

John 11:1-46

Verse 25 – *I am the Resurrection and the Life*

In this statement (v. 25) and in the verse that follows where the Lord says *whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die* the Lord Jesus sets before Martha her need for a more exalted view of Christ. Now Martha already had pretty impressive faith. She had faith enough to say *I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee*. She could confess: *I know that my brother shall rise again at the last day*; And even when she didn't understand exactly what Christ was saying to her she could nevertheless say: *I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God*.

That was a good confession but Christ would have her go even further in her estimation of his greatness. Her weeping eyes and trembling hands and mournful heart, you see, would not enable her to grasp the grand truth that he who stood before her had the keys of life and death, and that in her Lord dwelt *all the fullness of the Godhead bodily* (Col. 1:9). When he says to her *I am the Resurrection and the Life*, he is not merely asserting that he is a teacher of the resurrection, or an expert on the subject of the resurrection or that he believed in the resurrection or that he himself would be resurrected but rather he is stating that he is the Divine Author of resurrection whether spiritual or physical. He is the meritorious ground for resurrection. He possesses the power of resurrection because he is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

Martha's need is a need that we all come up against. We may share in Martha's orthodoxy and find ourselves able to confess what she confesses but if we're honest with ourselves then we'll have to acknowledge that we also share in her limitations. And so we too need more exalted views of Christ. We need a higher estimation of his greatness and his glory. Our time around the Lord's table serves the purpose of boosting our estimation of his greatness and glory and the higher our faith takes us in our views of him then the more we will be compelled to stand in awe of him and the more we'll love and worship him.

All too often we hold high views of our problems or we hold high views of the obstacles that need to be overcome. And the same thing that led to Martha's high view of obstacles and a lesser view of Christ is the same thing that often times leads us to that position. It's when the Lord delays in sending the blessing that we begin to doubt.

And the Lord Jesus, we read in v. 6, deliberately delayed coming to Mary and Martha. Look at what it says in v. 6 *When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was*. It was this delay that gave rise to their doubts and led them to conclude that as great as Christ was death was still greater.

Listen to the limitation that Mary and Martha both place on Christ. *If thou hadst been here my brother had not died* Martha says in v. 21. *If thou hadst been here my brother had not died* Mary says in v. 32.

I'm reminded of a contrasting scene that is found in Lk. 7. We have in that chapter the account of a centurion whose servant was sick. And the Lord Jesus agrees to go to the home of the centurion to heal the centurion's servant but then in v. 6 of the narrative we read: *Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.* This is one of only two instances in the gospels where the Lord commends somebody for having great faith. Such was the recognition by this centurion of the authority and power of Christ that he knew it was not necessary for Christ to be bodily present in order for a miracle to be performed. All that was necessary was for Christ to speak the word.

Mary and Martha would now learn that same lesson that all that's necessary for great miracles is for Christ to speak the word. And their estimation of Christ would rise to new heights. The Lord desires the same thing for you and for me. And one of the marvelous lessons that stands out so plainly in this narrative is that the Lord Jesus, at times, is pleased to let things in our lives go from bad to worse in order that he may, in the end, lead us to a more exalted view of his greatness.

And so in the case of Mary and Martha in order to enable them to overcome their doubts, the Lord would raise their orthodoxy and experience to a higher level by designating to himself a name and then proving to them that the name was indeed a proper designation for his power. This is one of several names that is formulated through the *I am* designations for Christ that we find in John's gospel:

- Jn. 6:48 *I am the bread of life.*
- Jn. 8:12 *I am the light of the world:*
- Jn. 10:9 *I am the door by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.*
- Jn. 10:11 *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*
- Jn. 14:6 *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Each of these designations for Christ reveal his glory in some fashion and should be studied by Christ's followers. This morning, however, I want to call your attention to the particular *I am* designation for Christ that we find in v. 25:

I am the Resurrection and the Life

I want you to look today at the meaning of this name and I want you to stand in awe of all that this name encompasses and then consider how it leads us to worship and service

and higher esteem for our blessed Redeemer. This is certainly a good name to remember around the Lord's table. Let's consider then:

I. The Meaning of This Name – *I am the Resurrection and the Life*

And the first thing I would say with reference to this name is that it means that Christianity is a supernatural religion. So much about our religion is supernatural. We believe in a God who performs miracles. I was sharing with the people at prayer meeting a couple of weeks ago the opportunity I had to share my testimony with my sister 'n law. She asked me what had happened to me and to Sandy that led us to become so religious. She knew in some measure what my life was like before coming to Christ and now she wanted to know what had happened. I began my testimony by saying to her that what had happened to me was nothing short of miraculous. I was the recipient of a miracle. Indeed I could argue that I was raised from the dead.

We believe, you see, in a God who has revealed himself supernaturally. We follow a book that is more than a book – it's a supernatural revelation of Jesus Christ. I cited to you a moment ago Martha's confession of Christ when she says to him in v. 27 *I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* This is the same confession that Peter would make in Mt 16:16 where we read that *Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* And do you remember what Christ said about Peter's confession? *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven* (Mt. 16:17). Peter's confession, you see, was not merely the result of an intelligent deduction, it was the result of a supernatural revelation of the truth of Christ to his soul.

And his confession demonstrates to us that our religion is a religion of miracles. Believers have been the recipients of miracles. Indeed you and I have both been the recipients of nothing short of resurrection power. Paul wanted the saints at Ephesus to understand this. He prays for them that their hearts would be illuminated to the truth of *the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places* (Eph. 1:19,20).

This is something that we do well to keep in mind when we seek the Lord to manifest His power. We're tempted to ask during days of spiritual desolation *can the Lord manifest His power again? How is it that Christianity seems to be so powerless today? Will we ever see that power manifested in our land and in our church – and indeed in our own lives?*

When these things burden our hearts we do well to remember that we have been the recipients of great power – of exceeding great power – of the same supernatural power that it took to raise Christ from the dead. When Christ says *I am the Resurrection and the Life* He reminds us that we have been the recipients of resurrection power. Spiritually speaking we were as dead as Lazarus. We had no more ability to respond to

the gospel than Lazarus had to respond from the grave. And yet Lazarus did respond from the grave. He came forth to life at the beckoning call of Christ. And so have we come forth from the grave of spiritual death by the effectual call of the gospel upon our hearts.

But would you note with me also that when we read this name of Christ we are reminded of something else – He says *I am the Resurrection and the Life*. We're reminded that He is the source from which all life springs. *In Him was life; and the life was the light of men* – Jn. 1:4; *He is the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world* – Jn. 1:9.

He is the source that makes life meaningful and fulfilling. *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly* (Jn. 10:10). Life finds its greatest meaning and purpose and fulfillment in Christ.

We sing that hymn – *O Christ, in Thee my soul hath found, And found in Thee alone, The peace, the joy I sought so long, the bliss till now unknown. Now none but Christ can satisfy None other name for me; There's love, and life, and lasting joy, Lord Jesus found in thee*. This is true because Christ is the Resurrection and the Life.

We could say also that He is the end for which all life exists. *For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist* (Col. 1:16,17). Or as Paul puts it in Rom. 11:36 – *for of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen*.

When we realize that Christ is the Resurrection and the Life then our lives will stay focused. We'll be able to live our lives with the big picture before us. We'll be able to keep eternity's values in view. And we'll do this because we'll remember what Christ Himself said about the resurrection – In Jn. 5:28,29 He said *Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*.

The resurrection reminds us that heaven is real and that hell is real and that eternity is real. It reminds us that this present state of things is temporal and these things will pass very quickly. Isn't this a challenge we face constantly? We become so absorbed by the here and now. We become obsessed with the little dilemmas that plague us in this world.

I can relate to this mentality from my years in the Printing industry. The pressure of deadlines would make you think that the whole world revolved around that little printing company. If you didn't have this proof ready on time, or if you didn't have this job printed by such and such a date the whole world would seemingly grind to a halt. The economy would collapse. The crops would fail. The rain would cease. The sun

would no longer shine and the world would stop turning and you would be personally responsible for it all if you didn't perform your task to meet that deadline! It seemed that life itself was just a prolonged emergency.

When you find yourself pulled into that kind of thinking you would do well to remember that Christ said *I am the Resurrection and the Life*. This name of Christ helps us to keep eternity's values in view. And it helps us to keep our lives focused on Christ who is the source for life and the reason for life.

Let me make one more observation about Christ's glory as it's revealed in this designation *I am the resurrection and the life*. This is a name that reveals to us not just the power of Christ in giving us life but in giving us the freedom that comes with that life. I love the words of Christ spoken in v. 44. When Lazarus comes forth from the grave Christ says *Loose him, and let him go*. This is the same word that Christ speaks to souls in salvation – *Loose them, and let them go*. Loose them from spiritual death that they may go forward in the freedom of new found life. Loose them from the power of sin and let them go forward in their new found freedom of holiness to follow after Christ. Loose them from the devil's dominion that they may go forward in the freedom of being Christ's servants. Loose them from this present evil world that they may go forward as subjects in the Kingdom of heaven.

What a glorious name, then, is this designation of Christ – *I am the resurrection and the life*. Before we come to the Lord's table I'd like you to think with me for just a moment on:

II. How This Name Leads us to Exalt our Savior –

Like any name for Christ this name leads us to worship. This is always true of any name of Christ. I believe it's in keeping with how Christ taught us to pray *Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name*.

We sanctify our heavenly Father's name by sanctifying his Son in our hearts. And when we see Christ as the source of life and Christ as the purpose for which life exists then we'll be led to thank God for the life He has given us and we'll thank Him for sending His Son to die for us in order that we may gain back the lives that we've forfeited through our sin. We'll find ourselves living life in the power of gratitude.

We're told in 1Thessalonians 5:18 that *In every thing we are to give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*. We find this to be a daunting task at times don't we? Giving thanks in everything? Giving thanks when the basement floods? Giving thanks when sickness abounds? Giving thanks when a friend or a business associate lets you down? How is this to be done?

Consider that Christ is the Resurrection and the Life and you'll find yourself able to live life without taking any element of life for granted. Every circumstance of life is sanctified to the believer when he realizes that Christ is the Resurrection and the Life.

Don't we find this graphically illustrated in Jn. 11? The sickness of Lazarus had the aim of bringing glory to Christ. Christ's deliberate delay served the purpose of magnifying his glory. His allowing things to go from bad to worse was not because he wasn't in control it was because he had a design to magnify his glory all the more.

One of the things that comes out so clearly in this passage is that Christ was motivated by love. So we read in v. 5 *Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.* They were very much aware of this love. So we read in v. 3 that when they initially sent word to Jesus they said to him in v. 3 *behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.* And when Christ showed up at the tomb of Lazarus and wept at that tomb his tears conveyed a clear message to those that were on hand to witness him. Look at what it says in v. 35 – *Jesus wept.* And what message did his weeping convey? Look at the very next verse – *Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!*

That's the message, you know, that the elements of the communion table convey to us. Behold how he loves us in giving his body to be broken for us and in shedding his blood for our sins. Behold how he loves us even when he allows sickness to be our portion or even when he allows us to be laid in a grave. There is no separating us from his love. This is the meaning of his words in v. 26 when he says *whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.* Oh your soul will be severed from your body and you may be laid in a grave. But even in that you will not be separated from his love. You will, instead, be ushered into his presence and there you will await the day when his love will be manifested yet again in the resurrection of your body from the grave.

So this designation of Christ as the Resurrection and the Life should move us to reverential awe and to praise and thanksgiving.

But perhaps most encouraging about this name of Christ is that it teaches us to expect miracles. If God can raise the dead – indeed if Christ can rise from the dead himself then is there anything too hard for God? If Christ can make His word so powerful as to call forth Lazarus from the grave then is there anyone beyond the reach of God's effectual power?

Is there a heart so hard that God's word can't penetrate it? Is there a sinner so defiled that he is beyond the bounds of God's power? Christ is the Resurrection and the Life – which means that we can pray that God will give life for death. God can bring forth life out of death. God can bring restore life where life has been forfeited. He can do this for individuals and so we ought to pray for individuals. He can do this for churches and so we ought to pray for our churches. He can do it for whole nations and so we ought to pray for our nation.

When Christ said *I am the Resurrection and the Life* he was saying in effect that He is the God of revival! For what is revival but life regained – spiritual deadness overcome with vitality in the Church and spiritual death replaced with everlasting life in the hearts of those that are lost.

Here is a name then that we do well to remember with the confident expectation that God will perform miracles. He's the same today. Don't you love it that Christ says ***I am the Resurrection and the Life?*** He doesn't say *I was* or *I will be* or *I am but will no longer be*. ***I am the Resurrection and the Life.***

May the Lord bless us in the remembrance of such a name in all that it encompasses this day.