

Easter Sunday Sermon

3/31/24

Series: I AM

Passage John 11:17-27

Title: I AM the Resurrection and the Life

Amen! Good morning! Happy Resurrection Sunday, Church! There is a traditional Easter greeting that has spanned the Church of Christ where I say, "Christ has risen" and you respond, "He has risen indeed." So let's try that this morning. [Call and response] I am so excited to be celebrating with you this morning that truth: that Jesus Christ our Savior lives.

This is the testimony of the angels at the empty tomb: ***"Why are you searching for the living among the dead. He is not here, he has risen!"*** – Luke 24:5-6

The disciples in Acts 2: ***"But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. As David said about him: I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken."*** – Acts 2:23-25

Christ has Risen! [He has risen indeed!]

I want to welcome you to Pittsford Community Church this morning. If you are visiting us or are here seeking, asking questions about faith, about Jesus, you are welcome here. Many Easter messages being preached around the world this morning focus on evidences for the resurrection, and there are good evidences, good reasons to believe – God calls us to faith, but he never calls us to blind faith. Amen? **The truth is: God has given humanity ample reason to believe that what he says in his Word is true.**

Dr. S. Joshua Swamidass, who is a physician and scientist at the Laboratory of Genomic Medicine at Washington University in Saint Louis lays out some of his observations as he has processed through the issue of the resurrection as both a scientist and a Christian. And as a starting place, as you work out your faith that may be a helpful resource for you. So if you are interested in that, I have placed that resource for you out at the welcome center for you to pick up after the service. It is entitled – "A Scientist Asks: Is There Evidence for Easter?" If you have questions, that can be a great starting place as you explore the reality of what we are proclaiming this morning, that Jesus is Alive.

Before we jump in this morning, I have a quick testimony. I was given yesterday morning a praise about God's goodness and the power of prayer. This has been in our local news. A few weeks ago, Sydney Pelusio, a 32 year old mother of two from Greece went into Strong hospital with flu-like symptoms and found out that her heart was failing. Doctors said she needed a heart transplant. Word went out to pray over her and the family. She's been in the hospital two weeks hooked up to machines. The story broke Friday when doctors came in, not only to find that her heart was beating with the machines, but also that it was strong enough to be removed from all life-support assistance. She has been removed from the

heart transplant list. Her mother Susan says, “My faith tells me this is an absolute miracle. When the doctors come in and say, ‘This is an absolute miracle,’ you’ve got to believe them.” Praise the Lord! There is power in prayer, not because of anything that we are but because of the One we pray to. He is a God who still works miracles and bears witness to his Great Name!

We are a few weeks into our Easter series “I AM.” Over the past several weeks we’ve been on a journey of faith. The question we’ve been asking is “Who is Jesus Christ and what does that mean for me?” 7 times in John’s gospel does Jesus proclaim, “I AM.” I AM is a reference to God’s name. Back in the OT God sends Moses to free his people from Egypt and Moses says to God, “When they ask, who should I tell them sent me?” And God response to Moses was: [**“And God said to Moses], “I AM WHO I AM. Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.”** – Ex. 3:14 Jesus uses the phrase “I AM” of himself throughout his ministry. To those around him, it was a bold claim, a divine claim. It was a claim that he was more than simply a good moral teacher, more than just a wise man, more than even a healer and miracle worker, but that he was God himself. And in that, humanity’s hope of salvation and life.

In each “I AM” statement, Jesus makes these incredible, outrageous claims about himself. I’ll bring us back to our C.S. Lewis quote from a few weeks ago when Lewis says, **“You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”** – C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Either Jesus is a Liar and a Lunatic, or he speaks truth and is Lord over all creation.

Listen to these claims. We see them up on the screen a moment ago:

John 6:35, “I AM the Bread of Life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

John 8:12, “I AM the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life.”

John 10:9, “I AM the Door of the sheep. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and go in and out and find pasture.”

John 10:11, “I AM the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Ridiculous, incredible claims about himself. Though perhaps none more incredible than the claim he makes in our passage this morning: ***“I AM the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet he shall live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”***

Now what’s the context of this statement? It’s the story of Lazarus. If you don’t know the story it’s found in John 11. In a nutshell, Lazarus dies, Jesus shows up, decides to teach

everyone a profound truth about who he is, and resurrects Lazarus after he had been dead for 4 days and calls him out of the grave. That's it. No big deal. Just another Tuesday for Jesus.

Of course I'm being trite. This is profound. Because what Jesus is doing in the midst of the tragedy of death is he is challenging our assumptions about victory and life. All throughout his ministry, Jesus has been pointing to himself as the ultimate answer. God's provision and satisfaction doesn't just happen. It happens through our relationship with Christ. He IS the Bread of Life. Being empowered to live a life free of sin and please to the Lord doesn't just happen. It happens through our relationship with Christ. He is the Light of the World. Finding God and the salvation he offers doesn't just happen. It happens through our relationship with Christ. He is the Door. And when it comes to the hope of a resurrection to new life, that doesn't just happen. Jesus says, "I AM the Resurrection and the Life." Neither resurrection nor the new empowered life that the Father has for us happens outside of him.

And then straight up, Jesus challenges us to wrestle with that truth. He asks, "***Do you believe this?***"

Listen: When Jesus asks Martha, "***Do you believe this?***", he is not asking if she believes that he can or even if she thinks that he is about to raise her brother from the dead. He is asking if her faith can go beyond an abstract belief of a future resurrection to a personal trust that Jesus is the One, the only One, who can deliver on the promise of the resurrection.

That is why the resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of our faith.

That's why Paul writes, "***For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.***" – 1 Cor. 15:3-4

Think about it: Why did Jesus go to the cross? Because we had to be saved. On the cross, Christ became God's eternal payment for sin. The Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, so that the sheep might live. "***And he who knew no sin became sin for us.***" It was his sacrifice, his blood, his death that bought our forgiveness before God the Father. And for a sinful world, Friday was a "good" day, because on Friday God built a bridge. God gave us in Christ the door through which we could enter and get back to him. Jesus paid our bill on Good Friday.

But Good Friday can only be called "good" because it is not the end of the story. Easter needed to come. Anyone know what the word "Easter" means? It's a word used in context to the resurrection for sure, but it's actually a word that means "dawn" or "sunrise."

Spiritually speaking, humanity needed dawn to come. "Though sorrow may last for the night, joy comes in the morning."

Our forgiveness could not end in death. Without life being at the end of the story, our being forgiven literally is meaningless.

I love what the apostle Paul says, ***“If the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins...If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’”*** – 1 Cor. 15:16-17,32

Listen: If life doesn't follow death, then none of it matters – you're still dead, I'm still dead. Might as well eat a ham.

For the Christian, Christ must be alive because, if he is not, then through him there is no life. Christ must be raised from the dead because, without the resurrection, our salvation counts for nothing since Christ cannot overcome death! In fact, Paul says that, if that were true, then Christians of all people are to be most pitied.

Can you imagine: believing we've been forgiven but have not, believing we have life but have none, believing we have God's spirit but there's no power for us to overcome, believing we've been adopted into God's family/secure in our inheritance but finding we belong to no family. Even if Jesus teaches us a few things by the way he lived, if that is all there is, we are of all people to be the most pitied.

But listen: If Christ has been raised from the dead, his resurrection is the firstfruits of our resurrection.” His eternal life becomes our eternal life. The fruits of his Spirit become the fruits of our spirit. His power over sin and bondage becomes our power over sin and bondage. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free!

And beloved, that is the truth we declare this morning: that Jesus is alive and that in his life he holds in his hand power over sin and death.

“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?”

That is the question of Easter.

The truth of Christ's resurrection changes everything. You cannot believe that God holds the key to our resurrection and life and not have that truth profoundly impact who you are and how you live. Because either we are connected to him by faith, or we are not. Either our lives are filled with his life, or we don't really live.

Would you believe that Jesus is everything this morning – your forgiveness, your life, and your salvation? Would you personalize your commitment to trust in him and follow after him?

As Christians, we believe in a Living Savior. Christ's resurrection is of first importance to us, because with his resurrection comes hope – hope of forgiveness, hope of salvation, hope that this world is not all there is. Hope that there is a new life and better life is available to me both now and in eternity.

Church, **Easter is the celebration of Christ's victory!**
If Good Friday he paid the bill, Resurrection Sunday he shows us the receipt. You see?
It's all true!

There are moments in time when all of a sudden something happens and everything changes. I'm here this morning to tell you that the empty tomb of Jesus changes everything. The darkness of night is broken by the light of a new dawn.

The book of Revelation calls Jesus the "Bright Morning Star." And in that, He extends an invitation to us saying, **"Come. Let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price, come."** – Rev. 22:17

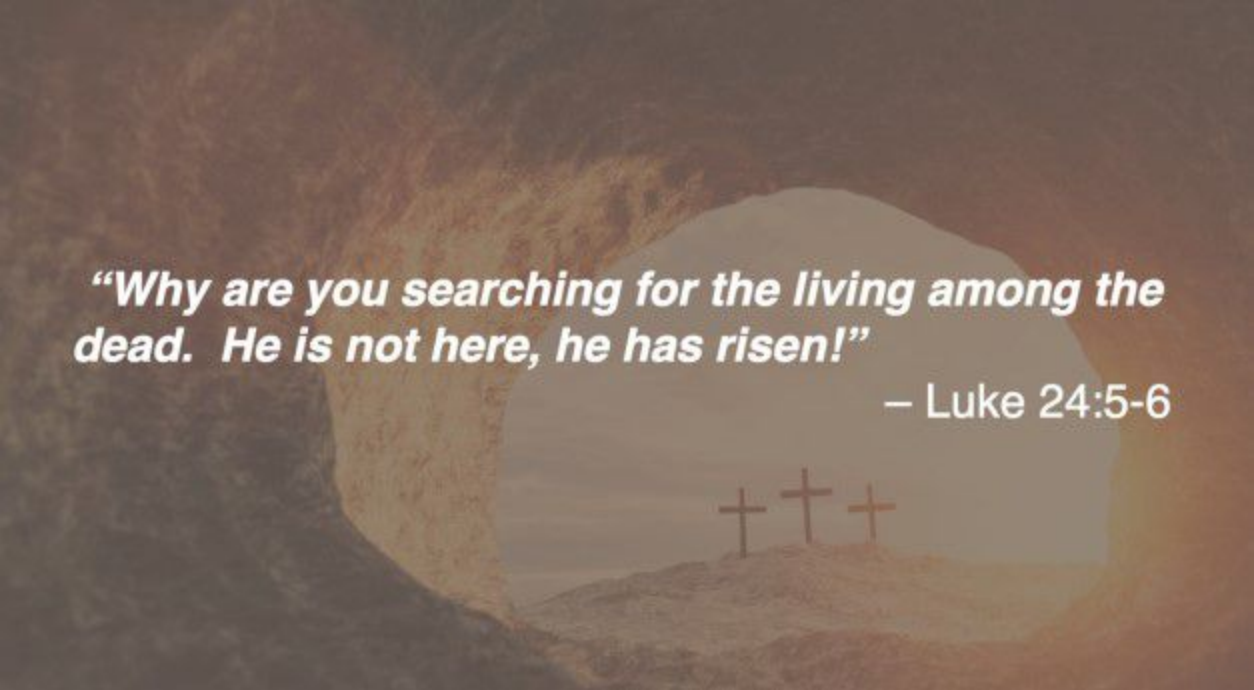
Do you believe this morning that Jesus is your life? That he is all that he claims to be? That the empty tomb testifies to this truth?

A pastor once said, **"The world offers promises full of emptiness. But Easter offers emptiness full of promises."** The empty cross, empty tomb, empty burial-cloths...all full of promise. The promise of Life and life eternal. The promise of freedom from the curse and bondage of sin. The promise of death being swallowed up in victory!
Only because of the promises of Easter can God's people say, **"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"** (1 Cor. 15:55). Church, Easter is time for celebration!

He is the Resurrection and the Life!

I AM





“Why are you searching for the living among the dead. He is not here, he has risen!”

– Luke 24:5-6

“But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. As David said about him: I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”

— Acts 2:24-25

Three simple wooden crosses are positioned on a small, rounded hill in the background. The scene is set against a hazy, brownish landscape under a large, pale, circular light source, possibly the sun or moon, which creates a soft glow around the text.

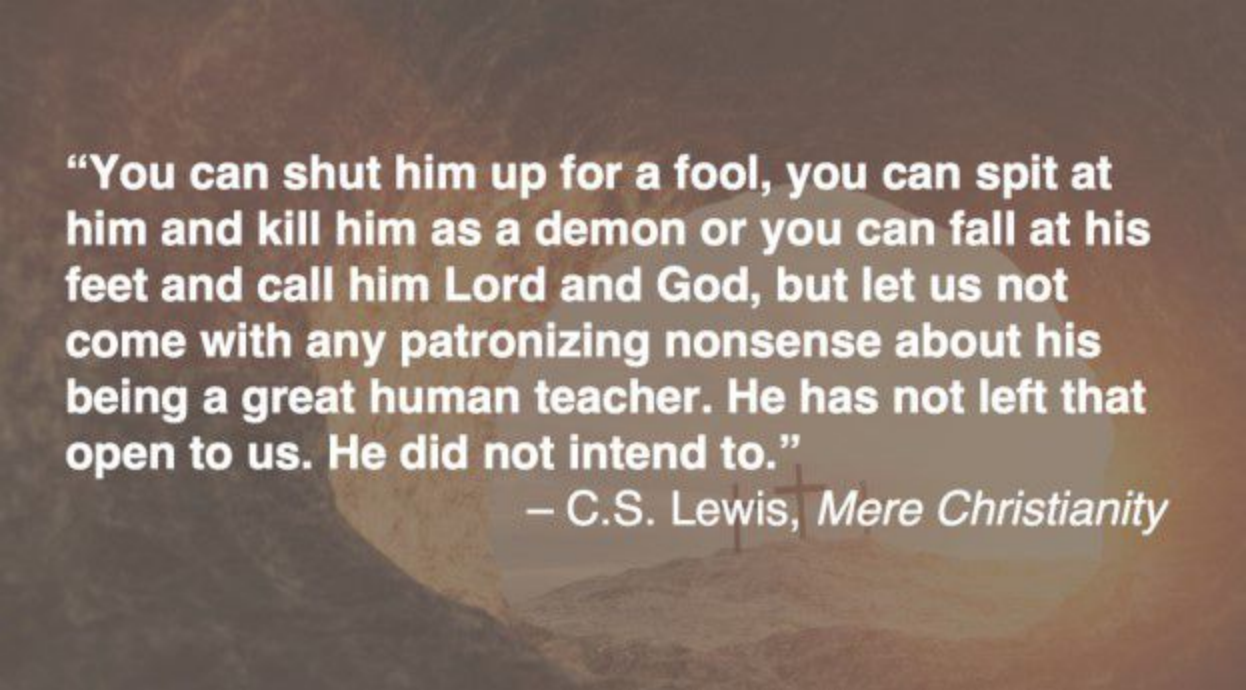
I AM





“And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.’”

– Ex. 3:14



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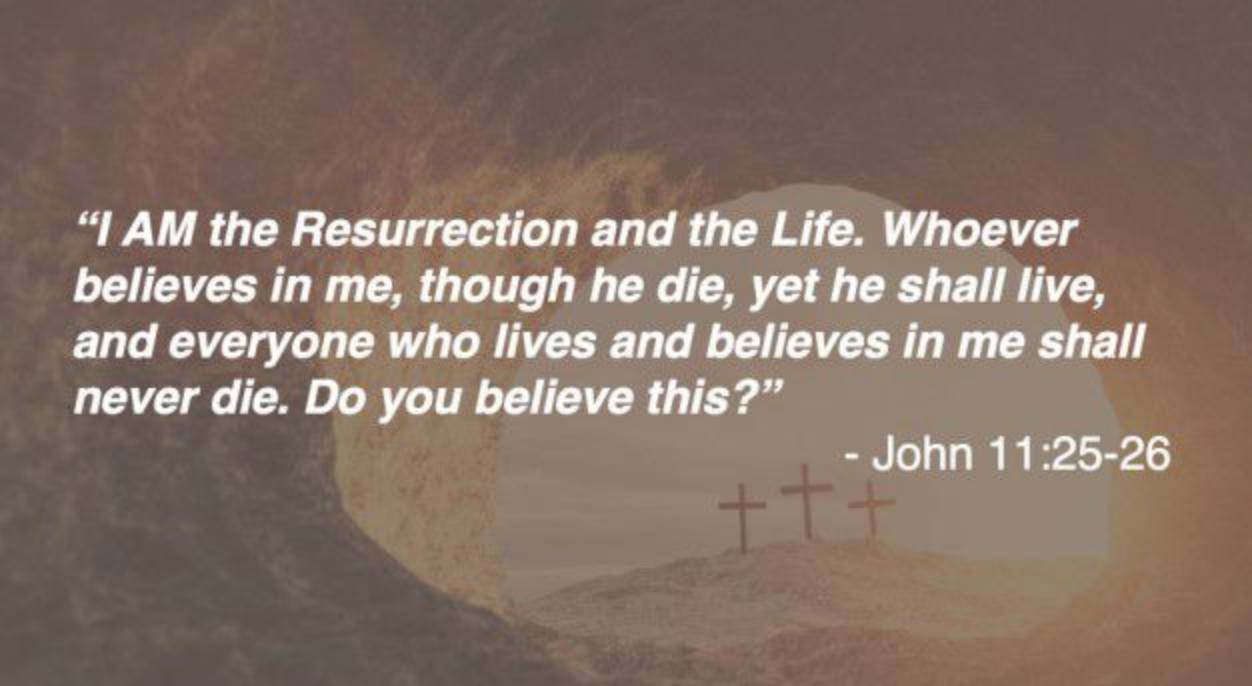
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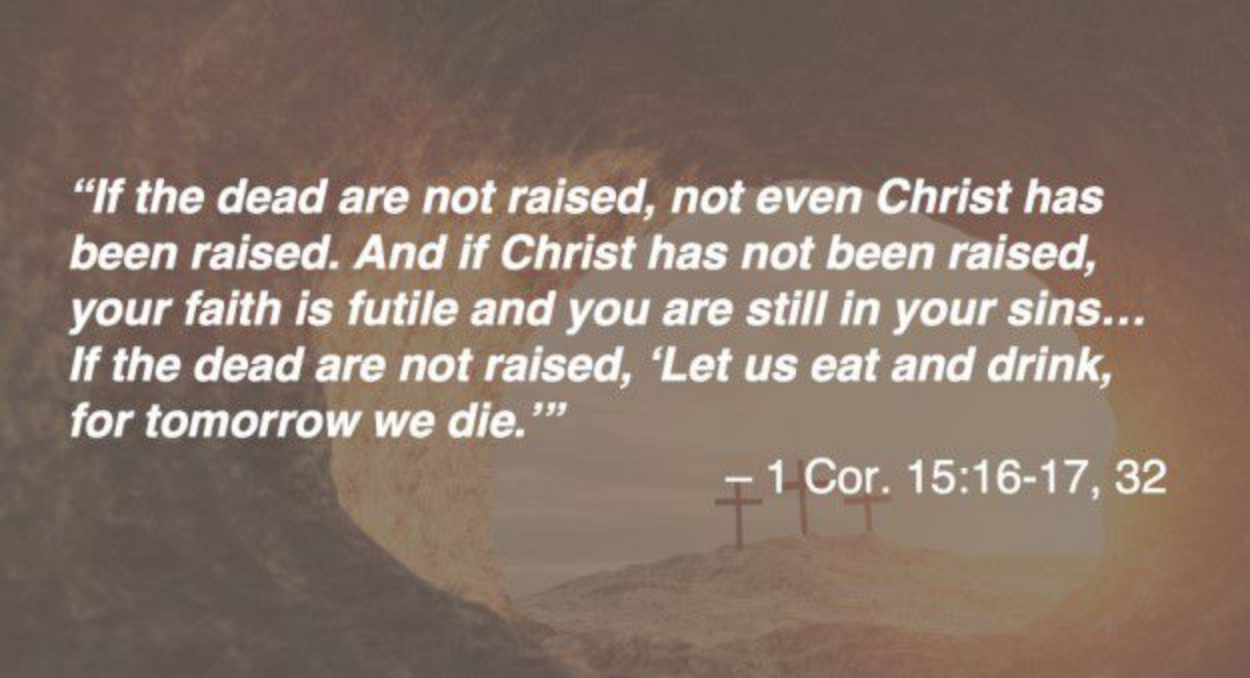


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- John 11:25-26

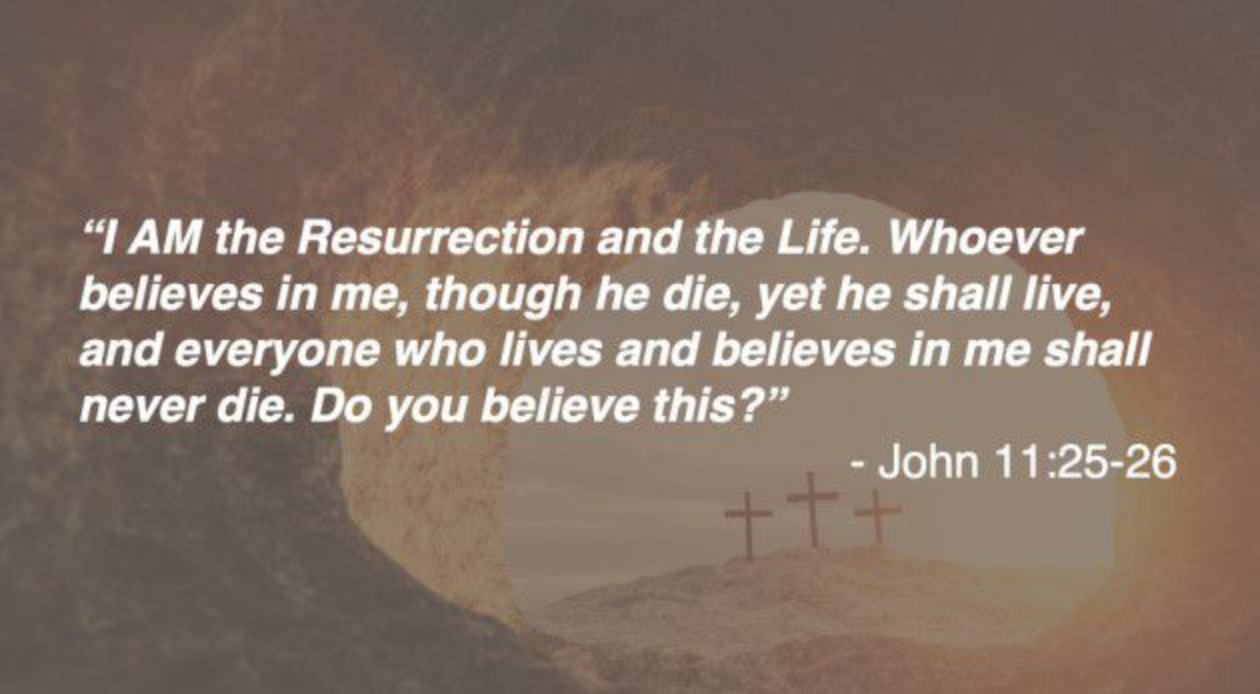
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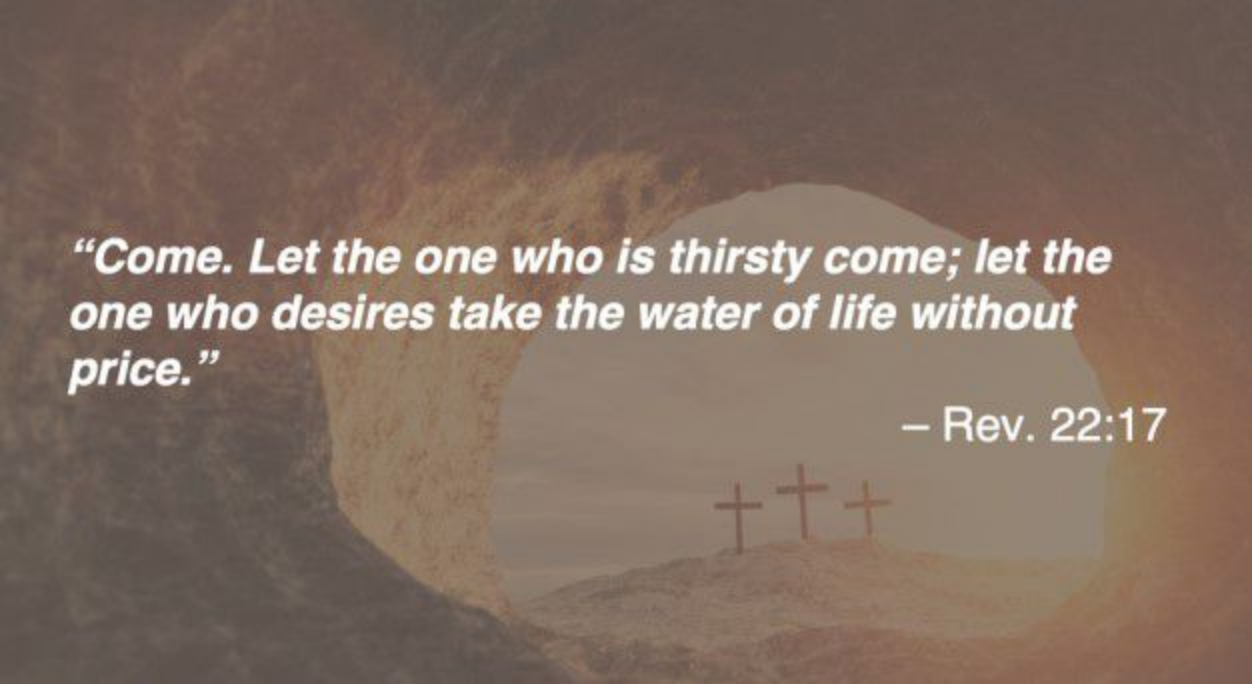
The background features a landscape with three crosses on a hill. A large, glowing orb, likely the sun or moon, is positioned behind the text, creating a soft, ethereal light. The overall color palette is muted, with earthy tones and a warm glow from the orb.

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