

## Questions

- 1) Lazarus' Burial - Why is it significant that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days? Note the earthly reality of this story is the death of Lazarus, but it points to a spiritual reality. "The reality of life apart from Jesus is the total lack of hope." Do you see this in yourself? In those you love? In your neighbors?
- 2) Jesus the God-Man - See v22. What does Martha not yet understand about Jesus' identity and authority?
- 3) Jesus' Identity "I am . . ." - See v25-26. This is one of the "I am . . ." statements in John's account of Jesus' life. What Jesus says to Martha he says to us. What does it mean that Jesus *is* the resurrection and the life? In other words, what is the difference between *granting* someone resurrection from the dead and *being* the resurrection? You may be familiar with this passage, but does it inform how you live each day? If so, how?
- 4) Accuracy v Object - Though Martha's faith is entirely accurate, what matters more? What do you think of this statement? "Your hope is not in the accuracy of your faith. Your hope is in the object of your faith." What is your response to it? A sense of . . . . What? Confusion? Encouragement? Freedom? Trying harder?
- 5) "Do you believe this?" - See v26. Jesus asks Martha this question. Why? Is he unsure of what she believes? Why is this so important? See John 6:29.
- 6) Martha's Profession - See v27. What is your profession? See John 20:31. Do you see, know, and love Jesus as the Son of God, the Christ, Savior, and Lord? [Note: This is one of those questions that appears to have a right answer. "Yes." But sometimes we struggle with knowing or experiencing it to be true, particularly when we do not understand the Lord's sovereignty or we question his love for us. How do we walk through those times?]
- 7) Resurrection of the Dead - See 1 Corinthians 15:12-26. Paul writes, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). Can you explain this theologically? See v20-26. Does this encourage or inspire you? Do you find yourself longing for the day when everything will be as it should be? As it was meant to be? When Jesus "delivers the Kingdom to God the Father" (1 Corinthians 15:24).
- 8) Extra Credit - Charles Spurgeon said, "I have a great need for Christ, and I have a great Christ for my need." Does this feel personal, true? How? In what ways?

## I Am the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:17-27)

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This morning we resume our slow walk with Jesus in the gospel according to John, and we turn once again to chapter 11, looking today at verses 17 – 27. The first 16 verses of this chapter lead up to this moment – with one of the most magnificent revelations of Jesus' glory in all of Scripture.

And what Jesus says today to Martha and to us is a truth that echoes through every page of human history. And through every human heart. That Jesus *is* the resurrection and the life. Not just that he *gives* resurrection. But that he *is* resurrection. Not that he *gives* life, but that he *is* life.

And we're invited this morning to hear this good news – and to behold this glorious Jesus – against the backdrop of the grave. If you have your Bibles open to John 11, you'll see that backdrop, as we pick back up in this story with Jesus arriving in Bethany where Lazarus has died.

So, as we walk with Jesus today in these verses, we have a lot of ground to cover, so we dive right in. And we look first at reality in verses 17 – 19. And the reality apart from Jesus is a total lack of hope. John sets the scene this way as he writes:

<sup>17</sup> Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.

Let me highlight verse 17 again. That:

<sup>17</sup> ...when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

That's a crucial detail.

That Lazarus isn't just *sick*... he is dead. Lazarus isn't *about* to die... he has already died. Lazarus hasn't been dead for *just a few hours*... he has been dead *for four days*.

There was a superstitious belief in some Jewish circles in those days that for the first three days after someone had died, their souls hovered over their bodies. Perhaps hoping to return to their bodies. But at the four-day mark, all hope of that happening was lost, unless there was supernatural intervention.

And it's at that point, that Jesus walks into town. At the four-day mark when all human hope is lost. Is this coincidental timing on Jesus' part? Not at all. Nothing is ever a coincidence with Jesus.

He comes into Bethany when Lazarus is really, truly dead... And John makes sure to highlight the details of this. Because this is the gospel: Jesus comes to give life to people who are dead. He comes to give light to people who walk in darkness. If you want to \*get\* the good news of gospel, then you first have to get real. That, just like Lazarus, according to Ephesians 2:1-2:

...you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked...

The great preacher Charles Spurgeon put it so well when he said:

"I have a great need for Christ: I have a great Christ for my need."

And what is my need for Christ? What is your need for Christ? That apart from him, you are four days dead. Really spiritually dead. This is reality: a total lack of hope apart from Jesus.

Now we learn from Martha in verses 20-22 our response to this reality. And our response, by grace, need only be a little bit of faith. And even just a little bit of faith is enough. Because our hope is not in the greatness of our faith. Our hope is somewhere else. Verse 20:

<sup>20</sup> So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

Now there is faith being expressed by Martha. In response to the hopelessness of the situation, Martha declares her faith in Jesus. But what we *can* and *should* observe – because this ought to be incredibly comforting to us – is that Martha's faith in Jesus is absolutely sincere, but not absolutely accurate. And yet Jesus still does what he does, and is who he is, because Martha's hope is not in the accuracy of her faith, but in the object of her faith. Verse 21:

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Her faith there is **absolutely sincere**. She's not complaining or suggesting that maybe Jesus should have hurried up and gotten to Bethany sooner. Martha *doesn't* say, "Lord, if only you had been here, Lazarus wouldn't have died."

She says "...if you had been here, Lazarus wouldn't have died". And that's true. She believes that Jesus is Lord. And she calls him Lord. Her faith is absolutely sincere. But look at verse 22. Martha says:

<sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

Her faith there is beautiful but **not absolutely accurate**. She's on the right track. She's headed in the right direction. And it's not that she's totally wrong. But that she's still talking to Jesus as if he is not \*one with God\*. As if he is not, himself, truly God. She says to Jesus: "...whatever you ask from God, God will give you".

Jesus isn't just *really close* to God. Jesus is God.

She's close, but she's not there yet. And that's OK. Praise God that's OK! Because what was true for Martha is just as true for you: **Your hope is not in the accuracy of your faith, but in the object of your faith.**

Maybe you feel crippled sometimes in your Christian life. Or in your prayer life. Because you don't have God all figured out. Or you don't feel like you talk to him correctly. Well neither did Martha. And neither do I. Neither does anyone.

There are plenty of times when one of my kids – usually Jacob, our youngest – will call me "Mom" by accident. We'll be in the car, and he'll just say, "Hey mommy..." and then he'll catch himself after a second. But when he just kind of mindlessly calls me "Mom" – I still respond. His inaccuracies don't change who I am to him.

In this moment, Martha didn't have everything figured out. But the one thing she had figured out was the one thing that mattered – she was talking to Jesus her Lord.

<sup>22</sup> ...Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

You've got that right.

<sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

Mostly right.

Here's the picture God is painting for us in his Word so far this morning: That our reality apart from Jesus is a total lack of hope. So by grace, our response to Jesus need only be a little bit of faith. It's not about our faith's volume or accuracy. It's about our faith's object. Jesus.

And now against that backdrop, behold Jesus' revelation of glory. This is the promise of the ages. A promise kept in Christ. Verse 23:

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Now Martha thinks he's speaking generically. She thinks he's talking about the future resurrection at the end of time, someday far in the future. She thinks he's offering common consolation. As if he's handing her a "condolence" card from Hallmark. *"It will all be OK. Your brother will rise again"*. So, she says to Jesus in verse 24 – again showing the incompleteness of her faith:

<sup>24</sup> [Sure, Jesus] "I know that (Lazarus) will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

And now highlight this, circle this, underline this... Because here is one of the most magnificent revelations of the person of Jesus, the glory of Jesus, the work of Jesus, the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus pulls back the curtain, Jesus stands before Martha, and he stands before all of human history. And he says, I'm not offering some kind of generic, vague, common comfort. He tears up the Hallmark card and says in verses 25 and 26:

I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

See how Jesus doesn't just give resurrection, he IS the resurrection. He doesn't just give life. He IS the life. He isn't one comfort, one hope, one consolation out of thousands. He IS our comfort, he IS our hope, he IS our consolation!

The person – the man Jesus – he alone is the resurrection and the life. There is none beside him, none before him, none above him. None who can claim such power, such victory over death. And see how, in his grace, in his kindness, he is the resurrection and the life for anyone who will simply believe. He says:

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

You won't find that kind of hope anywhere vague, or generic, or common. You will only find that kind of hope specifically, uniquely, solely in Jesus, when you place your trust in him by faith.

Isn't it good news – and isn't it kind of God in his Word to remind us over and over and over again – how all we must do to live forever, and to be forgiven, and to be assured that we are right with God forever... All we must do is believe.

Religion says: whoever does for me.

The gospel says: whoever believes in me.

You want to live forever? Believe in Jesus. You want all your sins to be forgiven? Believe in Jesus. You want to be assured beyond the shadow of a doubt that no power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck you from his hand? Believe in Jesus.

Forget all of the vague, generic, common comfort that this world offers. It's all a lie, and it will all fade away. This great promise is kept only in Jesus. Jesus says:

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

And then he asks Martha – and he asks you – this question. The question that invites either **reception or rejection**. At the end of verse 26:

...Do you believe this?

Do you believe this? Believe what? Believe Jesus. Believe the I AM.

When Jesus asks Martha – and when Jesus asks you – “do you believe this”, what he's asking is: do you believe him? And it's a question that invites reception or rejection. Yes or no. Jesus or not Jesus.

Martha responds, in verse 27, with a deeper insight and a greater grasp of Jesus than centuries worth of worldly thinkers, worldly philosophers, and even worldly so-called believers who came before her and who would come after her.

When faced with the question of receiving or rejecting Jesus she says, in one sentence, with four parts:

“(1) Yes, Lord; I believe (2) that you are the Christ, (3) the Son of God, (4) who is coming into the world.”

This isn't something Martha has come to figure out about Jesus. This is what Jesus has come to reveal to Martha.

You will never arrive at a point where you've come to figure Jesus out. That's not belief. That's not faith. By grace, you will arrive at a point where you will see what Jesus has come to reveal himself to you.

He says:

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

And do you know why he asks you that? It's not because he needs to know. Jesus knows who believes and who doesn't. He knows who receives him and who rejects him. The reason why Jesus asks, do you believe this? Is not so that he will know. But so that you can know.

I often think of the time I visited a gentleman in the hospital the night before he died. It wasn't anyone that any of you would know. He had been a committed believer in Jesus all his life, by his own confession and evidenced by his own fruit.

Yet on that night, when it was just the two of us behind closed doors, he said that he didn't know if he was going to be accepted into heaven.

He had lived his whole life without the assurance of knowing that he would live forever.

You can know. And you can know that you know.

Well, what about the reality of the darkness in my life? You can know.

Well, what about my small amount of faith? You can know.

Well, Jamie, isn't that vague, generic hope? I mean how can I know for sure? You can know for sure.

Because Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in him, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Jesus shall never die.

"(You) have a great need for Christ: (you) have a great Christ for my need."

Do you believe this?