

Who is Jesus?
The Resurrection and the Life
6th Sunday after Pentecost
July 13, 2009

Who is Jesus? So far in this series we've see that He is the I AM – God Himself who took on flesh and bone. He is the Bread of Life who comes to us and gives Himself, and requires complete surrender to His Lordship in our lives as He tells us point blank, “Stop grumbling.” He is the Light of the World that shines in the darkness of our sins and exposes them for the purpose of forgiving them. Last week we saw that He is the Gate through which we get into Heaven, and He is the Good Shepherd who loves us enough to break our legs, if necessary, so He can carry us and we can grow closer to Him.

This week we are looking at a miracle of Jesus' that for the people was one of the ‘Top Ten’ miracles. I invite you to open your Bibles to our Gospel reading today from John 11. As always, let's take a moment to set the context.

This miracle occurs in Jesus' third year of His ministry, known as the Year of Opposition. People were very divided about who Jesus was. Some said He was the Christ, some said He was demon possessed. This was the year of Jesus' ministry that saw a lot of miracles, and a lot of planning for a way to silence him on the part of those opposed to Him.

Lazarus, Mary and Martha were friends of Jesus'. They were such good friends that Jesus spent a lot of time with them throughout His ministry including the week before He was crucified. He even used the name of His friend, Lazarus, in telling the parable we usually call, “The rich man and Lazarus.” This family of two sisters and their brother held a special place in Jesus' heart.

So it was odd that He didn't respond right away when Lazarus got sick. Look at verses 6 and 7: *Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when He heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was two more days. Then He said to His disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.*

Have you been there? Have there been those times when you've wanted, felt like you needed a touch from Jesus, and you just didn't get one? Have there been times when the silence of God has screamed louder than the shouts of everything else? We all have been there. We all have our stories, but we can hold on to what Jesus said of Lazarus: *“This sickness will not end in death.”*

It doesn't end in death. It doesn't end in the end of existence for Christians. There is a bigger picture for us, and an eternal life waiting for us on the other side of this temporary life. I know things can get hard – more importantly, Jesus knows things can get hard, but this is not all there is. There is more to this life than just what we see and experience here.

But it was still odd for Jesus not to have responded right away, and both Mary and Martha let Jesus have it when they saw Him. We only see Martha's response to Jesus in our reading today, but Mary said the same thing in the verses we didn't read when she saw Jesus – "If You had been here, my brother would not have died."

If You have been here. *If You* would have just responded when we called. *If You* would only have come when we needed You, we'd be spared all the pain we're experiencing now. *If You* would just have loved us the way we thought You did, things would be different.

Jesus was asked to come, and He said, "No."

Jesus was asked to perform a miracle, and He said, "Not now."

Jesus was taken to task by two women who were beside themselves with grief, and He said, "This isn't the end of the story. There's more than you realize. *I am* more than you realize."

Take a look at this video: (click on the link, and then the video titled, "I Raise Dead Things")

<http://www.sermonspice.com/search?q=lazarus&topic=All>

"Let me help you live."

He is the one who makes all things new, who raises the dead things to life. He is the one who forgives and restores. He is the one who tells us point blank – "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

Think about this: Christians were created for a place they've never seen. This world is not our home. Our real home is the one Jesus is preparing, and the place people can only get to through Him.

Do you believe this? This is the question all people will have to face at the end of their lives. Do you believe? This is the question Michael Jackson faced; this is the question Farrah Fawcett faced. The answer determines our eternal destiny.

But what about now? *If* we believe this now, how does it affect us today? I'm not trying to be or sound all charismatic-y, but *if* we know that our Savior Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life and nothing is impossible for Him; *if* we know that our God is in control of everything and nothing comes into our lives except what He allows to pass through His hands; *if* we know the Holy Spirit give us faith and desires to lead us into a deeper, stronger faith and relationship with Jesus, then what in the world do we have to fear? What in the world can hurt us? *We were created for a place we've yet to see!*

Listen to the promises made in Romans 8:28-39, and you can write this reference in the margins of your Bibles next to these verses in John:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He is the resurrection and the life, not only of the life to come, but of this life. Right here, right now. And nothing can change that.

“Let me help you live. Now.”

He is the resurrection to eternal life in Heaven, and the resurrection to a new and forgiven life here on Earth. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says it all, and you can also make a note of this reference in Your Bibles: *“If anyone is in Christ they are a new creation; the old has died and the new has been born.”*

The old has died. No more excuses of, “I can’t help myself, that’s just the way I am.” Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life – I’ve raised you out of the old way of living to a new life in me.”

“I can’t help the way I am, it’s just in my heritage, my genes, my culture, my fill-in-the-blank-excuse.” Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life – I’ve raised you from the death of the former things and made you new.”

“Let me help you live. Now. Trust me – I am the resurrection and the life. There is nothing in your life I can’t handle, and nothing in your life that’s going to do you any good to cling to other than me.”

Isaiah 43:18-19a says this, *“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!”*

A new thing. A new thing done by the One who is the Resurrection and the Life. The former things are dead and gone, the new life has come and it’s available for all who just believe.

Are we ready for that in our lives? It’s going to mean a change.

Are we ready to submit ourselves to the authority of Jesus, be taken by the Holy Spirit that came to us in our baptisms, and go to a new place? It's going to mean a change.

A new place in our faith in Jesus? It's going to mean a change.

A new place in our devotion to God's Word? It's going to mean a change.

A new place in our relationship with others? It's going to mean a change.

If anyone is in Christ, they are a *new* creation. Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past. Look! He's doing a new thing! The old has died, the new is born!

This past week I put a post on my Facebook page that generated a lot of conversation. I said simply, "If you Die before you die, then when you die you won't Die." If we die to ourselves, to our own opinions and thoughts, our own ways, then when we die physically, we won't die eternally. It's time for many of us to 'die' to the self so that when we die, we won't 'die.' It's time to let Jesus be the Resurrection and the Life of *this* life, so we will have the resurrection to Eternal Life in the life to come.

Mary and Martha walked away with a renewed and deeper faith in Jesus. The miracle itself, believe it or not, caused even more divisions and 'problems' for Jesus, and even resulted in a price put on Lazarus' head so he would no longer be seen and be living proof of the Prophet, Priest and King from Nazareth who took the Divine Name for Himself and said, "*I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die!*"

If you Die before you die, then when you die you won't Die.

It's a promise from our Lord Jesus to you and me and all who call on His name. And it's a promise for us *right now*. Do we believe it? Will we let Him take all the 'stuff' in our lives, die to it, and start living for Him? Let's do it! *Right now!*

Would you pray with me please?

Jesus, You are the Resurrection and the Life. Thank You for raising Lazarus, and thank You for coming to us to raise us. You raise us out of the things of this life that distract us from You and make us brand new as You do new things among us and urge us to forget what has gone on before. You will raise us again on the last day and take believers to the place You have prepared for us.

Help us to die to ourselves so we can live for You – our Savior, our King, our Brother, our Resurrection and our Life.

Amen.