

July 31, 2022

“I Am the Resurrection and the Life”
John 11:1-44

FCF: Our fear of death

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Jesus is the resurrection and the life.
(magnet) That changes our view of all of life.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

We’re uncomfortable with death. We’re accustomed to it. Obituaries, funeral homes, hearses, cemeteries remind us that death is lurking out there. So we’re accustomed to it. But it makes us uncomfortable. Think of our traditions. It wasn’t until the 19th century that embalming was standard fare. And with that, ornate caskets, vaults, and cosmetics. This is our discomfort with death. We clearly desire to hide it, to ignore it. And that discomfort is rooted in our fear.

We fear death. But what if we could be rid of that fear? That’s what we’re considering today - the next “I am” statement in our series and Jesus’ claim to be the resurrection and the life.

SCRIPTURE READING: [John 11:1-44](#)**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

The history of professional sports is filled with prima donnas - men and women who read their press and thought there had never been another like them, who gave little thought to their adoring fans, and would all but say, “I am this team.” Meaning it was nothing without them. Such folks are hard to like. We might praise them for their feats but shun them for their pride.

But think of what Jesus says here ([READ John 11:25-26](#)). You may recall we have said that the key to understanding these “I am” statements is reading broad and back. Reading broad, John has already shown us, through the record of Jesus’s signs and miracles, that materially, spiritually, and physically, Jesus gives life. So “Look to Him. Life is found in and only in Him.”

Reading back, we see resurrection was part of the promised restoration. The prophets had spoken of the return from exile to the Promised Land to be like a resurrection. And here is Jesus declaring that He is the fulfillment of what that return was meant to picture. Think of it.

He goes on. Jesus says the means to life - everlasting and ever deepening life - is belief in Him. It comes by turning to, trusting in, looking to, leaning on Him. Quite a claim. Jesus says He is the resurrection and the life. And as we take that in, it changes our view on all of life.

How so? In what ways would this change our view of life? In these three ways. First, with the path ahead. Second, with the pain of death. And, then third, with the power of God.

I. THE PATH AHEAD

First, the path ahead. That is, the expectations we should have as to what it means to heed the call to follow Jesus. As we do so, we need to know that His ways can be surprising.

A) The Larger Pattern

And this fits a pattern we see all through the Scriptures in a host of different ways.

1. Old Testament

God surprised Moses, calling an 80-year-old with no gift of speech. He surprised Habakkuk, choosing to use a nearby nation known for its moral corruption to chasten Israel for her idolatry.

2. New Testament

How could that be? Moving to the New Testament, we see Paul prayed for the healing of others. And they were healed. Yet when he asked for relief from the thorn in his flesh, God refused and chose to give him the grace to endure the thorn instead. The Lord's ways can be surprising.

B) *A Case Study*

Then you come to this case study here in John 11. Think again as to what we read.

1. Jesus' response

Jesus gets word that a friend of His is ill. You can take the delivery of this news as a request for Him to come. What then is Jesus' response? Not to pack up and go but to sit down and stay.

2. Jesus' reason

And what is His reason? It is not apathy or out of busyness. Read it again (**READ John 11:4-6**). It was love for them. It was the reality of a greater purpose He had in mind for them, that they would see God's glory. Had Jesus come when His friends wanted Him to come, there would have been no miracle, no climactic sign. His delay was the only way this could come about.

This shows us something of the path ahead - of who Jesus is, of what He is like, of what it can mean for us to follow Him. His ways can be so surprising. And they always have been.

Illustration:

Consider this scenario. A shipwreck survivor swims to a deserted island. He prays for God to save him and builds a hut for shelter and storage. One day, he comes home to find his hut on fire. It's the worst thing that could have happened. Everything he had was gone. He cries out, "God, how could you do this?" But the next day he hears the sound of a ship come to rescue him. "How did you know I was here?" he asks his rescuers. "We saw your smoke signal."

Application:

Has your hut ever caught fire? Have you ever assumed you knew what God needed to do and how and when He needed to do it? I have. We can trace some of the deepest and most painful times in our lives to the assumptions, expectations, and demands we put upon Him. It would seem that we need hold loosely to our demands but tightly to His unchanging love for us.

Jesus is the resurrection and the life. His path for us may surprise us. But He is good.

II. THE PAIN OF DEATH

Which brings us to the second point, the pain of death. How should we feel about death? How does Jesus respond to it? As followers, as disciples of Jesus, that should be our guide.

A) *Righteous Anger*

The first thing we notice is that Jesus feels. His is not the stoic's stiff upper lip.

1. The reality of Jesus' anger

His is righteous anger (**READ John 11:32-33**). “Deeply moved in spirit” - like the snorting of a horse. Not anguish but anger. “Greatly troubled” - internal turmoil and external shuddering.

2. The reason for Jesus’ anger

And why was He angry? Not at the inconvenience or at the mourners but at the evil of death, the misery of the human race. Jesus burnt with rage against our oppressor. This was a call to arms.

Illustration:

Some of you know something of what this feels like. If you’ve had your home or school or place of work vandalized. Perhaps it was your car or something you created, a treasure that was callously damaged. You then know something of that sense of violation. And deep anger.

B) Deep Sorrow

That’s what Jesus is feeling here. Deep anger and deep sorrow (**READ John 11:34-35**).

1. The reality of Jesus’ sorrow

Jesus’ sorrow here is real. These were real tears upon His cheeks, tears that people could see.

2. The reason for Jesus’ sorrow

But why? It was not sorrow for the loss of His friend. Jesus knew what He was about to do. It was sorrow for the sorrow of His friend’s sisters. This was profound compassion and empathy.

This is how Jesus responds to death. And it shows us how to grieve, to respond to death.

Application:

Here’s what we need to know. Death is not normal. Things have not always been this way. They’re not supposed to be this way. And they’re not going to stay this way. Death does not belong here. It is an intruder, an enemy. It is not normal. It is abnormal. This is why it is good and right to resist it, to pray and work for healing using every ethical means. And then commit those efforts to the hands of God, entrusting ourselves and those we care for to Him.

Jesus is the resurrection and the life. And He shows us how to respond to death.

III. THE POWER OF GOD

Which brings us to the third point, the power of God. Custom meant people were often buried in caves. So a stone had to be rolled away. So that’s the context (**READ John 11:43-44a**).

A) A Shocking Command

1. The words themselves

A shocking command. This was no request, no asking of permission. This was a summons.

2. The effect of His words

And what happened? The dead man came out. By the power of Jesus’ word, the dead man came out. It harkens back to the speaking into existence of all creation. Now imagine you were there.

B) The Stunning Lesson

What could this mean? It was a shocking command. And then a stunning lesson.

1. Jesus is the giver of life

This points forward to Jesus' resurrection in just a few days. But also to the great resurrection to come for all His followers. The glory of God is seen. Jesus is the giver, the restorer, of life.

2. The reversal of the curse

All of which points to the reversal of the curse, the curse upon this world traced back to Adam and the separations it brought - man from God, from himself, from others, from creation. The good news is that the kingdom has come. The restoration and renewal of all things is upon us.

The power of God, the reign and rule of the King, is shown. But its fullness is delayed.

Illustration:

I've used this analogy before. D-Day, the Allied invasion of France making a beachhead in Europe, ensured the defeat of Adolf Hitler. It was a great effort - land, air, and sea. And it was a great success. That was June 6, 1944. But V-E Day was not until May 8, 1945. There were 336 days between. The German army was not finished. And Hitler refused to concede defeat.

The gospel is the news of the coming of the King and His kingdom into this world. It is a counter-insurgency. It is a reclaiming of what is His. But this does not come immediately.

Application:

Yet it has come. This is why we catch glimpses of it even now. This is what's behind moments of closeness with God, a sense of His presence. They are real experiences of a future personal intimacy with Him that will never grow stale or cold. This is what's behind those times when God works powerfully in our lives in acts of healing, conversion, or provision of need. They are testimonies to the power that will be fully unleashed one day when all creation will be renewed and made right. The kingdom has come. These are assurances of what is to come.

Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Such is His power and the coming of His kingdom.

CONCLUSION:

Even the most amateur astronomer can tell you where to find Polaris. By appearances, the sky seems to rotate around it. A lot of folks think it's the brightest star in the sky. But it isn't. In fact, it only just makes the top 50. But the thing with Polaris is that, if you know where to find it, you can figure out which way is north. That's why we call it the North Star. Some of you may know that, during the Civil War, this was how fugitive slaves made their escape to Canada by the Underground Railroad. As they made their way in that network of paths through the woods and fields, river crossings, by boats, ships, trains and wagons, all through that treacherous journey, seeing Polaris was a constant strengthening to their faith and a guide to their steps.

Now imagine a scenario in which Polaris failed you. Let's say it was no longer steady. I'm not sure how the physics of that could happen but imagine a scenario in which its location wavered and its direction became erratic. So to follow it would no longer mean certain safety but danger and even death. What would you do? Well, you'd find a new star. You'd find a new star. Jesus is the new star. He is the one true guide and sure way to life now and life forever.

He is the resurrection and the life. As we take that in, it changes our view of all of life - the path ahead, the pain of death, and the power of God. Do you know Him? Do you know this life ever deepening and life ever lasting? It's what you were made for and your heart yearns for.

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