

John 11:17-44 | “I AM the Resurrection and the Life”

Turn in your Bibles to John chapter 11, verse 17.

This morning, we will cover verses 17 through 44, as we see Christ resurrect Lazarus, in one of the most clear and powerful signs that Jesus performs. *[pause]*

If you remember last week, we read about how Jesus heard of Lazarus’ illness, but waited two days and then went to him.

That passage was setting up the great miracle that Jesus would accomplish in our text for today.

There is a lot packed into this passage, so let’s get started.

READ JOHN 11:17-27.

Ken Davis gives this illustration in one of his books...

“A woman looked out the window of her home and was horrified to see her German Shepherd shaking the life out of the neighbor’s pet rabbit.

Her family had been quarreling with these neighbors, and this was certainly going to make matters worse.

She grabbed a broom and ran outside, pummeling the dog until he dropped the rabbit now covered with dog-spit—and extremely dead.

What was she going to do?

The woman lifted the rabbit with the end of the broom and brought it into the house.

She dumped its lifeless body into the bathtub and turned on the shower.

When the water running off the rabbit was clean, she rolled him over and rinsed the other side.

Now she had a plan. She found her hair-dryer and blew the rabbit dry.

Using an old comb, she groomed the rabbit until he looked pretty good.

Then, when the neighbor wasn’t looking, she hopped over the fence, sneaked across the back yard, and propped him up in his cage.

No way was she taking the blame for this thing!

About an hour later, she heard screams coming from the neighbor’s yard.

She ran outside, pretending she didn't know what was going on.

Her neighbor came running to the fence. All the blood had drained from her face.

“Our rabbit, our rabbit!” she blubbered. “He died two weeks ago, we buried him, and now he’s back!” *[pause]*

We may pretend to be able to bring things back to life, but we can never do it.

Only Christ is the resurrection and the life!

Only He can give life to a lifeless body. *[pause]*

In our passage this morning, we find that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, who does some things for us. First...

I. The Resurrection and the Life *speaks*. (17-27)

Jesus doesn't leave us hanging, wondering who He is.

He doesn't keep us guessing, but he *speaks* to us.

He came from Heaven to Earth in order to die for us, yes, but also to reveal himself to us.

You see, Jesus isn't a mean God, who just expects us to know who He is, without revealing anything to us.

He doesn't remain quiet, but has spoken.

And in this section of text, verses 17-27, Jesus speaks in order to show us once again who He really is and what belief in Him grants us. *[pause]*

Starting in verse 17, we see a brief setting for what's going on at this time.

Jesus arrives in Bethany and he finds that Lazarus has been dead for 4 days.

This shows us that Lazarus was *definitely* dead.

It wasn't like he was barely alive in the Tomb when Christ called him out, but he was certainly dead for 4 days.

We also find that there is a lot of sadness going on at this point.

Mary and Martha are grieving, and many people are coming to their house to comfort them.

This was a normal custom.

There was actually a period of 7 days of mourning, where the family would stay at home and people would come to house with food, and also to mourn with them and console them.

That's the situation as Jesus arrives in the area. *[pause]*

Somehow Martha hears that Jesus was coming, so she heads to meet him, while Mary stays and mourns.

Martha is actually showing great respect for Jesus, as typically the mourning family member would stay in the house and the guest would come to them.

So Martha meets Jesus and they have a very important conversation about life and death. *[pause]*

Martha is grieving, she is despairing, and she is in a place of mourning.

And you see this grief come out in what she says to Christ.

She says, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

This statement is very interesting because it's a statement of faith, yet a statement of unbelief.

It's faith because she believes that he has the power to heal and if only he were there, she knows he would have done it.

Yet it's a statement of unbelief because it doesn't acknowledge that Christ was in control, his timing was perfect, and he could have even healed Lazarus from a long distance, if he wanted to.

And after this indirect rebuke, she catches herself, and says that she knows whatever he asks God, God will give him.

But when he tells her that her brother will rise again, she's only thinking of the future resurrection.

And then she ends on a high note of belief, stating that He is "the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." *[pause]*

What we see with Martha is that she had unbelief mingled with belief.

In some areas, she was trusting Him, but she wasn't fully trusting him.

In some ways, she was spot on with her doctrine, but in other areas, she was lacking.

Isn't that like us, though?

Don't we often not fully trust Him?

We may trust Him in certain situations, but other situations, we think he's incapable of doing anything. *[pause]*

And Jesus doesn't deal with her in harsh ways, but gently leads her to deeper faith.

He gently corrects her understanding, so that she can grow in not only her knowledge, but her belief. *[pause]*

Aren't you glad that you have a Savior who deals with you often gently to grow your faith?

He doesn't take a hammer to our head, in order to knock some sense into us.

He takes us where we are, and leads us onward to more trust in Him.

And He speaks encouragement to us in our despair. *[pause]*

What Martha needed was encouragement with truth, and Jesus gave just that.

He told her of the hope that her brother would rise, and gave her the promises of life that he alone can give. *[pause]*

Christian, in your grief, remember that Christ has given you encouragement and precious promises found in His Word.

But we must trust them! *[pause]*

You may have sound doctrine, I mean if you had to write your doctrinal statement, it would follow every point well...but do you really believe it?

Martha had some strong doctrine.

She believed Jesus could heal. She believed in the future resurrection.

She believed that He was the Christ, the Son of God, coming into the world.

But did she really and truly believe it in this situation? *[pause]*

It's in the hardest times of life that our trust in God will show its true colors.

We all need to have correct doctrine about the person of Christ, like Martha.

But we need to make sure that we actually believe that doctrine in *every* circumstance in life. *[pause]*

In Jesus' conversation with Martha, we also see him speaking to declare his identity and giving promises about those who believe him.

He says, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Now that's a powerful statement.

There is no resurrection or eternal life without him.

Life is found in Him alone.

Only He can take something that is dead and make it alive.

And the way to receive this resurrection and life is through belief in Him.

He declares, "Whoever believes *in me*, though he die, yet shall he live."

And then he says, "Everyone who lives and believes *in me* shall never die."

Our belief must be in Jesus, not merely a set of ideas. *[pause]*

So we must have faith alone in Christ alone.

And the result is what? Life.

We may die physically, but our life continues.

What an amazing, encouraging promise!

Death is not truly death for the believer.

When you die, you live on because you have eternal life.

If you really think about, for the Christian, death never has the final word.

It is not a threat to the believer because they live on in eternity. *[pause]*

Christian, do not fear death because it will not have the victory in your life! *[pauseeee]*

"As a young man, D. L. Moody was suddenly called upon to preach a funeral sermon.

He hunted all through the Four Gospels trying to find one of Christ's funeral sermons, but searched in vain.

He found that Christ broke up every funeral He ever attended.

Death could not exist where He was.

When the dead heard His voice they sprang to life."

Jesus is truly the resurrection and the life! *[pauseeee]*

There is so much grace in the fact that the Resurrection and the Life *speaks* to us!

He doesn't leave us in the dark, but he tells us exactly who he is, so that we may believe.

And he not only tells us who He is, but he tells us of eternal life, which we receive by believing in him. *[pause]*

The Resurrection and the Life speaks, but he also...

II. The Resurrection and the Life *feels*. (28-38a)

He doesn't just speak great things about himself and not feel anything about our difficult situations - but he *feels*!

READ JOHN 11:28-38a.

Martha goes back to the house and tells Mary that Jesus is asking for her.

So Mary gets up and goes to him, while those who were comforting her, follow her, thinking that they will help her mourn at the tomb. *[pause]*

Behind this whole scene, you can see the hand of God at work.

Through the comforters actions to help Mary, Jesus' resurrecting miracle will be seen by a crowd of people. *[pause]*

So Mary is there weeping at his feet, and the other people are weeping around him, and it causes Christ to have an emotional reaction. *[pause]*

We see in these verses some emotions come out.

He is deeply moved, troubled, and cries.

The Greek word that we translate as "deeply moved" actually entails anger.

He's not angry at Mary or the people, but I believe he's angry at sin's effects, as he sees firsthand the impact it has on people.

But he also grieves over what we sees. *[pause]*

The commentary written by Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown said this...

"Who can doubt that in His ear every feature of the scene proclaimed that stern law of the Kingdom, "The wages of sin is death." *[pauseeee]*

Jesus' emotions here show us a couple things...

First, it shows us the humanity of Christ.

He is fully human and so he has all the same emotions that we do, except they are sinless emotions.

He felt and showed sadness; he personally saw the effects of sin and death upon people, and the pain that it causes.

So this reminds us that it is not sinful to cry or to show emotion - even the Lord cried! *[pause]*

This is important, so please listen...

...To *never* show any emotion and to *always* be cold and stoic is not piety.

It doesn't make you stronger than others.

There is a place for sorrow in the Christian life, so don't be afraid to show it.

We grieve, yes, but not as those who have no hope.

So don't be averse to showing emotion, for even your Savior cried in front of people. *[pause]*

We have such a sympathetic and compassionate Savior!

He showed us that even he can "weep with those who weep".

We don't have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but who understands.

He understands that your trials are not easy.

He knows your sorrow, he sees your sorrow, and he can feel your sorrow. *[pauseeee]*

Also in the text, the crowd sees and discusses his tears.

No one likes their crying to be the topic of discussion, but here Jesus' crying is the talk of the crowd.

Some see his crying as a display of love for Lazarus, while others see his crying as a display of a lack of power.

The ones who see it as a display of love are partly right, but the ones who wonder about his power to save Lazarus are dead wrong.

Of course, he could have prevented him from dying, but his crying isn't because he couldn't do it.

This discussion again emphasizes the people's misunderstandings of who Jesus is. *[pauseeee]*

Really think about this section of the passage: the resurrection and the life *feels!*

What an astonishing thought!

He feels our sorrow and our pain.

He sees the destruction of sin.

He doesn't disregard our emotions like an apathetic and distant King, but regards our lowly estate and feels our sadness.

He has come to see and feel our sin-riddled plight, and has determined to save us out of it and give us life everlasting. *[pauseeee]*

A pastor named, Scott Bayles, gave this illustration...

"Ella Wilcox once witnessed a strange phenomenon in the middle of a train car.

Sitting quietly by herself, Ella noticed a woman near the front of the car who was crying.

There was nothing subtle about it either. This wasn't a single tear rolling down her cheek; rather, she was sobbing very noticeably.

At first, Ella was a little bothered by the persistent weeping, but then she noticed another passenger in the car—

...An older gentlemen sitting near the rear of the car telling funny stories to the passengers sitting around him.

Everybody smiled and chuckled along with the old man.

After a while, some of the other passengers in the car started moving.

They were getting up from their seats in the front, near the crying woman, and gravitating toward the back near the man telling the funny stories." *[pauseeee]*

Thankfully, Jesus doesn't move away from us in our grief, but *feels* our sadness, knows our sadness, and cares about our sadness. *[pauseeee]*

The Resurrection and the Life speaks, feels, and thirdly....

III. The Resurrection and the Life *acts.* (38b-44)

Dwight Moody gave this illustration once...

“A man was once conversing with a Brahmin priest, and he asked: “Could you say, ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life?’”

“Yes,” replied the priest, “I could say that.”

The man then said, “But could you make any one believe it?” *[pause]*

Christ not only declared that He was the resurrection and the life, but he proved it with his actions.

That’s the great thing about our Lord - he doesn’t just speak and feel, but *acts!*

He isn’t a powerless man, who can only speak great things and feel for us, but he’s the powerful Son of God, who acts. *[pause]*

READ JOHN 11:38-44.

Jesus comes to the tomb, and tells them to take away the stone, but Martha raises a concern.

Her concern is that it’s going to stink when they open it because of the dead body within.

Martha is again showing some unbelief here, not trusting the Lord.

But notice how Christ responds to her.

He doesn’t shame her; he doesn’t dismiss her; and he doesn’t humiliate her.

Instead, he acts in grace amidst her hesitation.

He simply says, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”

He reminds her of what he said earlier and pretty much says, “Didn’t I tell you that this would happen?”

In love, he once again is pushing her to faith.

‘You made one of the most accurate professions as to who I am - now actually *believe* it.’

‘Believe, Martha, believe. Trust what I said.’ *[pause]*

That’s our Savior.

Even though we doubt him, even though we raise objections at times, even though we have hesitations, he simply pushes us to belief.

He says to you, “Believe what I have said.”

That's what we are called to do: believe.

He has the power, he does the work, and we are called to rely on Him. *[pauseeee]*

Observe something else that comes out in this section...

They take the stone away, and Jesus prays to the Father.

And in his prayer, he says something interesting.

He prays, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."

Jesus has already asked that he would raise Lazarus, and now Christ is saying, "Thank you for hearing me."

But Jesus brings out the fact that just because he says, "Thanks for hearing me," doesn't mean that there was a question whether the Father would hear him.

Rather, he said this in his prayer so that those listening would believe that he was sent by the Father. *[pause]*

In love, Christ crafted his prayer so that it would help those listening to believe.

Isn't that love?

Jesus says and does things in our lives to help us believe.

He could have just thought, 'They should just believe me without me helping them at all.'

But that's not his character.

He is love, and he takes time to aid us in belief. *[pause]*

Think about the numerous times that he has worked in your life to bring you deeper in your faith.

Be thankful for those moments, for they show great love for you. *[pauseeee]*

After this short prayer, he cries out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."

Imagine the scene.

You are in the crowd, and you know Lazarus has been dead for 4 days, and Jesus has people take away the stone.

He prays and calls Lazarus to come out.

You might be standing there thinking, “I don’t know about this. I mean if you’re dead, you’re dead.”

“Nothing’s going to happen, right?”

Your eyes are focused on the entrance of the tomb, and all of a sudden you see a body start to appear.

It’s Lazarus! And he is slowly trying to shuffle his way out of the tomb, bound with linen strips!

Just picture the excitement, astonishment, and amazement that erupted among the crowd.

A dead man was just resurrected after 4 days, now that’s a miracle. *[pause]*

If this miracle doesn’t prove his power and identity, then what does?

Jesus acts in power to resurrect. *[pauseeee]*

In a publication called, “The Possible Years”, this story is given...

“I once heard a story about Robert Ingersoll, the famous atheist of some decades ago.

It is told that at one time he sought to show how the miracle of Lazarus being raised from the dead by Jesus was just a trick to bolster His waning fortunes.

To clinch his point, Ingersoll said to the audience, “Can anyone tell me now why Jesus said: ‘Lazarus, come forth!’?”

An old Christian in the back got up and said: “Yes! Because if He had not said ‘Lazarus,’ He would have had the whole graveyard of Bethany coming out to Him.”

That’s the power of our Lord! Simply by his voice, the dead come out...[pause]

Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life!

If you think about it, if it wasn’t for Jesus being the Resurrection and the Life, we would all still be dead in our sins.

For He came to this world, and gave his life, so that we may have life.

He took us, who were dead spiritually and made us alive.

And now we have eternal life because we have believed in Him. *[pause]*

Through this passage, Jesus is asking each of you, like he asked Martha, “Do you believe this?”

Really ponder that question.

Do you believe that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life?

Do you believe that he raised Lazarus from the dead?

Do you believe that those who believe in Him will never die?

If you have never believed in him, do that today.

He promises to you that if you place your faith in him, then even if you die, yet you will live.

Trust in Him this morning.

Repent of your sins, and believe in the One who took your sin upon himself. *[pause]*

And if you have believed in Him, let this passage push you to even deeper faith in Him.

Trust Him fully in every circumstance of life. *[pause]*

Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

He speaks, feels, and acts.

His words can be relied upon, and He can be relied upon to act.

He understands and sympathizes with your situation, sadness, and sorrow. *[pause]*

Like Mary, fall at his feet with all your concerns and grief, he won't turn you away.