

I Am, part 3
I Am the Resurrection and the Life

John 11:17-27

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We are in the midst of a series entitled I AM, looking at some of the I am statements made by Jesus Christ. With the celebration of Easter today, we are looking at Jesus' statement, "I am the Resurrection and the Life" found in the gospel of John 11. Next week we finish the series with I am the True Vine.

For some of us, Easter marks the coming of spring. For others, it is about family and a meal. And to children, it is all about bunnies and baskets. I still remember looking for eggs around our house and getting sick on Yellow Peeps. To this day I can barely look at them. But for Christians, Easter is a celebration of Jesus' victory over sin and death. You may have come today as a Christian or considering Christianity or on the fringe of Christianity, a 'Chreaster.' Or maybe you are here because someone invited you. Whatever your reason for being here, Jesus wants to speak to you and invade your life. I remember the day he did that to me. As a college student, I was going to church for the co-eds. But everything changed one Sunday when God invaded my life and changed the direction of my life. I believe he wants to do the same to you through our passage in John 11:17-27. Let me give you some back story. Mary and Martha and Lazarus are siblings who knew Jesus well. Lazarus became ill and his sisters did all they could to nurse him to health and when it looked like he would die, they sent word to Jesus to come heal him. Jesus did not come immediately and by the time he showed up, Lazarus is dead. This is Martha's conversation with Jesus.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. Lazarus has now been dead for four days. So, Martha complains to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died." In other words, if you loved him or me, you would have come in time.¹ In her mind, Jesus did not come through for her. Some of you may have the same question and it is a hang up for you. How can God be loving or good and let this happen to me? It may be some disappointment or worse, some trauma, that is so painful that it has marked you and shaped your identity so that you cannot get past it. God did not come through for you. So, you are mad at God; you blame God. Or you reject any idea of God because you cannot reconcile your experience with a loving or good God. Or maybe you cannot believe that God would love you with what you have done. Well, let me put that to rest, it is not about how bad you have been but about how good God is. All of us want to make sense of pain and suffering. From a Christian perspective of the world, suffering is the result of sin in the world but God has a redemptive purpose for it in our lives. The cross, greatest evil in history accomplished the greatest good for humanity. Yet if you have a secular or a naturalistic worldview, then life is random, there is no rhyme or reason for what happens, and suffering has no purpose.

Then Jesus points her to the future by telling Martha that her brother will rise again. Martha knows Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. She is confident that there is a future life after death. But Jesus wants Martha to believe Jesus for more than just a future hope. Martha's pain points to the greatest issue we all face, sin. Lazarus and all of us will die because of sin. Pain and suffering is a daily reminder that there is something terribly wrong with the world. But Jesus' love is displayed much deeper than sparing us from suffering and death. God demonstrates his love more by giving himself for us in Jesus.

So, Jesus points her to present pain and Lazarus' death. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet he will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me, shall never die." Right here, we are confronted with the truth that Jesus is more than a good moral teacher. He does not point her to God like all the great religious teachers do, he points her to himself. Jesus is the answer to human pain and sin and death. Jesus says I am what you need, I am the answer to both your pain and your sin. Jesus as the resurrection and the life is not just some future event, it invades the present. For Lazarus, Jesus promises that "whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." And for Martha, "everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." But he says, I am the resurrection and the life. If you have been with us, Jesus as the

¹ See also 11:32, 37. The Jews note how much Jesus loved Lazarus (v. 36) but some question this love, 'could he not have kept this man from dying (v. 37)?' In fact Jesus will raise Lazarus from the dead. Sometimes Jesus allows grief and suffering for a greater purpose, see 11:4, 38-45.

life means that true spiritual life is only found in Jesus. Jesus' own resurrection not only secures our resurrection after death but he also secures eternal life for us now. Eternal life is God's very life invading our lives and transforming us. Jesus is saying that in the cross and resurrection, I defeat sin and death for you so that you will experience eternal life now and fully and completely after death. Will you believe?

Questions for Life Groups:

1. Why was Martha disappointed in Jesus?
2. Have you ever been disappointed in God? Are you willing to share that with us?
3. Why did Jesus not come immediately to heal Lazarus?
4. Jesus not coming immediately also created tension and disappointment in Martha. Why does Jesus create tension in our lives?
5. Are you dealing with tension and disappointment with God right now?
6. How does Jesus resolve Martha's pain?
7. What does Jesus mean by he is the resurrection and the life?
8. What do you need from Jesus as your life today?

