

## ***I AM the Resurrection and the Life***

John 11:1-27

The Gospel of John Sermon Series- Part II

Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

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**TEXT:** John 11:1-27

This morning we continue in our series on these breathtaking statements made by our Lord



Jesus, statements of I AM, statements of His divinity, each and every one flowing out from this great revelation of God's name and identity in Exodus 3 when the Lord says, "I AM who I AM." We've looked together over the past few weeks and heard Jesus call to us in various ways, each one asserting His divinity. Last Sunday we heard Jesus announce that He is the Gate, the Good Shepherd for the sheep, and that Christ desires to be your Shepherd and mine, your Pastor, to watch

over you, to provide for and protect you, to give you His divine presence, to enfold you into His flock.

This morning, we turn our attention to Jesus' towering statement of John 11 that "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Jesus promises us that He stands triumphant as Lord of life, conqueror of sin, death, and hell; and His voice alone says "no" to death, and to the fear of death. Belief in Him is the promise and realization of eternal life. The setting for this great statement is John 11, and the context is the severe sickness of one whom Jesus loves, Lazarus. We want to walk through this passage and stay inside this narrative and hear Jesus' voice come thundering to each and every one of us in the end. Let's journey through this passage to hear the authoritative voice of Christ who says: "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

The scene begins in a town near Bethany. We read in John 11:1 about a certain man named Lazarus who was sick. The name *Lazarus* is the Greek form of *Eliezer*. It was the third most popular name among God's people at this time, after Simon and Joseph. Eliezer means *God helps*, and this, as we will see, proves quite true in this man's case. God does, in fact, help him. His sisters are Mary and Martha. They are from the town of Bethany, which means *the house of*

*affliction, or pain*, and that is also relevant for our setting. Mary is the most popular name for a woman at that time, with Salome number two in popularity. The third is Martha. *Martha* can mean woman or Madame. It is an honorific name of a godly woman.

So we have a cast of characters at the beginning of this narrative, and these characters are close to Jesus. It is important for us to recognize that this declaration on the resurrection and the life is spoken to people whom Jesus loves. You may be tempted in this life and in this narrative to think that Jesus has perhaps forgotten them, and this proves not to be the case. Lazarus is seriously ill and his sisters send the message to Jesus in John 11:3:

*“Lord, the one You love is sick.”*

Some commentators have wondered if Lazarus is the author of the Gospel because he is identified as “the one whom Jesus loves.” We looked at that weeks ago, so you know that “the one who Jesus loves” in the Gospel of John is the author John. The disciples would notice that those around Jesus have a very clear sense that Jesus loves them. Do you know, are you aware, that if you are in fellowship with Jesus Christ and call upon His name, He loves you? They send the message out: “The one whom You love is ill.” When Jesus receives the message, He is a few miles away. He has left this area because of threats against His life. Yet, when He gets this message, Jesus responds and gives us a very important piece of information as we read this passage. In John 11:4, Jesus says:

*“This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.”*

He tells them that this sickness will not end in, or lead to, death. Instead, this sickness has a greater purpose, and that purpose is on behalf of God's glory, in order that the Son of God might be glorified through it. It sounds very similar to John 9 about the man who was born blind. It seems like a tragic situation, and the disciples ask: “What happened to this man, did he sin or his parents?” Jesus says: “No, no, no, no! This sickness is actually a setting through which God's glory will be manifested and revealed. Jesus says that the sickness of Lazarus does not have its end or its goal or its purpose in Lazarus’ death. No, it is an occasion for the Son of God to be revealed and glorified.

This is difficult, so in translating this passage, different versions bring this out in different ways. I like how the New American Standard version puts it:

*“But when Jesus heard it, He said, ‘This sickness is not unto death [or serving death], but for the [serving the greater] glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it.’”*

Lazarus's illness will resolve in the manifestation of the glory and divinity and identity of Jesus Christ, and you and I must embrace this for all of the difficulties we encounter in this life. This is

the biblical view of sickness or suffering or hardship. When things difficult happen to us, we will find a temptation arise within us to say: "Lord, where were You?" or, "Lord, I need you yesterday to change this situation." Jesus says: "No, this situation is actually an occasion for the greater glory of God to be seen, to be revealed, and to be experienced by all those around." Jesus has a greater glory in view. This is very important in the narrative, and it's important for us as we journey through this life. In John 11:5, we hear again:

*"Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus."*

It is as though John wants us to be absolutely clear about this. This is very important as we hear what Jesus does next. He decides to wait. Can you imagine that? I have a prayer request, and Jesus is waiting! Have you ever experienced the tension between the moment that your prayer request went up and the time when God answered? Often when we pray, it's a last stop for us. Our faith has already reached the terminus, and we turn then and say, "Okay, I guess I'd better pray." So we're expecting Jesus to respond immediately. All of our other options are exhausted. We read in John 11:6 that Jesus, upon receiving this news:

*". . . stayed where He was two more days."*

His delay in responding, however, does not signify a lack of love. This is so important for us as sometimes we need to be patient in awaiting Jesus' response to our need, because as we'll hear in this passage, and as we'll experience over a lifetime of faith, Jesus really does know what He's doing, and He has a greater glory in view. Sometimes the delay in response is a part of His answer to the prayer. So, after two days, Jesus commits Himself, resolves to return to Judea. He goes with a group of hesitant, reluctant, timorous disciples. He says to His disciples in John 11:7:

*"Let **us** go back to Judea."*

I hope that by this time in reading John, you have become pronominally sensitive. You need to have pronominal sensitivity when you read the Scriptures because this is another one of those devastating first-person plurals: Let **us** go back to Judea. The disciples say in John 11:8:

*"But Rabbi, a short while ago the Jews tried to stone You, and yet **you** are going back there?"*

"It was just recently that people had stones in their hands, and they were ready to stone You for blasphemy, a religious execution." Notice their shift, very subtle, back to the second person, that safe second-person pronoun, "What, are **you** going back?" The disciples, and we, often fail in these pronominal tests. Jesus says: "Let **us** go," and they say: "Are **You** really going to go? We're planning to stay here where it's safe. Are **You** really going?" Notice what Jesus does in John 11:9. He says:

*"Are there not twelve hours of daylight?"*

In the Bible, the day is divided evenly between the light hours and the dark hours. I remember

once traveling to the Caribbean. It was my first experience of feeling like the day really works on a 12-12 system. Right when you're near the equator, the sun comes up fully, with great drama and flare, in about two minutes. It's totally dark, and then it's totally light. Then at 6 o'clock in the evening, the sun drops down, and it goes from feeling like it's high noon to pitch dark.

Jesus says to them in John 11:9:

*“Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light.”*

He has already told the disciples that He is the Light of the world. Jesus is saying that the clear will of God more than cancels other dangers. No matter what dangers may be perceived around you, if you're walking in the will of God, you are safe. That's where you need to be walking; that's where I need to be walking. We need to walk in the light of Christ who is the Light of this world, so that we can see clearly. Whoever does the will of God walks during the day. Walk in the light of Christ.

I want to share with you something that made me so happy at our church this week. Midway through the week, a well-dressed, middle-aged man came into our church office, and he said, “I really need to speak to the pastor.” I was called out of a meeting, and we went back where it was quiet and sat down. He looked at me and started to talk. He said, “I have to tell you that someone from your congregation was doing some work at my house recently. He went above and beyond any reasonable expectation in the work he did. Then, at the end of doing that project, this person prayed for me and talked with me about Christ, in my driveway, for two hours!” He then went on to say, “I was just diagnosed with a serious illness. I don't know what you're doing at Kenwood, but I want you to know that the light and presence of Christ is radiating off the people here, and I just had to tell you that.” Praise God! You can interrupt any meeting I'm in to tell me something like that! Walk in the light of Christ and don't be afraid. Serve Him all throughout the week.

Jesus then goes back to the disciples and tells them another first-person plural. Jesus doesn't take the second person bait. He says in John 11:11;

*“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”*

His disciples breathe a sigh of relief and reply in John 11:12:

*“Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.”*

“We can just stay where we are. There's really no need to go since he's going to get better.” Jesus sees through the bluff again, and He tells them plainly in John 11:14-15:

*“Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.”*

This is a great lesson in contextual Bible reading. He was not saying, “Lazarus is dead and I am glad because now there is one less person to care about.” “No,” He says, “Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there.” How does this make sense? It makes sense only with the end of the verse: “. . . so that you might believe.” The delay of Christ, the allowing of Lazarus to physically die, provides the setting for Jesus to manifest His glory to us. Then He says at the end of John 11:15:

*“But let us go to him.”*

“Let us go to him that you might believe.”

Thomas, the twin called Didymus, says to the other disciples in John 11:16 (Thomas in Aramaic means *twin*; Didymus in Greek means *twin*):

*“Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”*

It is unsure exactly how he means this, but I think Thomas takes a courageous step here. It could mean that he says: “Let us go with Jesus because surely Jesus is going to be killed.” It could also be: “Let us go with Him and die like Lazarus because Jesus is about to act decisively on his behalf and reveal His glory.” Well, they go to Bethany, and when they arrived there, there is a great scene of mourners around Lazarus’ tomb. Martha hears that Jesus is coming, and she rushes out to meet Him, and we have the dialogue which is the heart of this passage, the dialogue between Martha and Jesus in John 11:21-23:

*“‘Lord,’ Martha said to Jesus, ‘if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give You whatever You ask.’”*

*“Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’”*

Martha answers with the reply that would seem foreign to many living right now and foreign to many in her own time outside of God's people. Martha says in John 11:24:

*“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”*

In antiquity, God's people are the only people on the planet who have this hope. The entire Greek tradition speaks not a single word about a resurrection from the dead. Achilles, when he slays Hector and Priam is grieving the loss of his son, Achilles says: “You will never raise him from the dead.” Many people living today believe that when you die, that’s it. You are just going into the grave and decompose, and your family members decide how expensive a casket you should have. Others have a very vague and nebulous view that we die and somehow we all have something better ahead. God's people, though, have a very specific hope that you must have if you're reading the Scriptures. It is the hope of Job 19:25-26 when Job says:

*“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And*

*after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"*

It is the hope of Isaiah in 25:7-8:

*"On this mountain He will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth."*

In Isaiah 26:19, the Lord says:

*"But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy."*

It's the hope of Daniel 12:2-3 when the prophet says:

*"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."*

In Ezekiel 37:12, Ezekiel is told to prophesy:

*"Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O My people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O My people. And I will put My Spirit within you, and you shall live.'"*

The only way that you can know this or expect this is by reading the Bible. Reading the Bible shapes this hope. The weekday prayer in the synagogue, called the *Amidah* or standing prayer, has a list of 18 blessings and prayers and thanks to God. Number two on this great list that is prayed 1000 times a year in the synagogue says this:

*"You are mighty forever, O Lord, You resurrect the dead,  
You are powerful to save.  
You sustain the living with faithfulness,  
You resurrect the dead with great compassion,  
You support the falling, and heal the sick, and set the captives free,  
You cause your faithfulness to arise upon those who lie in the dust.  
Who is like You, Lord of power? Who can be compared to You, O King?  
You bring death and make alive and cause salvation to spring forth.  
You are faithful to resurrect the dead.  
Blessed are You, O Lord, who resurrects the dead."*

God will do this. Israel knew it; Martha knew it: "My brother will rise on the last day." What she

did not know is what Jesus says next. She did not know, and what we hear with great power this morning, is that Jesus, in John 11:25a, says: “Martha, I know that you know all of this, and now let Me tell you that I am the Resurrection and the Life, that I am the Agent of creation, I am the One through whom the dead will be raised.”

It is only through belief in Christ that the dead will be raised forever. Jesus says: “I am the Resurrection and the Life,” and then He provides two clarifying statements of these vital terms. He says in John 11:25b:

*“He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies.”*

Even though you may experience a physical death, if you have believed in Jesus, then you will live. He will call you forth to new life. Death is not ignored by Jesus, but death is denied an ultimate significance. Death is not the last word, and we know this only through Christ, and we experience this only through faith in Christ. Jesus says next in John 11:26a:

*“Whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.”*

He will not die forever. Jesus says the one who lives and believes in Him will never die and will have eternal life. If you are united with Jesus Christ in faith, then you will live again. You will be raised and summoned into new life, and you will experience this in part even now. If you have believed in Christ, then you will never perish eternally. Jesus turns to Martha in John 11:26b and says:

*“Do you believe this?”*

Notice, this question is not: “Do you believe in the resurrection?” This is a question of: “Do you believe in Me?” She says in John 11:27:

*“Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”*

Her faith is placed in Jesus.

In the ending of the chapter, Jesus then demonstrates this reality. With the crowds of people gathered around the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus says in John 11:40:

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

They took away the stone, and Jesus says in John 11:41-42:

*“Father, I thank You that you have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that You sent Me”*

After He says this, Jesus, in John 11:43, stands before Lazarus’ tomb and calls out in a loud voice:

*“Lazarus, come out!”*

The dead man comes out, and the glory of Jesus Christ is on display for all to see. John tells us in John 11:45:

*“Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in Him.”*

The many who are gathered there, who had come to visit and give comfort, when they saw this, they believed in Jesus. Jesus' delay is not a signal of the absence of His love, for the proof of His love is manifest at the end of the chapter. His greatest love for us is to reveal Himself to us so that you and I can believe in Him and hear His voice calling to us: “Come out!” There is an ultimate and final coming-out of which Lazarus' coming out is a pointer. There is a sense in which we experience the beginnings of eternal life as soon as we believe, and maybe some of you need to hear Jesus call you out from the dead right now. If you are spiritually dead or trapped in a situation of death, let Him call you out. Come out into the light and life which is in Him.

Let me apply this text and four short ways.

Number one: Resurrection and Life come through Jesus Christ alone. The only way you can receive these things is through Him. That's what our text is telling us. There is an exclusivity to Jesus' words.

Number two: I wish by the power of God's Word to snap the cord in your soul of the fear of death. Death is the greatest fear people report that they have, and by the Word of God, I just want to cut that, not by my power, but by His Word. The fear of death is broken. Hebrews 2:14-15 says:

*“Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil--and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”*

Be free of this fear in Christ.

Number three: There is a related fear that I want to cut, also. For some of you, it is the fear of life. Some of you have the fear of really stepping forward with Jesus into Judea. The dangers are too many. Some of you might say: “I'm a second-person singular kind of person. I want to stay safe.” For some of you, the thought of living forever is scary. But Jesus says, “If you live and believe in Me, you will never die; but you will really live, and that living can start today, right now.”

Number four: The raising of Lazarus is a sign revealing Christ, and this sign, like all of Jesus'

signs, really points to Christ's own death and resurrection. At the end of John 11, the Council meets and says Jesus must be put to death. The wheels are set in motion for His own dying and rising, and yet Jesus' own death and resurrection is the sure and fixed basis for Christian hope.

In our banner this week, the artists got it right again. They took some artistic liberties you -



can't roll or move a stone that is shaped like a heart, and no one in the first century made a tomb stone that looked like a big heart. This is not made for archaeological accuracy, but it has theological accuracy. The heart of God comes to us in Jesus Christ and rolls back the stone. Jesus says to Lazarus and to us, "Come forth! Come out from the land of death through faith in Me." Death could not hold Lazarus when Jesus calls him. Death could not hold Jesus. He is the author of life, and Christian hope becomes stable and fixed and concrete and real, and a hope

from which you can jump forward and really live.

J.I. Packer makes a difference between optimism and Christian hope in a very beautiful way. Packer says:

"Optimism hopes for the best without any guarantee of its arriving and is often no more than whistling in the dark. Christian hope, by contrast, is faith looking ahead to the fulfillment of the promises of God, as when the Anglican burial service inters the corpse 'in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Optimism is a wish without warrant; Christian hope is a certainty, guaranteed by God himself. Optimism reflects ignorance as to whether good things will ever actually come. Christian hope expresses knowledge that every day of his life, and every moment beyond it, the believer can say with truth, on the basis of God's own commitment, that the best is yet to come."

Do you believe this in Jesus Christ?

Let's pray. O Lord Jesus, we glory in You. We thank You for waiting for two days. We want to thank You for waiting to respond in our own lives that a greater glory might be revealed. Father, we pray that You would help us to be set free from the fear of death, from the fear of life, to have a sure and certain hope in Jesus Christ. Lord, we love You, and it's in Christ alone that our hope is found. Amen.