you.

[16:09] He feels as well. More importantly. Your pain. Everything is not about now. Or even making us more comfortable.

In the situation. I always laugh when I see that phrase. Everything is not about. Me and Sue often do this. Quoting a scripture.

A very deep scripture. From a film called Two Weeks Notice. Where a woman hangs out the window. And calls back to her husband in the house. Everything is not about you. But it really isn't. It really isn't. That means. That doesn't mean that God hasn't got compassion on this situation. But everything is not about now. Or even making us more comfortable.

I'm not talking about not having compassion. But knowing that sometimes the best solution. The God solution. Is awaiting its time. And I'm borrowing a little bit from Habakkuk 2 there.

[17:14] For the revelation awaits in a point in time. It speaks of the end. And will not prove false. Though it linger. Wait for it.

Wait for it. Andy Lloyd's got an expression. Don't push the river. Let the river flow. Don't push the river. Don't push the river. Wait for it.

It will certainly come and will not delay. And I believe we can say that. For the situations that God has for us in our lives. So by all means.

And we want to keep praying. Keep laying it at God's feet. Because he will bring revelation to us. About how we should act. Keep offering the situation to him. But be aware that he is God.

Has higher ways. And purposes. Than us. Used to be a children's song. His ways are higher than mine. Higher than mine. His ways are higher than mine. Much higher.

[18:12] Very complicated lyrics. But yeah. But it's absolutely true. Absolutely true. I love that scripture.

That he is able to do immeasurably more. Than all we ask or imagine. Ephesians 3 verse 20. That won't necessarily be quick.

It won't necessarily be easy. But it will be more. It will be more comprehensive. It will be wider.

It will be deeper. It will be higher. And it will be beyond. Our imagination. I think sometimes. When we read that scripture. We think. Okay. What's the best thing I can imagine.

And we don't get the link. That it's beyond. What we can imagine. God is able to do immeasurably more. Immeasurably more. More. More.

[19:12] Than we can measure. Than what we can ask. Or even imagine. It's out of our sphere. It's beyond our imagination. It's beyond our thinking.

Not just more. But immeasurably more. And this is what's happening here. Jesus is doing immeasurably more here. Than we can ask or imagine.

Because he's actually setting down a marker. For the entire Christian world. That follows on. He's actually making a declaration.

That we all. Sort of hang to. And we'll look at that later on. I'm getting ahead of myself. Jesus is basically saying.

And he's taking a lost course. The dead. The most helpless. Situation. That we could think of. You can't get more helpless. Than death. You can't have less.

[20:18] Input. Into anything. Than when you're dead. You can't manage. Anything. Anymore. And for some people. That's why death is so scary.

Because it's a complete. Loss of control. And it's. It's then when we realize. That we're mortal people. That we can't manage things for ourselves. That we actually.

We can't run our life anymore. Because we've run out of life. So Jesus is basically. And that this is. Not the end.

Jesus is not going to meet. The needs of the sisters. With a sticking plaster here. A sticking plaster of a solution. That brings instant comfort. And relief. But he's going to declare himself.

As God. To them. To all who witness this. To foreshadow his victory on the cross. We've been singing about it already.

[21:13] To foreshadow his victory on the cross. And his mastery. And lordship. Over death itself. Hallelujah. Jesus doesn't use power to resurrect people.

He is the resurrection. And the life. Immeasurably more. Than we can ask. Or imagine. This sickness.

I'm going to say it again. Will not end in death. Our sickness. In this world. Everything that we experience in this world. For the Christian.

Will not end in death. No. It will end in glory. Glory to God. And to God's son.

And to his people. When we join him. In glory. Next slide Josh. Well 2 Corinthians 4 verse 6 says this.

[22:22] And this is what got me thinking. It says. For God. Who said. Let light shine out of darkness. Made his light. Shine. In our hearts. To give us the light.

Of the knowledge. Of God's glory. Displayed. In the face of Jesus. That's pretty parallel. Isn't it? Really.

From what we've just read. But there's encouragement here. In the waiting. because Paul goes on to say about being hard pressed and this is life about being hard pressed but not being crushed about being persecuted but not abandoned about being struck down but not destroyed and in verse 11 it says about us you know that this body is always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal bodies I want a bit of that life don't you?

yeah? I'm glad there's me and somebody else verse 16 therefore we do not lose heart though outwardly we're wasting away yet inwardly we're being renewed day by day for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all verse 18 so we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen and what is to come since what we've seen is temporary it's going to pass away but what is unseen is eternal amen so as we've already said Jesus is not focusing on the immediate comfort and in your life he may not be at this time focusing on your immediate comfort even though he loves you and he's your friend but his plan is always to reveal his lordship in your life his victory over death in your life and that physical death is not the end of the matter in fact in the context of eternity anything that life can throw at us is light and momentary now I know people will say

I'm sorry I don't want to offend anybody this morning because we've all got very real problems I'm sure and when this scripture is shared I think sometimes we just think oh that means that what we're suffering now is nothing no what it really means is if you think this is tough now just imagine the glory that's going to come just imagine how much more God is going to pour his glory into you in eternity because it says quite clearly that these light and momentary troubles are achieving for us a glory in heaven that far outweighs them all but we might need to know that what Hebrews 4 verse 15 says as well even though we might not feel that these are light and momentary troubles our Lord and Saviour understands us for we do not have a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities well our feeble frame he knows he loves us he feels for us he's been tempted in every way he's struggled in every way just as we have but hallelujah was without sin and sin here in this situation will be to put the temporary needs of his friends before the greater purpose of God and God's purpose for their lives not to mention the witness to others and countless followers of Jesus throughout the generations who have read this story and realised that Jesus is the resurrection and the life the hope of life after death no it's for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it next slide Josh so does God's purpose make life sad for the sisters does God's purpose sometimes in our life not exactly fill us with joy the simple answer is yes can't get away from it is there something better for them yes yes there is so Jesus waits two more days and I've got this now

[28 : 14] I think despite his love for Martha and Mary and because the two things are true at the same time despite and because of his love for Martha her sister and Lazarus and I think it's important that we focus on Martha and Lazarus in this bit because that's exactly what John does actually in the passage he calls Mary her sister after this point and he didn't mention her by name in this part which I thought was quite interesting really so after two days Jesus says let's go back to Judea okay paraphrasing the disciples response bad idea yeah no I won't go back there Lord can't you remember you got in some right bother last time you were there yeah people wanting to stone you yeah take your life yeah yeah you're going back what's what are you doing Lord of course they wouldn't have said it like that probably but that's what we think isn't it

Jesus' response to use is to use a common situation about daylight hours firstly on the simple face value and practice that daylight hours were where you could walk safely and then the night you couldn't really without falling over okay not many street lights around in those days the response is to make the disciples aware of a couple of things that Jesus' time of ministry was limited and they had to minister to them while he could and we need to grasp the nettle with that sometimes we don't know how long we've got we don't know how long we've got to the minister we don't know how long we're going to be in the light of our life and the second point is walking in God's will is like walking in the light in the daylight hours and this was the best way to walk even even get it if it meant physical death or suffering Jesus was fully aware that he would have to lay his life down and it would not be taken from him so in that respect the light of the world

Jesus himself was with his disciples so it was still light for them Jesus' time of night had not yet come so in summary we walk in the light when we do the revealed will of the Father and we'll not stumble spiritually even if all of us in this church seem to be falling over at the moment but spiritually we won't stumble if we walk in the dark if we walk in our own wills we're liable to stumble spiritually as we're walking contrary to that which God has for us and that is the best way to go so in verse 11 to 14 next slide Josh we get this comical interchange which reminded me so much of Monty Python I couldn't believe it when I read it really it's a dead parrot sketch isn't it in a funny sort of way without being disrespectful it feels a bit like the dead parrot sketch yeah yeah this parrot is dead no he's just resting he's just resting no he's pining for the fjords yeah strange isn't it how the disciples had

decided one way and Jesus was quite obviously talking another way but I've got some sympathy you know one of the commentaries

I looked at said the thick disciples or some expression of the same I thought that's a bit that's a bit steep that isn't it but there you go so Jesus says our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep but I'm going to wait there to wake him up the disciples assumed Lazarus was merely sleeping to recover from illness after all Jesus had sent back an encouraging reply to the messenger he said you know it's alright this is not going to end in death and all that and then he waited two days so it couldn't have been any rush really from the disciples perspective there's no reason to panic here yeah if it had been urgent Jesus would have gone already he'd have gone anyway if he's just sleeping the rest will do him good good sleep he'll be alright there are other instances in the bible where the term sleep or sleeping is used to indicate physical death I'm not going to go through them now but Acts 7 20 where Stephen fell to his knees and then it said at the end of that when he'd said this he fell asleep which basically means they'd stoned him to death okay in Deuteronomy 31 6

Moses God talks to Moses about him going to rest with his fathers in Daniel 12 2 multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake some to everlasting life others to shame and everlasting contempt the really encouraged one in 1 Thessalonians 4 verse 13 is this brothers and sisters we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind who have no hope we have a hope welcome for we believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him according to the Lord's will we will not we tell you that we who are still alive who are left until the coming of the Lord will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep for the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God and the dead in Christ will rise first after that we are still alive and our left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will be with the Lord forever what an encouraging phrase we will be with the Lord forever therefore encourage one another with these words the wonderful truth of the passage next slide

[34 : 47] Josh is that those who sleep in the Lord whatever their sickness it won't end in death but ultimately in resurrection to eternal life with Jesus as heirs of the Father co-heirs with the Son eternity in glory far outweighing anything we've experienced here far outweighing it it's not hard to see why the disciples may have been a bit confused so Jesus has to tell them Lazarus is dead isn't that the most ultimate of humbling situations to be dead but Jesus goes on and says for your sake I'm glad I was not there so you may believe because if Jesus had been there I believe he would have been there to mourn rather than to do the perfect will of the Father and no miracle of resurrection would have taken place this is a miracle for the disciples this is a miracle for

Lazarus this is a miracle for Martha and for Mary this is a miracle for those who mourn this is a miracle for those who think that death is the end for those who have no hope that wonderful big up to Thomas here by the way if you notice down in Thomas we call him we give him a hard time pragmatic practical because he needed to see physical evidence of Jesus' resurrection rather than just take the word for others I wish some of us were a bit more like that sometimes you know you know not just sitting there and taking everybody's word for everything but actually testing it for themselves wanting it for themselves if you keep putting yourself you know if you're a bit of a doubting

Thomas this morning Jesus wants you and he wants you to keep putting yourself in the place to see him just as Thomas did God will reveal the extent of his love for you if you keep putting yourself in the right place just like he did to Thomas he'll show you the nail prints in his hands and the hole in his side I love this because whether or not the next statement is said with sarcasm or tremendous courage I don't know or maybe it's both he said with loyalty and devotion let's also go that we may die with him he doesn't say I'm not going because I might die you're on your own Lord but he's willing to follow Jesus into a potentially fatal situation as long as it means being with Jesus when Jesus arrived he found Lazarus had been dead and buried in the tomb for four days the whole situation is completely over what's more many Jews had come from Jerusalem yeah well that's the intimation anyway to comfort the sisters in their loss so there's a potential danger here for Jesus a potential real conflict at the very least the next part is interesting though and it's the encouraging bit because in verse 20 Martha heard that Jesus would come in and this time rather than putting the kettle on and getting the cakes ready this time Martha goes out to meet Jesus she steps out of her mundane responsibilities of her life that could distract her all these people mourning

around her she steps out of that and she steps to be with Jesus you know what this is a different woman you know this is a different woman God has transformed her I believe at this stage or is in the process of transforming her it's the opposite to the Martha who would have been so preoccupied with the work of entertaining so critical of a sister who decided on what was better to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to him now she wants to be with Jesus now she wants to be with Jesus tremendous growth from Martha but there's also an honesty there about Martha as well next slide Josh Lord if you would have been here my brother would not have died do you know as a person I think that must have hurt Jesus you weren't here for me Lord you weren't here for me but I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask just to really touch Jesus that I'm pretty sure there was a sense of disappointment in Martha and perhaps hurt that the Lord wasn't there for them at the time of the death or didn't heal Lazarus maybe that's why Mary has stayed at home maybe it's all too much for her don't know don't we feel like this from time to time isn't that feeling sometimes this didn't need to happen

[40 : 30] Lord if you'd been here if you'd just been here but nonetheless Martha declares that she still believes that God will give Jesus anything he asks for her faith in Jesus is undimmed whether she really expects what Jesus states next is unclear your brother will rise again says Jesus and her response in saying he will rise again in the resurrection of the last day perhaps suggest that she's really unaware of Jesus' plan of physical resurrection right now but I want to go back to the statement really that is the main statement here and this is it really the hope of every Christian since that day and through eternity Jesus says I am I am the resurrection and the life the one who believes in me even though they die and whoever believes by believing in me will never die and then the question to Mary do you believe this

I'm going to wind things up I'm sorry I've gone a little bit longer than I should have this morning Jesus is making the fifth of seven I am statements here this is Jesus full flow I'm not messing about here I'm telling you that I am God I am equal to God I am God he's in me I'm in him there is no doubt in it as he as God spoke of himself as being the I am in Exodus 3 verse 14 there's a statement this is a statement of God's absolute necessary and eternal existence the definition of God is the one who just is who must be and Jesus used the same terminology several times Jesus is claiming to be God and equal with God in John 20 verse 30 to 31 but this particular I am statement puts a personal emphasis on human salvation this gospel is unique amongst explanations of eternity and that it's not about how much knowledge you gain or about what you achieve or some ethereal state of being it's the light of the knowledge of the glory of God as displayed in the face of Jesus Christ it's about him if you want to feel totally fulfilled you will need to look full into the face of Jesus Christ and until you do you will never be fulfilled you need to look straight into the face to get close to it to examine it turn your eyes upon

Jesus look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace do you know what there's already been a miracle Martha has stepped into a different place in her life because she declares then one I think of only seven people to declare that Jesus Christ was the Messiah the only woman certainly I think a special place yes Lord I believe and this morning the question is do you believe do you believe do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah do you believe that he died for your sins do you believe that you can live forever in eternal glory with God do you believe that he can walk with you through every dark and difficult situation do you believe that he walks through the valley of the shadow of death with you because this morning you can there isn't a lot of time for reflection and prayer and again

I do apologize I've stayed too long but I want you to know I want you to know that this morning God is asking you that question do you believe and I want you to respond in your hearts to him shall we just pray as we finish father forgive me for too many words but lord I pray that your word right now would go and meet the point where it should be right now that you would touch hearts that you would touch minds that you would transform people by the power of your holy spirit for the glory of your name lord that you would reveal the light of salvation in the face of Jesus Christ this morning in Jesus name amen amen amen