

John 11:25-26 I am the Resurrection and the Life (Reworked 4-21-2024)

History is full of famous quotes. *“I know nothing save the fact of my own ignorance”* (Socrates, 5th Century B.C.). *“That which does not kill us makes us stronger.”* (Fredrich Nietzsche, 19th Century). *“My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country”* (John F. Kennedy). As monumental and brilliant as all the sayings of men may be, none compare with the words of Jesus in our text today: ***“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”*** These are eternal words. They proclaim what is true from before the foundations of the world to the unending future. Today we will pay particular attention to this truth displayed in the story of Lazarus. I would like for us to focus on 3 truths from v. 25 about the Lord Jesus, as we follow up last week (John 15 - Abiding in Christ). 1) Jesus is unique; 2) Jesus is the resurrection; and 3) Jesus is the Life. Then, I will follow with some applications.

1. Jesus is unique. I get this from the words “I am.” Let me retell the story for some explanation. If we go back to cp. 10, Jesus was in Jerusalem where he encountered some very angry Jews who tried to stone him and arrest him for saying, ***“I and the Father are one”*** (10:30). John tells us that he escaped from their hands and he went way across the Jordan to the place where John the Baptist was first baptizing. It was there he received the news that his friend, Lazarus was sick. And, right from the beginning Jesus tells his disciples in v. 4: ***“This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”*** In other words, *“this miracle is for my glory.”* Then, after waiting two days, he finally says to the disciples, *“Ok, it’s time to go back.”* At this point, they can’t understand why he would go back after what just happened. They are thinking, *“Are you crazy? They just tried to kill you. Let it settle down. Maybe later we can return.”* Then, after an explanation about how God is sovereign and NOW is the time for the work he came to do, he says in v. 11: ***“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, (meaning, he has died) but I go to awaken him.”*** In this verse, Jesus is saying, “WE are going.” But, ***“I go to awaken him.”*** He says this because there is no one else who can do what he is about to do. Jesus is unique!

In v. 17 they find out Lazarus had already been dead 4 days, which by the way, was the time it would take for Jesus to travel from across the Jordan. Also, at that time, Martha hurries to meet Jesus and is very glad to see him. But, she had no idea what was about to take place. She says in vv. 21-22, ***“If you had been here, he wouldn’t have died. But, even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”*** Remember, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were GOOD friends of Jesus. Whenever he traveled to Jerusalem, this is probably where he stayed. Outside of the immediate disciples, they were probably Jesus’ closest friends. So, Martha, though very sad, was happy to see Jesus, thinking he had come to console and bring comfort. But, Jesus says to her in v. 23, ***“Your brother will rise again.”*** She has no problem with this fact. As with the Pharisees, she knew she would see her brother again in the resurrection (v. 24).

This brings us to v. 25. Here, Jesus brings the whole story to its point. He says, ***“I AM the resurrection and the life.”*** He was saying, *“Take your eyes off of Lazarus and his death and his future resurrection and look to me.”* The words “I AM” tell us everything about the true identity of Jesus. We don’t get this in our English translations. Do you remember when Moses stood before the burning bush? He asked God, What is your name? To which God replied, ***“I am who I***

am.” And when you go to Egypt and speak with Israel, tell them “***I am***” has sent you (Exod. 3). You see, in English “am” is a helping verb. It needs something after it. For example, “*I am Jon. I am a father. I am a husband. I am a pastor.*” But in the Hebrew, it is God’s name. I am who I am!

Jesus has said this before. In John 6, after feeding the 5 thousand he said to the people, “**I AM the bread of life.**” In cp. 8 He said, “**I AM the light of the world.**” In cp. 10, “**I AM the door of the sheep.**” Also, in cp. 10, “**I AM the good shepherd.**” 14, “**I AM the way the truth the life.**” In cp. 15, “**I AM the true vine.**” Now, in v. 25, “**I AM the resurrection and the life.**” You see, when Jesus said these things, those listening had their attention on physical bread, physical light, hard doors, walking shepherds, and grapevines. Martha was focusing on Lazarus’ future resurrection. But, when Jesus says, “I AM,” using the name for God, alongside the real pictures, He is saying, “*I AM unique! I AM the real meaning behind all of creation. I AM eternal. I AM deity.*” He is saying, “*Martha, Martha, yes, your brother will rise in the last resurrection. But, he will rise because the great I AM is here with you. Look unto ME. The great I AM is in your midst.*”

Therefore, we must do the same. Today, If you have seen Jesus, you have seen the Father.

2. Jesus is the Resurrection. I get this from v. 25: “Jesus answers Martha, “**I AM the resurrection.**” In these words Jesus wants to divert Martha’s attention from a general resurrection on the last day to the fact that He alone can provide this resurrection. As Jesus not only GIVES the bread from heaven, He IS the bread from heaven. In the same way, Jesus not only raises the dead on the last day, He IS the resurrection. The point here is that there will be no final resurrection apart from him. In this way, only Jesus is the All Powerful I Am, and anyone who raises from the dead at any point in history or anyone who will be raised from the dead is because of the power of Jesus. Look at the 2nd part of v. 25: “**Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live . . .**”

Still, the context is the resurrection on the last day. Jesus is saying, “*the person who believes in me, though he dies, he will live again.*” “***I am the RESURRECTION.***” Today, only God has the power to raise the dead. And as God in the flesh, Jesus has this power.

In John 5:25-29 Jesus says: “**Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.**”

3. Jesus is the Life. I also get this from v. 25. Jesus says to Martha, “**I am the Life.**” Some say resurrection and life are really the same thing. But, I don’t believe so. I believe the context shows that Jesus is making two different points, though they are linked together. For there is no resurrection if there is no life. But to say, “*I am the Life*” means more than simply, I will give life on the last day. Look at the second part of v. 25: “**Everyone who lives and believes in me shall**

never die.” In some way, Jesus is teaching that whoever believes in Him now, on this side of the resurrection, will in some sense never die. So he is saying to Martha and those listening, “*Believe in me . . . NOW . . . and you will have eternal life . . . Now!* He is saying to us today, “*Believe in me and I will raise you on the last day. Believe in me and I will give you eternal life.*”

We see this truth throughout the Bible, especially the Gospel of John. In 8:51 Jesus said, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.**” John 3:16: “**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**” John 5:24: “**Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.**” Ordinary life will slip away; but the life that Jesus gives will never end. It is in this sense that whoever lives and believes in Jesus will never die. (This should remind us of John 15 “*I am the vine, you are the branches. Apart from me you can do nothing.*”)

Now, look at the end of v. 26. Jesus asks Martha, “**Do you believe this?**” He is not asking if she believes he is about to raise her brother from the dead. He is asking if her faith can go beyond quiet confidence that her brother will be resurrected at the last day to personal trust in himself as the resurrection and the life, the only person who can grant eternal life and promise the transformation of the resurrection. I don’t think Martha understood everything yet. But, look at her answer from v. 27: “**She said to him, Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.**”

Today, the demons believe and they shudder. Many people in the world believe in some kind of afterlife and even the resurrection of the dead. But, do they believe in Jesus, the great I Am, the Resurrection, the Life? Do you believe this? The reason we gather and read such stories is that we might believe. John wrote these words: “**Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**” Please believe today!

Now, at this point, Jesus doesn’t have to prove his claims to deity. Nor does he need to prove his great power to raise the dead and give life. In the book of John we’ve already seen 7 miracle signs. In cp. 2, he turned the water into wine. In cp. 4 he healed the official’s son. In cp. 5, he healed the man who had been crippled for 38 years. In cp. 6 he fed 5 thousand men and many of their families. Also in cp. 6, he walked on the water. In cp. 9, he healed the man who had been born blind. And Martha would have known of all these things. But, as further evidence, let’s continue to the end of this story from v. 28. (Read vv. 28-45) before moving to some applications and comments.

1. As a non-Christian, If you want to see the glory of God, believe. As we have seen, John's purpose for this sign is that we might believe. Believing brings life. In v. 40, Jesus says, “**If we believe in Christ, we will see the glory of God.**” For Christ IS the glory of God. “**If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.**” Again, believe on the Lord Jesus and be saved.

2. In this story we see the beauty of Christ in his humanity. He had good friends. He loved them. v. 3, 5, 11; He felt for them, v. 33, 35; In v. 33 Jesus is "troubled" or "angry" or "irate." In v. 35 Jesus wept. Brothers and sisters, Jesus is like us in every way, except without sin.

3. God doesn't always answer our prayers the way we think he should. Look at vv. 5-6: **“Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.”** Christ is never too late. His timing is always perfect. This means that God's delays in answering our prayers are still for his glory and our good. In fact the miracle that Jesus actually performed confirmed the faith of his disciples and friends with dramatic power that would have been lacking if Jesus had responded immediately to the plea for help. Think about all the things we ask for. I know it is hard to wait. But, trust God! Do your best! Use the means God has given. And, wait! God's timing is perfect.

4. The resurrection assumes death. In other words, there will be no resurrection if there is no death. Therefore, the death of Lazarus is a picture of Jesus' own death. As Lazarus was wrapped and laid in the tomb, so was Jesus. And as Lazarus was raised so was Jesus. On good Friday they laid him in the grave. But, 3 days later, he conquered death.

5. Only Christ has the power to give life to those who are spiritually dead. Jesus' calling of Lazarus from the grave is a picture of regeneration. In Eph. 2:1 we read: “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins . . . But just a few verses later we also read: **“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-- by grace you have been saved”** (Eph. 2:4-5).

6. We have everything we need for life and godliness. The life Jesus gives is spiritual. But, it is so much more. It is physical life and it is everything we need. Those who are in Christ have the fullest of life. 2 Pet. 1:3: says, **“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence . . .”** This means that Jesus' purpose isn't simply to glorify God through his life, death, and resurrection, but also to do us good by giving everything we need for godliness in this life.

7. Those who are in Christ will rise. Those who "fall asleep" will one day be wakened by him who is the resurrection and the life. Just as Christ rose Lazarus from the grave and just as Christ himself rose from the grave, so we will be raised. The resurrection of Jesus himself is the final proof. Death cannot destroy the life that Christ gives. This is why there is no fear in death for the Christian.

8. Our need is to see Christ, his person, his work, and his power more clearly. Martha was a bit mixed up. She saw the resurrection of the dead in the OT, but she did not see Jesus as THE RESURRECTION. This is why he said, **“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.”** This is also our need! How often do we long for comfort and inward peace as we go about this life, calling ourselves Christians. Vague and indefinite views of Christ is the problem. Many of us are like Martha. Our knowledge of Christ is often too little! But of the fullness that dwells in Him, of his resurrection, his priesthood, his intercession, his unfailing compassion, we have tasted little or nothing at all. Many of us have named Christ for way too

long, and yet know very little about him. If this is so what right do you have to wonder that you feel so little sensible comfort in your Christianity. Your slight and imperfect knowledge is the true reason of your discomfort. If this is so, it is time quit being lazy in the school of Christ. It is time to know him and the power of his resurrection. When we can say like Paul, “***We want to know him and the power of his resurrection,***” we will find new wells of spiritual water we did not know existed. Today, the root of a happy Christian is a clear, distinct, well-defined knowledge of Jesus Christ. May Christ who is the resurrection and the life be more beautiful to us today and tomorrow as we think about such things!