

I am the resurrection and the life

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[0 : 00] The reading this morning is from John chapter 11 and can be found on page 1077 of the Church Bible. Page 1077.

John chapter 11 beginning in the first verse. Now a man named Lazarus was ill. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

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. So 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. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was two more days. And then he said to his disciples, let us go back to Judea.

[1 : 08] But Rabbi, they said, a short while ago, the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back. Jesus answered, are there not twelve hours of daylight?

Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.

After he had said this, he went on to tell them, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up. His disciples replied, Lord, if he sleeps, he will 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 am glad I was not there so that you may believe, but let us go to him.

Then Thomas, also known as 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.

[2 : 20] Now 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. 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.

The one who believes in me will live, even though they die. And whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this? Yes, Lord, she replied.

I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you.

[3 : 27] Thank you. Hello. Is that all on? Yeah, it's all on. My name's Jack. I'm a member of the congregation here. May I add my welcome to Jonathan's.

And I'm going to pray for us as we look at God's word together. Father God, we thank you that you speak to us and we thank you that you make yourself known.

Please, as we look at your word now, would you reveal your son Jesus to us and would you glorify him so that we might know him better and trust him more. Amen.

So we're picking up in John's gospel. We've been doing a little series through John chapter 10 and 11. And one of the main themes so far of John 10 has been that Jesus says that he is from God's and that he is God's son, that he is fully doing God's work.

And in John chapter 10, as we saw a few weeks ago, as he talks about his identity as God's son and as God's appointed king, he makes a claim about what he can do for those who follow him.

[4 : 35] So John chapter 10, verse 10, the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they, his sheep, believers in him, may have life and have it to the full.

Jesus says that he can give us, that he can give his followers life. And our question for this morning is, do we believe what Jesus says?

Do we believe what Jesus says to us? He said something similar back in chapter 5 and verse 24. I need to turn there. I'll read it for you.

He says, very truly, I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. And the question is, Jesus, are you for real?

Do you mean it? When you say that you can give me life, when you can give me fullness of life, can I trust you? Or perhaps in words that better suit John's gospel, Jesus, can I believe you?

[5 : 42] I don't know if you've ever asked that question of Jesus yourself. And at different times in our life, we might ask that question for various different reasons. Maybe you're here and you're looking into the Christian faith.

You wouldn't say that you currently believe in Jesus. And it's great that you're here with us this morning, great that you're looking into things. And you've been looking into things, perhaps you like some of what Jesus has to say.

Perhaps you've enjoyed being at church and enjoyed meeting Christians. But some of what Jesus says just seems much more far-fetched. Heaven and hell and his claim to be God.

Can you believe him about everything that he says? Maybe you say that you do believe Jesus' words. You are a Christian, but for whatever reason in your life, you're finding it difficult to believe what he says.

Maybe you've started to have doubts. And those have started to unsettle your life as a Christian. You might know lots of people who seem kind of clever and competent. But they don't believe what Jesus says.

[6 : 45] And believing in life after death can feel foolish. And then there are other things that happen to us during our lives. There is suffering.

Maybe you are someone who is suffering or you know someone who is. Maybe you are going for a time of illness or for a time of tremendous difficulty or huge stress.

And that experience is testing your trust in Jesus. Can Jesus really do what he says he can do?

Do I have reason to believe that he can give me life? In this passage, we're going to encounter that question in its ultimate form. We encounter it in the death of a loved one.

The death of a brother. Leaving grieving sisters and grieving friends. Many of us will have family and friends who are believers in the Lord Jesus who have died.

- [7 : 45] And you'll know the deep pain and the questions that can come with that. Jesus says he will give us eternal life. Can we believe him? It's a way beyond a question.
- It's beyond a kind of academic question. It's not just a question for debates. It's a question about whether we can have hope in the face of death. So can we believe Jesus? And as we dive into John 11, we're going to meet all different sorts of people.
- We're going to meet skeptics. We're going to meet those struggling to believe. And we're going to meet people who are grieving. So we're going to dive into John chapter 11. And John wants to introduce us to a man called Lazarus.
- So 11 verse 1. Now a man named Lazarus was ill. And Lazarus is sick. He says the man named Lazarus was ill.
- He's sick. And as we're going to go on and see, he's seriously sick. Not kind of cough and a cold. A bit of a headache sick. But really seriously sick. So sick that he will die soon.
- [8 : 45] What else do we learn about Lazarus? Well, then, look, verse 2. We learn that he has two sisters. Mary and Martha. And when they realize how sick Lazarus is, they want to send a message to Jesus.
- Verse 3. So his sisters sent word to Jesus. Lord, the one you love is ill. Jesus, someone that you care about, is sick.
- And Mary and Martha would know there was huge risks for Jesus to come back to Jerusalem. Recently, he's been tried to be arrested and tried to be stoned. But this is serious. Lazarus might die soon.
- And then the first thing that we need to see to understand this is verse 5. Is that Jesus loves Lazarus. Verse 5. Now, Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.
- Jesus loves Lazarus. He loves Martha. And he loves Mary. Jesus deeply, deeply cares for them. He wants their best. If you love someone, you would do your absolute best to help someone.
- [9 : 49] And we know that Jesus is God. And we know that God becomes man. Fully God. Fully man. And here we see God's love up close. These are people who Jesus cared for.
- He got to know. He met with. Spoke with. Ate with. People that Jesus cared for. Jesus loves Lazarus. And he loves his sisters. And he wants their best.
- And so, with all of that in mind, we perhaps get to the most surprising verse in this passage. So, I'm going to get you to do what a previous minister of mine used to get us to do often. Which is to use your finger to cover up.
- A piece of paper to cover up a verse. So, I went to cover up verse 6. With a piece of paper. Or your finger. It's a bit tricky. So, you get now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.
- So, what would Jesus do? How would you finish the sentence? He loves them. So, what will he do? I think if we were to write this. And we know he's doing all of this for his glory.
- [10 : 46] That's what he said in verse 4. This illness is for his glory. So, I think we'd say it seemed like Jesus rushed straight away to Bethany. And he healed Lazarus. And they all lived happily ever after.
- The end. Or perhaps he might pray to God. And say, Lord, won't you heal Lazarus? I know that you will do whatever I ask. I'm your son. And Lazarus would be healed.
- But he doesn't do that, does he? He loves them. So, verse 6. When he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was two more days.
- Jesus delays. Jesus loves Lazarus. He loves Martha. And he loves Mary. So, he delays. Isn't that strange? He doesn't go straight away. He waits.

And that's just so different to how we think that Jesus should act. When we feel that there is a need, we think we must do something right now. We must do something straight away.

[11 : 48] I kind of used to work more in hospitals. I mean, you have times you had to, like, carry around what's called, like, the arrest page. So, it's a little kind of black box that you kind of clip onto your trousers. It's actually a bit like that. So, you can have this little black device and clip onto your trousers, shove it into your pocket.

And it goes off. You know, it makes this sort of squawking sounds. It makes this white noise. And then a voice comes from it and tells you that there is an emergency. And what that means is you're supposed to run to wherever it tells you to go to.

It's not supposed to, like, take time, take a break, go and get yourself a coffee. That means somewhere, if it goes off, somewhere someone in the hospital is about to die. And if you do something right now, then you might be able to save them.

And I think that we expect Jesus to respond to the news of Lazarus' sickness a bit like that. Jesus doesn't make sense. Why does he do things this way? Why doesn't he go straight away?

Why doesn't he heal Lazarus? But before we get a full answer to that, John wants us to focus on something else first. Because John actually wants us to see a much deeper problem.

[12 : 57] He wants us to see that the disciples are struggling to believe in Jesus. They struggle to trust Jesus. And I think you could even go as far at this stage as to say they don't fully believe in him.

So let's plunge back into the passage. In verse 7, Jesus says to the disciples, Let us go back to Judea. Verse 8, Do you see what they're saying?

Are you crazy, Jesus? Do you want to die? Last time you were there, they tried to murder you. And they do have a fair point. They are absolutely right. In the end of chapter 8, he was almost stoned.

Chapter 10, he was almost arrested. And they're not stupid. So let's look at Jesus' response. Jesus' response. Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours of daylight?

Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.

[14 : 05] At Jesus' point, it seems very simple on one level. If you go out at night, if you go into the woods, or go up a hill, and you don't have any light, you're going to fall over. You're going to trip.

I sort of tested this out the other day. I was down in Keswick last week, and we had some accommodation. You had to walk up through some woods to get back to where we were staying.

For added difficulty, I was also trying to eat a kebab at the same time. So I tried to walk through. Actually, I didn't fall over, which is a slightly more interesting illustration. But as I had been walking back through town, I had seen some people who were about to settle on a very long distance run.

They had their walking sticks. They had their caps, their backpacks. But crucially, they had head torches, because they were about to head out onto the hills at night with rocks and cliffs, and if they were to fall, they would get seriously injured or seriously hurt.

It would be dangerous to go without light. If you go by day, you'll be fine. If you go by night, you'll fall. So what is Jesus saying? What relevance does this have to them?

[15 : 12] I don't think he's talking about his own actions. He knows what he's doing. He's talking about them. Jesus is the light of the world. He's talking about he has light.

He gives it. The ones who don't have light in themselves are the disciples, and there are two ways for them to go, one by day or one by night. They either live with Jesus and his truth or without him.

And the disciples, you can see, they think death is to be avoided. And why are you going back, Jesus? Why would you risk dying? Is that just going to be game over for you and for your ministry? They are stumbling in the dark because they don't yet see by this world's light.

And we see it again when Jesus starts to talk about sleep. So verse 11, he knows that Lazarus has died. After he has said this, he went on to tell them, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up.

The disciples say, if he sleeps, he will get better. But Jesus had been speaking of Lazarus' death. I think what they're not getting here is it just doesn't cross their minds.

[16 : 20] It doesn't occur to them that Jesus could be talking about death. They think he's talking about sleep because they think, well, Lazarus is dead, so that's it. How can Jesus wake him up?

They just don't think, they think he's talking about literal sleep because the possibility that Jesus could be raising someone from the dead just doesn't occur to them. And I think in the disciples, we see our default human attitude towards death.

We think death is the end. We think it is to be avoided. We don't necessarily think there's going to be something afterwards, and we are scared of it. But Jesus doesn't leave the disciples there.

He doesn't leave them in their unbelief. Jesus acts out of love. And so we're going to see what he's going to do for them. Verse 14. Having seen what the disciples really think, he tells them plainly, Lazarus is dead, and for your sake, I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.

But let us go to the hymn. Isn't that another amazing thing for Jesus to say? Jesus was happy that he wasn't there. He knows a deeper problem. And to understand this sign, this miracle, and we're going to see more about the actual miracle itself next week, we need to understand why Jesus is doing it.

[17 : 42] He's doing it so that they and we might believe. That is why he delays. He has Martha and Mary's best interests at heart. He has the disciples' best interests at heart.

He loves them, and he loves you, and he loves me. And what he wants is for us to believe. So that's what we're going to see next. So Jesus arrives in Bethany, and then verse 20.

Martha hears that Jesus is coming, and she goes out to meet him, and says, 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. We can feel her grief, and we can feel her questions, but we can also see her hope.

Jesus, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Jesus wasn't there, and he could have done something sooner, but he didn't. But she knows he's powerful, and she knows he is important, but just how much she has yet to grasp.

[18 : 56] So we pick up the conversation again. Verse 23, Jesus said to her, your brother will rise again. Verse 24, Martha answered, I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

Now, Martha believes what most Jewish people at that time would have believed. There would be an end to time when all the dead would rise in the resurrection, come back to life for judgments.

And she's perfectly orthodox for her time and what she believes. What she says is true, and what she believes is right. But there's something that's not quite enough. There's something that is missing.

She's missing something, and these are our key verses for this morning. Verse 25 and 26, Jesus said to her, 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 to you believing in her. Believe this. He's asking her not just to believe in a final resurrection in the future, on the last day, not just to believe in life after death, but to believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

[20 : 10] The whole purpose of this sign, the whole purpose of the delay of Jesus, the whole purpose of him letting Lazarus die so that he is in the grave for four days so his body has started to rot and to break down, is to bring about belief, belief that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

But what does it mean that Jesus is the resurrection and the life? Martha understands that these things will happen. She believes in life after death, but what she doesn't yet understand is that the source of that resurrection, the source of that life, is standing right in front of her, talking to her.

She didn't get it. The disciples didn't get it either. But he can give life. Jesus can give life. It belongs to him. It is in him. It's not just the principle of life after death that Jesus wants us to believe, but to believe in him as the one who gives us life.

And he's going to prove that he is the resurrection and the life, and as we'll see more of next week, by bringing Lazarus back from the dead out of the grave only by speaking. But again, Jesus goes on to explain himself a bit more in verse 25 and verse 26.

He's the resurrection and the life. So first of all, he explains what he means by he is the resurrection. The one who believes in me will live even though they die.

[21 : 36] For people who believe in Jesus now, even if they physically die, dead, buried, in a grave, Jesus who believe in Jesus will rise with new physical bodies.

There is life after death in him. The one who believes in me will live, we will go on living, will live in the future, sorry, even though they die. Jesus is talking about life in a new world with new bodies, bodies that don't die, not ruined by sickness or illness, bodies without sin.

And when Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, he shows that he has in himself the power to give us life from the dead even when we have died. And then in verse 26 as well, he explains what it means for him to be the life as well.

Whoever lives and believes in me will never die, he says, or lives by believing in me. I think the ESV, whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Jesus, that means that Jesus also gives us eternal life now. Because life is in him, he is able to give us life and life to its fullness now. And what that means is that he gives us a relationship with God now.

[23 : 02] And we experience that as we know him. And we know him and trust his words. We become more alive than anything else in this world can give us. There is our experience of forgiveness and peace and joy and purpose as we come to believe in our hearts the words of the Lord Jesus because in him is life.

He is the life. And the question that he asked Martha and I think it's the question that he asks us as well and asks us today as we look at his words is verse 26.

Do you believe this? Do you believe this? And verse 27 Martha says that she believes it but actually next week we'll see that she is even then until she actually sees the miracle itself she's not quite there yet.

But that is what this miracle is for to show us that Jesus has eternal life in himself and if we believe him if only we believe his words when he says that then we have that life too.

and we can know that for sure as we see his ability to raise Lazarus. And what does that mean for us? Well it's an open invitation isn't it to anyone to anyone who believes to believe Jesus to believe he is a resurrection and a life and to know that if we believe him we have life life that we can't lose now knowing God and to know that we will rise back from the dead to new resurrected bodies when he returns.

[24 : 32] Jesus says believe me it's so simple. It's a life that as we go on to see he gives us by his death. As we read on in John's gospel we actually see that Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is what gets Jesus killed.

And it is in Jesus' death where he is able to take the punishment for sin that we deserve that gives us life. And gloriously this is what our brother Gordon believed and this is what he had.

He believed in Jesus knew him and believed Jesus' words and so had life now and will be resurrected in the future because he knew and trusted the Lord Jesus.

I'm just going to spend a few moments talking about the implications of all of that and what it means for us now and us in the future. So life now. It's so important I think for us to see is that we know that Jesus is the life now for us.

In Jesus we have the life that we can't lose. We know from later in John's Gospel so chapter 17 verse 3 I'll read that out for us.

[25 : 39] Chapter 17 verse 3 Now this is eternal life that they know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. The life that is in Jesus is a life for us knowing God.

This is a life that in Jesus we can't lose. We can't lose and it's the best life. It's the life that we were all made for. Life of the highest quality with purpose and a life of peace and joy.

It's a life knowing God. And we have that now in Jesus. If there's life in Jesus Jesus is the resurrection and the life and we have that now. No matter what happens to us no matter what happens to us in our life circumstances we have life in Jesus.

How do we live that life? Well we live it by hearing the voice of the good shepherd Jesus believing him to be true trusting in him and doing what he says and that is the life that we receive from him and we listen to him and we obey him and we experience the life that he has for us.

And I think that just changes our perspective on so many different things in our lives. You could apply this in so many different ways in our own circumstances seeing that in Jesus is the life and I think that just changes how we view pretty much everything.

[26 : 57] I was thinking it would change how you view your job actually because you can read in the Bible how Jesus wants us to work by acting honestly and speaking the truth at all times and working hard because you're working to please Jesus knowing that you'll get a reward from him and not just because it gets you ahead it's going to make you a fantastic colleague or employee and you might lose out if you decide to do things the way that Jesus wants you to do them but we will know that we are experiencing life eternal life in him that is resurrection life that we have in Jesus now as we listen to his words and as we obey him the life is in Jesus and in what he has to say to us.

A life following Jesus what Jesus has to say we can't lose it's going to make us far happier than anything else. And then we know that we have life after death we have a physical resurrection to look forward to if we have trusted Jesus' words and it's a life we can't see now unless Jesus was able to give us proof of it through Lazarus' resurrection and our own resurrection and we wouldn't be able to speak about it but if we believe in Jesus and we can know now for sure that he can give us physical life after we die only in Jesus only he is the resurrection in the face of fear and in the face of our grief about death we can have hope and we will still go through those things and we will still fear and we will still grieve and we will still feel the pain of life now but we know that we can go to him to believe his words and to know that hope for life after death isn't in vain and we know that because he has been brought back from the dead so we will see those we love again in the new creation in our new resurrection bodies and never have to fear death or sickness or illness again and let's pray

Father God we thank you that your son Jesus is the resurrection and the life and thank you that we have that life and we believe in him and thank you that it's so simple for us to do thank you that we can know you we can know your words and we can believe him and trust him and please help us all in our lives to listen to Jesus' words and to believe what he says to us Amen