

I am the Resurrection and the Life

Scripture Reading John 11:1- 45

Singing: 76:1-4 – 321:1-2 – 79:1-3 – 29:1-3 – 387:1, 2, 4, 5

Congregation, what do you think of Jesus Christ? Who do you say He is?

I expect all of you to say, “He is God’s Son.”

But many people in John’s days did no longer believe that.

They thought Jesus was a good man, even a remarkable man who did miracles, but they thought it was going too far to say He is the Son of God.

For this reason, John wrote His Gospel with one main purpose in mind. He wrote in John 20:31, “*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.*”

John was not only moved to write in order to inform us about Jesus.

His main purpose is to lead us to faith in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God.

In John’s days, there were a number of people who began to question Jesus’ divinity.

No one disputed that Jesus was good and great, a worthy example to follow.

No one questioned that Jesus was a man of integrity, moral and upright.

But the claim that He was God went too far for many.

For that reason, John was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this book about Jesus.

His purpose was clear: *to show all the world that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the Son of God.*

This truth is like the foundation of a house.

If the foundation would begin to crumble and sink, the entire house would be unsafe.

In the same way, if Jesus is not truly God, the entire house of salvation would perish.

Then all hope for salvation from sin and suffering would be dashed to the ground.

If Jesus is not God, His death would be merely another human death, though in horrible circumstances.

Then all the promises He made about eternal life with Him in glory would be baseless.

Then placing your trust in Him for the forgiveness of your sins,

or looking to Him as you face the battles of life,

or praying to Him as you struggle with the evil workings of your heart,

would all be vain!

For how can He help us if He was only a special man?

Then He would be nothing more than a good friend, a kind neighbour, or a devoted pastor.

But He is exceedingly more than this.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is God Himself.

To support that claim, John chose seven specific miracles which prove that Jesus is more than man.

Who can change water into the best wine?

Who can heal a young lad nearly dead by a simple unspoken command?

Who can tell a man who has been paralyzed for 38 years to get up and walk?

Who can turn five barley loaves and two fishes into seemingly endless supply of food to feed over 10,000 people?

Who can walk on the waves during a blistering storm in a pitch-dark night?

Who can heal a man born blind with mud and water?

Finally, who can raise a man from the dead, whose body was already decomposing?

Obviously, no human being can anything close to this!

Only God can do this as He stands beyond and above all boundaries and limitations we face.

This 7th miracle which we read about in this chapter is the most glorious and most divine.

It was also the most convincing that He was not just the son of Mary, but far more: the Son of the Living God.

After the news of this miracle came to the ears of the religious leaders, the lot was cast.

Jesus had to die as we read in verse 53, *“Then from that day forth, they took counsel together for to put Him to death.”*

They could not afford to leave Him alive.

For this last miracle far exceeded all the other miracles He ever did. It proved without a doubt that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Our purpose in this sermon is to listen closely to the message Jesus preached in this remarkable miracle about Himself in verse 25 & 26, *“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”*

I invite you to listen to this Word and consider *Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life* in two thoughts,

1. The timing of this revelation of Himself
2. The comfort in this revelation of Himself

First then, let us consider the timing of Jesus' revelation of Himself.

It was spoken on a sad day to a brokenhearted woman.

Death has taken away a special brother and friend.

A few days earlier, their brother Lazarus had fallen seriously ill.

He became weaker and weaker and finally he breathed his last breath.

Peering upon his dear face, both sisters felt the world draining away.

Their last hope had been the message they sent to Jesus that their brother, whom Jesus loved, was sick.

They had eagerly watched and waited for Jesus to come.

But death came earlier than Jesus.

After having finished the preparations of the body, they buried him in a cave.

Devastated, Mary and Martha returned home to mourn the loss of their precious brother.

Their circle of three was now permanently broken.

You know, death is everywhere.

It is not only in cemeteries or in hospitals, but everywhere!

There is death in families and among friends. Empty places of loved ones are found everywhere!

We see death in nature as animals die and rot away. Children and adults feel sad when their pets die or when they see animals that have been killed.

Death is everywhere—also in your hearts!

What? In our hearts?

Yes, your broken relationship and separation from God is death!

And out of your hearts and lives comes the stink or corruption of death.

It is the stink of death when your homes are filled with raised voices of disrespect and arguments.

How smelly is that spirit of “Me, myself and I” first!

How rotten is that attitude of “I am better than you!”

How sick is the spirit of bitterness, discontent, grouchiness or grumbling!

How sour is an ungracious spirit shown to those who have fallen in sin!

Do not forget that God sees and hears in our hearts and homes. He is as grieved as He was in Genesis 6:5-6:

*“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth
and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

*And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth,
and it grieved him at His heart.”*

Facing all this death, you stand totally helpless.

Against all this death your best efforts fail.

No government system or psychology theory or counseling effort can remove this reality of death.

But where we fail, Jesus declares calmly and with authority,

I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die. Believest thou this?”

That is a bold claim to make!

Does He really have that power? Is He truly able to reverse the irreversible, even death of 4 days already?

Can He truly restore to purity and beauty what is putrid and beastly?

Does He really have the ability to undo the power of death that holds us in its deathly grip?

Is there hope for such heart as mine, full of stinking corruptions?

Can we escape the dismal grave of a life separated from God and good?

Is Jesus' word trustworthy?

Yes, it is. In this amazing chapter of the raising of Lazarus, our Lord Jesus Christ proves that He is able.

But why did Jesus not come earlier then? Why did He not stop death from taking Lazarus?

Martha and Mary also asked those questions.

Little did they know, however, that Jesus purposely waited to come on the exact right time.

John informs us in verse 6, *"When Jesus therefore heard that he was sick, He abode **two days still** in the same place where He was."*

Despite His deep love for the three siblings in Bethany, the Lord allowed the grim reaper to invade the family.

But why did the Master do this? Why did He allow their sorrow and pain? Why did He allow them to be so deeply tried?

Perhaps you are asking this question also this morning?

There were two reasons that the Master did this.

The first one Jesus told verse 4: *"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the **Son of God** might be glorified thereby."*

Jesus was allowing death to speak, but death would not have the last word in this family!

Life would be victorious over death and for that reason, Jesus allowed death a temporary victory.

God's glory in Jesus Christ would finally be seen and acknowledged afterwards.

Through the reversal of the humanly impossible, He would declare before Satan and all men that He is King even over death.

And that is a comforting message for us all as we grapple with the realities of death, in whatever form it has touched you personally or in your family.

God stands above the waves that you may feel are crashing relentlessly over your lives.

His timing is perfect, though it seems to you He is too late or waits too long.

Of course, only afterwards did Martha and Mary learn this and so it is mostly with us.

May it encourage you to continue to pour out your heart before Him as you wait upon Him.

The second reason that Jesus purposely allowed Lazarus to die is stated in verse 15:

"And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe."

Jesus knew that the disciples' faith in Him and His teaching needed strengthening.

He knew that they still did not see Him fully as God Himself.

For example, in verse 21-22, Martha expressed her admiration of Jesus but still added, *"But I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee."*

She did not yet fully grasp that Jesus did not need to ask anything of God, for He was God Himself.

When He raised Lazarus from the dead after four days of corruption in the grave, He demonstrated without doubt that He was God. No human can raise another from the dead. Only God can do this!

This undoubtedly boosted the faith of His disciples greatly and it also brought many others to faith, as seen in verse 45,

“Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him.”

Congregation, did you notice what Jesus said *about* these opportunities to strengthen our knowledge of His glorious Person and our feeble faith in Him?

In verse 15, He said that *He was glad* that He was not there.

He was glad for the opportunity that was created to strengthen their faith in Him, for that would make them stronger than if He had prevented their trials.

God still purposely orders the course of events in your life to grow faith in Him; and this growth of faith in Him was a cause of rejoicing in the Master’s heart.

Just as the goldsmith feels gladness when the quality of the gold becomes purer after setting it in the fire, so the Lord Jesus is glad for our sakes when we meet with tribulations and trials.

None but God knows better how trials and afflictions are for the growth of spiritual life.

No, that is not how we at first will consider the fiery trials we meet with in sickness and death, or in the stress or pain we experience.

But the Master knows that the muscle of faith only grows by facing the trials and troubles.

I am the Resurrection and the Life.

Jesus spoke these words amid the scenes of death and despair.

The reality of suffering and sickness is depressing and when the finality of death is faced, something in us dies.

If you have ever sat at the bedside of a loved one, you know the feeling when his or her breath ceases.

The flicker of hope we desperately try to hold on to, dies when the soul departs from the body.

Now it is really all over.

For Martha and Mary, the only glimmer of hope in the final days of Lazarus had been Jesus.

They both expressed this hope in verse 21 and 32 with the words,

“Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.”

But since He had not come in time, also that hope had perished.

Both feel the unbridgeable distance between their brother and themselves.

How final is the reality! Lazarus has died. He is no more. Forever departed!

You can feel this despairing darkness as Jesus meets these brokenhearted sisters.

Though many mourners surrounded them to comfort them, none could soothe their pain.

Only God could do something and now their hope is that He would do that for Jesus’ sake.

The Jesus said to Martha, *“Thy brother shall rise again.”*

Yes, Martha believed that one day, at the general resurrection, at the end of the world, all will rise.

But that will not bring him back *now*!

Though comforting and true, it does not fill the empty place *now*.

Upon that outburst of her pain, calmly Jesus declares that He Himself is the Resurrection and the Life.

In a most amazing statement, Jesus claims, "I am in control both of life and death.

And all who believe or trust in Him shall live even though they are dead."

Jesus gently asked her, "Martha, do you believe this about Me and about all who believe in Me?"

Martha answer was an amazing confession. She confessed here for the first time that she believed in Jesus' Divinity:

"Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Though her confession is the cornerstone of salvation, it is not yet a confession of personal comfort in that truth.

Lazarus was still dead.

She still was grappling with the reality of the loss of her beloved brother.

Do you understand Martha?

Are you comforted by trusting in the Lord Jesus, or do you struggle like Martha?

Yes, you know He is able as He is the Son of God, but His power of resurrection and life you do not experience.

Death stares you in the face: and not only the physical death of loved ones, born or unborn.

But the deeper and far worse death: *our separated relationship with God!*

In the day of our fall in Paradise, we spiritually died.

Through sin, this beautiful and intimate relationship with God ended.

We even became enemies of God.

Through sin we have turned our world into one giant cemetery which each day gets fuller.

Therefore, what we witness in John 11 is, besides a despairing setting, also a deserved setting!

Sickness and suffering were foreign in the Paradise God created.

There were no sickbeds where loved ones gathered in tears and fears.

There were no wailings heard at tidings of death.

There were no Martha's and Mary's seeking to console each other with sweet memories.

In the setting of death and despair the Saviour spoke,

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Before we consider these words, let us join our hearts in singing ...

After having briefly considered the setting, let us now consider Jesus' words in verses 25-26.

The words are full of comfort and are intended to bring comfort only God can give us.

Jesus spoke these words to Martha in order to encourage her and to reveal Himself more clearly to her.

Martha and Mary, as all His disciples, still lacked the strong and assured knowledge and faith in Jesus' Divinity.

The sisters clearly saw Him as a special prophet and priest.

They believed He had special access to God in a way that others did not.

In verse 22, Martha confessed, "*But I know, that even now – now that all our hope for Lazarus has died – whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.*"

Yet the full glory of Jesus was still hidden for them.

All she and her sister saw at this moment was the empty place of Lazarus.

Death had snatched him out of their reach.

The victory of death was decisive and irreversible for now.

Oh, how powerless we are to mend or restore this dismal reality.

And this helplessness is not only experienced with the death of loved family or friends.

How helpless we are when we stare into the face of our brokenness spiritually!

Is the reality of Lazarus stinking in the grave you discover in your own heart?

Are you beginning to see, when you peel away all the layers or covers, that your heart is a cave of uncleanness?

How distressing to learn that all our imaginations are evil only continually: *selfish, greedy, proud, angry, impure?*

Or perhaps you face a brokenness in your heart through the injustices done to you.

Our world is so full of this dark reality and how deeply can this affect us.

No matter what you try, or what you tell yourself, or what you resolve, the tide of our evil heart is not stoppable.

Do you recognize Psalm 88:3, "*My soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave?*"

Or you feel like verse 6, "*Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.*"

In words like this, the poets expressed their spiritual exercises with the reality of their separation from God through sin.

To have this relationship restored and our hearts renewed is what the Bible calls salvation.

But for that to happen we need to deal with what caused our separation: *our sins!*

We do not have it in us to remove the cause of our spiritual death.

For as the leopard cannot change its spots, so we cannot change our hearts.

Salvation is also removing the infinitely high wall of separation, our guilt!

But again, also in this we do not have any ability in us to cancel our guilt.

For how can we remove our debts to God if we increase them daily?

Justice needs to be satisfied and if that is not done, we face the eternal separation of death.

The truth of that separation is vividly illustrated at each funeral we attend.

Let us return to the story of Jesus and Martha.

All Martha saw before her as she stood with Jesus is her dead and buried brother.

All she could look at was the gravestone which mocked all hope for resurrection.

Calmly but purposefully, Jesus spoke to Martha, "*I am the Resurrection and the Life.*"

It is like Jesus said to her, "Martha, turn around and away from looking at death.

Stop looking into the direction of that grave where your brother is buried.

Look at Me and hear Me: "*I am the Resurrection and the Life!*"

Martha, in Me is the hope of rising out of death and the hope of a new life after that.

In Me, Martha, is everything needed to reverse the humanly irreversible.

Though death is powerful, I am more powerful: and I can also undo the spiritual death to all men face.

Dear friends, this is the most wonderful news.

Jesus is the resurrection and the life of dead and stinking human natures!

Do you find your heart a smelly place?

Are you getting nauseated by the stink of the pride, selfishness, unbelief, and evil thoughts that waft out of its hidden depths?

Be honest, you can be so rebellious, not only against your parents or authorities but also against God.

How easily you and I disagree with His providence in the weather or the milk prices or our circumstances!

How quickly we disagree with how He seems so easy on others while it seems His hand is heavy on you only.

Giving ourselves a good talk does not help, for the evil fountain within continues to spew forth its venom within you.

Oh, what discontent and dissatisfaction can fill your hearts even while you sing in church or pray at home.

Against such realities, no counselor has a lasting remedy.

But Jesus does as He emphatically declares in the face of death: *I am the Resurrection and the Life.*

He presents Himself not only as the beginning point of a new life but as the new life itself: *I am the Life.*

In Me is the life as it was in a perfect world and as it should be.

In Me and out of Me and through Me you can experience the power of a new life of true love to God and your neighbour.

Congregation, the life that Jesus lived Himself is the life He speaks about.

Even if you have only once read or heard about His life, you have already learned that there was no one like Jesus.

Though He suffered, He never threatened. Though He was reviled, He did not revile back but genuinely loved everyone whom He met.

Though He was rejected by many, He wept over them instead of being angered.

None was as meek and lowly of heart as the Lord Jesus was, even to the worst personal offenders.

He was never ashamed to reach out and receive those who lived a shameful life.

Have you ever seen Him judge harshly those who failed God and other people?

His whole life and manner were grace-filled towards sinners, hostile enemies as well as His failing friends.

Did I say 'was?' He still is and shall ever be so, for He never changes.

Not only is He the secret, source, and power of a beautiful life of godliness,

He is also the secret of the life of communion with God.

Nothing is more beautiful in this life than to live in sweet communion with God.

To live apart from Him is death, but to live in full assurance of God's love and acceptance is the sweetest life.

Paul described that life as "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" and "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Which is given unto us" (Romans 5:1 & 5).

That is the life of having the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry "Abba, Father" as fruit of the Spirit's testimony that we are the children of God (Romans 8:15-16).

Words fail to express the depth of joy and peace when in the midst of fierce fires, our heart is given to sing as we sense the loving embrace of a sovereign God and Father.

Now we must not forget that the spiritual death we face cannot simply be removed with a miracle like raising Lazarus.

For Jesus Christ to really undo death and become the source of the resurrection, He Himself went into death.

He personally experienced every detail of death and it is power and ugliness.

He was forsaken, abandoned by both men and God.

As the Substitute He took the place of the guilty and suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18).

In other words, He endured and experienced the separation first to become the source of the resurrection.

In Jesus Christ, the Son of God, therefore, is our ONLY hope!

"I am the Resurrection and the Life." It is one thing to say such beautiful things, but quite another to do it.

Therefore, to let all the world know that His claim are not just words, He commanded the stone to be rolled to be rolled away from Lazarus' grave.

The tension of anticipation must have silenced all the wailing and weeping voices.

Martha's objected but Jesus' answer is clear, *"Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God."*

And a few moments later, Martha and all eyewitnesses heard and saw the glory of God, in JESUS.

With a loud voice, He commanded Lazarus to come forth.

That means He commanded death to let him go.

What awe must have gripped all who saw a wrapped-up Lazarus step out of the grave as a living man!

Jesus proved He truly is God, able to raise the dead and able to make our lives new.

With Him all things are possible!

Once more, let us return to Christ's words, *"I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?"*

With these words, Lord is also speaking to us and inviting us to place our trust in Him!

Anyone who places their trust in Jesus, even though he or she were dead, will live.

Here 'dead' must refer to our spiritual condition of separation from God.

Ever since mankind's fall, this is our condition. Irreversible! Undo-able!

And why is our condition irreversible and undo-able?

It is because we owe God a payment we cannot make even if we worked on it for a billion centuries.

It is also because we cannot reverse sinfulness into holiness and without holiness no man, no person, shall see God.

We are therefore unable ever to restore the relationship with God because all we do falls short of the glory of God.

But hear then how simply and openly Jesus invites you to place your trust in HIM!

"He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

To believe is to look to Him as your only hope.

It is to trust Him and to confess it as Martha did, *"Yea, Lord, I believe"* (verse 27).

Faith in Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and us, will enable the heavenly Judge to justify us for the sake of Christ's life and death.

If you come with nothing in your hands but only clinging or looking to God's only begotten Son as your ground of hope, you will live.

Do you believe this? Do you trust Him? Are you relying on Him?

Are you looking away from the grave of your own heart? Are you seeking for hope outside of yourself?

Has the Spirit been teaching you to drop all out of your hand you thought you needed to appear before God?

Has He been teaching you that it is Christ Only, Grace Only, Faith Only?

Then hear His promise: *"yet shall he live."*

You will not be condemned, for you are pardoned and acquitted from all your sins in Christ's Person and work.

Such is the promise of the Living God: *"Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

Will you believe this, or will you continue to trust in your own versions and own efforts of salvation?

True faith is not just an intellectual assent to what Jesus Christ speaks here.

Such a faith is no more than the devils have who believe and tremble.

In true faith, we assent to God's truth, but we also give our consent, or our "yes, Lord, I believe."

How precious is that faith which cries out, "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief. I entrust my case, my need, my brokenness, my pain, my death to Thee as Thou alone are the Resurrection and the Life. But help me to believe Thee fully."

How sweet the sound when Jesus hears the needy soul, perhaps barely daring to whisper, "I entrust my case to Thee, as Thou alone are the Messiah, the Son of God Who came to save sinners like me. I will leave my debts, my spiritual death, my ongoing sinful heart at Thy feet as Thou invited me to come unto Thee."

Beloved, if that is your spiritual life, then fear not, you shall live.

For the words of the mouth of Truth are, *“For whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die,”*

Jesus does not refer here to our physical death, for all God’s children still die.

Even Lazarus later died again to be buried for the second time.

But Jesus’ words *“never die”* mean, *“You shall never be separated from Me anymore.”*

All those who learn to look unto Jesus are released from all condemnation of sin in this life.

They will be secured from all separation as well, for nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“I am the Resurrection and the Life, life eternal. Believest thou this?”

That is Jesus’ application question after preaching Himself to us also.

Hearing His Word is not *come, listen, and go* like we do with a music concert.

Hearing the Word brings an obligation as the Lord invites us to place our trust in Him.

He knows we cannot handle the realities of death, in whatever form or shape we grapple with it.

He knows you and I are worthy to be left in the trenches of the suffering in this life.

He knows that your strength to cope with all the strains and stresses, sadness and sorrows is eluding you.

Therefore, hearken to His sweet invitation to believe, to entrust, to commit all your impossibilities, all your irreversibles, all your bosom sins, all your death unto Him.

“Martha, believest thou this?”

On basis of His great and glorious revelation in this chapter, bow your knees before Him, and in your own words, cry it out,

“Lord Jesus, to Thee to I bring my sad complaint, upon Thee I roll my heavy burden of sins.

before Thee I lay my impossibilities. To whom else can and may I go as I am.

But Thou has said, ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life.’

With Thee is a new beginning and a better life.

In Thee alone is strength and hope.

Command Thou in my situation what Thou commanded in Martha and Mary’s need.

Undertake for me as I entrust myself and all my needs to Thee, oh, blessed Lord and Saviour.

Amen