

"I AM . . . the Resurrection and the Life!"—John 11:21-27

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, "I AM . . . the Resurrection and the Life!", is John 11:21-27 → *Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "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. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, Who is coming into the world."* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

I will never forget the day that I walked into her room at the nursing home. She had been admitted temporarily for physical therapy, confident that she would get to go home to continue her life in a normal way. As I sat down I could see her countenance was downcast. With tears in her eyes she told me

that she had been given bad news—she would not be able to go back home. This was her new home. The sharp reality of her situation pierced my ears when she said, “Pastor, this is where I am going to die.” Grief sets in not only upon the death of someone else but even at the thought of one’s own mortality. Death is gruesome, ugly and foreign to life. It is such a harsh reality that most people avoid places which bring them face to face with their mortality such as nursing homes, hospitals and funerals.

Could it be this is the reason why Jesus wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus **even knowing that He was going to raise him from the dead?** What reason would He have to weep? He could have cured Lazarus from his sickness and prevented His death in the first place! But He is the great I AM in the flesh so death is no obstacle to Him! He wept because death is just wrong. It needs to be countered by life, but it has to involve His own death.

Our text finds Jesus entering Bethany having purposely missed Lazarus’ funeral. By this time he had been in the grave four days. Jesus was greeted by Lazarus’ sister, Martha, who was mourning the death of her brother. She recognized Jesus as the great I AM as her confession of faith clearly attests: *Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.* (cf. Verse 21) She confessed that He had the power over both life and death. She also recognized that it wasn’t too late. He can still act even in the midst of death.

This is what the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is all about. Not just recognizing but actually believing and confessing Who Jesus really is—the great I AM Who has the authority over both **your** life and death! Jesus responded to Martha’s concern about the death of her brother with life in verses 23 → *Your brother will rise again*. Her response reflected that she believed in a resurrection of the dead sometime in the future: *I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day*. (cf. Verse 24) However, Jesus was working on a different timetable than she.

Resurrection from the dead must be a present reality in your life in order for it to be a reality in your life later. Listen to Jesus’ words from verses 25-26 of our text: *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*. At face value these words do not seem realistic. However, notice the focus is on what’s happening in your life **with Jesus** right now: *Whoever **believes** in Me* (present tense—a presence activity in your life); *everyone who **lives** and **believes** in Me* (again a present tense—a presence activity in your life). Resurrection involves living and believing in Jesus each moment of each day.

To those people who are trying to define life, find meaning in life and “get a life,” while living under the fear and apprehension of death, Jesus says: ***I am***

*the resurrection and the life.* (cf. Verse 25) In order to have life there must be a resurrection which takes place in your heart and life right now.

God has His own dictionary and it's not called Webster. Thus, in order to understand resurrection we must define death and life in God's way, from the Bible. Naturally the most common definition of death is physical death, that is, the death of the body. However, while people know people die so many do not acknowledge the real reason why people die. Death is a result of sin. When Yahweh announced the consequences of sin to Adam and Eve on that dreadful day in the Garden of Eden He said: *You are dust, and to dust you shall return.* (cf. Genesis 3:19) We die because of sin in our lives.

However, another death took place in the lives of these people whom God intended to live forever physically. Yahweh had commanded Adam not to eat from *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil . . . for **in the day** that you eat of it you shall surely die.* (cf. Genesis 2:17) Notice that *in the day* they ate of this tree they didn't immediately drop dead. But a death did happen immediately. They died spiritually. Their one act of disobedience killed their perfect relationship with Yahweh, with each other and with all of creation. Romans 5:12 puts it this way: *Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*

If you refuse to recognize this spiritual death in your life and its serious

consequences of a severed perfect relationship with God because of your sinfulness, you will experience a life of eternal death in hell. This is God's definition of death from Romans 6:23 → *The wages (or payment) of sin is death.* Jesus speaks about being *the resurrection and the life* **in your life today** because this spiritual death must be dealt with in order to experience life eternal at the resurrection of the body on the Last Day. Thus, a death and resurrection must take place in your heart and life right now, killing this sinful nature through repentance and being raised through your faith in Jesus. This is why Romans 6:23 continues: *But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord!*

The reason Jesus came was to deal with death by experiencing your eternal death on the cross so that you can be judged on the basis of **His** resurrection to life eternal! That's why Jesus can say: *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.* (cf. Verses 25-26) **It's all about the resurrected life now and eternally!** The question is *Do you believe this?* (cf. Verse 26) This question which Jesus placed before Martha is just as applicable for us today. Do you believe in Jesus as your resurrection from spiritual deadness in sin in your life? Can you confess in all humility along with Martha: *Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of*

*God, Who is coming into the world? Now is the time to confess.*

The essence of the celebration of Easter is not simply getting together with family, going to church, having an overstuffed turkey with overstuffed people and some kind of acknowledgment that Jesus rose from the dead. The essence of the celebration of Easter is dying every day to your life of sin by repentance, trusting in Jesus' life, death and resurrection for your salvation and living life for Him throughout each day! It's not just a recognition of a future event but the confession of an accomplished work for you as you live life in the midst of death today! You confess in the words of Galatians 2:20 → *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

*O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*

*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.*

*But thanks be to God,*

*Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

(1 Corinthians 15:55-57)

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