
LIFE IN HIS NAME

SEVEN LIFE CHANGING IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESURRECTION, PART 2

John 11

“Seven Life Changing Implications of the Resurrection.” This is Part 2 of a message from John Chapter 11. We looked at the first 27 verses previously. In those verses we discovered that Jesus has a very special relationship with this family – Lazarus and his two sisters. Lazarus gets very ill. Jesus is given notice of that, and instead of going immediately to help Lazarus before he dies, he intentionally waits. In that period, Lazarus dies. Then Jesus shows up when Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days.

We are picking up in verse 28 today. I would like to read the first few verses of this section: “Seven Life Changing Implications of the Resurrection, Part 2,” beginning in John 11:28.

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”

The theme of this passage is the resurrection. This is the seventh miracle, the seventh sign that John tells us about. Now, Jesus did many additional miracles, but John carefully selects seven of those miracles. He tells us about those seven because he is wanting to reveal Jesus to us. He is wanting us to see, to gain an overview of Jesus so that we might believe in Jesus and have life. And this is the culminating sign, the seventh sign, the great miracle of the healing of Lazarus from the grave.

It’s interesting because John tells us this, not as a parable but as an actual historical event. One of the interesting things about scripture is that we have books of the bible, portions of scripture, fragments that are dated just a few years after the actual events happened. We have hundreds, thousands of manuscripts. That means that when these gospels and these letters were written, many of the people who were alive when the events themselves took place were still living. It

provides an accountability, an authenticity of the recorded word of God, and there is considerable evidence that these miracles took place.

This particular sign points to the resurrection of Jesus himself. Jesus himself will die and be raised, and his resurrection is a promise of the resurrection of all who believe in him. Jesus is the life. Jesus is the creator. He is the creator of all. And sin has entered his world, and death, and the world is a messed up place. It's a wonderful place -- so many great things, so many good things -- and yet so many things that are not right. So Jesus himself, God himself, the word of God, the creator, has come into this world to take back what belongs to him. He is the life. He is the resurrection.

In the earlier part of the chapter we read this declaration by Jesus in John 11:25-26. "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?'" When you trust in Jesus Christ and follow him, death is defeated. You have life in you. Jesus is life. Jesus is resurrection. You will live forever. You will be raised. You don't have to fear death.

Last week we laid out the first three implications and we wrestled with this whole idea that Jesus could have stopped Lazarus from dying. We can imagine that these four days must have been very difficult for Mary and Martha, extended family, loved ones, friends. The experience itself would have been a trial for Lazarus himself. The scripture is very clear. It tells us that Jesus didn't do that. He deliberately didn't do that. He is teaching us that trials are not an indication that God doesn't love us, but that God ordains trials sometimes for us, that they have a purpose, that they help us to experience God's glory. They help us to experience God's love.

They are not only purposeful, they are transforming. They bring change in us that could not come any other way and we live now to reflect the glory of God. That was a main takeaway for us -- that when we enter into trials we want to have faith for us to experience God's glory, and to reflect God's glory, and that that's the key to our own experience of the Lord and happiness and walking by faith.

We talked about how Jesus is given to strengthening our faith. He uses these difficult times to build our faith. Why is that important? Well, because we know him by faith, and apart from faith, we cannot know him. So trials serve this wonderful purpose.

We also discovered that your faith is time proof. It is not limited to the future. It is not limited to the past. It is past, present, and future. When you trust in Jesus, you can trust him with your past. He cleanses us of our sin. He heals us. He sets us free from what we have done and what's been done to us. We can believe him in this moment. He is with us. He is moving. He is actively working his presence, his will, bringing his kingdom, and we trust him with our future. We

will be raised. We will see him and be glorified and receive a glorified body by faith and reign forever in a new heaven and a new earth. It will be gloriously spiritual, but also wonderfully physical.

I'm going to say I get asked this question more often than any other question. I'm not sure that's actually true, but it's got to be close to the truth. I think it's the truth. And that question is this: "Will my dog be in heaven? Will my pet be with me in glory?" I don't think that that's as foolish or crazy as we are first inclined to think. What we are saying in a very strange way is that the things that are dear to me – "Will I have some connection to those in heaven?" The answer to the latter question is yes. The answer to the first question, "Will your dog be with you in heaven?" is: I can't promise you that. I don't know. I don't have an indication from scripture that your dog has a soul and will live for eternity with you. But there will be meaningful connections, and that's what we are after with this idea.

See, I've lost you. Now you are sitting there thinking, "Oh no, my dog's not going to be in heaven!" I regret that whole...your dog will be with you in heaven, okay? Or something better. Here's the point I was hoping to make. We can't imagine not being physical creatures because it's so much a part of our existence now. You will have a glorified body with Christ in heaven. This teaching – "I am the resurrection and the life" – is glorious, and the implications...we are just scratching the surface in terms of the far-reaching ramifications of the teaching of the resurrection.

So let me jump in, if I might, to this teaching. Implication #4, picking up here now in our list of seven:

IV. Jesus is with us in trials, verses 28-35.

We read these verses and what we discovered is that Jesus displays a lot of emotion when he comes to the tomb of Lazarus. There is weeping going on. It might help you to know that in this culture there were flute players at every funeral. Even the poor would be expected to hire a couple of flute players and professional mourners. Those mourners were actually there to facilitate mourning and there were professional weepers at the funeral. There is this gathering, and then there are, of course, the various expressions of grief from family and friends. And there in this scene we are told that Jesus was deeply moved. Deeply moved. Now, that is a completely inadequate translation of what's in the original language. It's clearly speaking of an anger. Jesus is outraged. Some translations get closer to the heart of that, but that is an accurate translation of the language. Jesus is outraged. We are told that he is deeply troubled. We are told that he weeps, that he is expressing grief.

Now, we may scratch our heads and wonder at that, saying, "Wow, that seems unusual because Jesus is about to bring Lazarus back from the dead, to raise him up out of his tomb. He knows that. Why is he expressing this emotion?" On top of it, one of the reasons translators kind of try to tweak the interpretation is because it seems like the anger, the outrage contradicts the weeping, unless you've been through this.

Many of you have lost dear, dear loved ones and you know. You experience a whole gamut of wide emotions. You are angry. You are deeply troubled. You grieve. You weep. It comes on you in unexpected waves. At first you may not feel it. You may be numb from the experience of the loss. You are shocked later when it sweeps over you. You are dumbfounded by the depth of it and your inability to control it.

Jesus is expressing the gamut of emotion that we experience when we are in this position. It teaches something wonderful: that God, the son of God has become a man, and in his humanity now he is with us in this created, fallen order and he empathizes with us. When you go through trials Jesus is with you, not in some detached, removed way, not in indifference, like: "Okay, don't worry. I'm going to make it better. I've got a purpose in this." No, he is walking with you.

There are many applications that you could draw from that, but simply put, the first one is: Be comforted. Be encouraged by the presence of God and know that he is with you. Draw near to him and receive that comfort. You will know him in a way that you did not previously know him. I never meet a believer, having gone through the entire experience, genuinely knowing the Lord, who can't say, "I might not have chosen this, but God revealed himself to me in new ways through this experience."

The second application is that this is instructive for us in terms of how to help those who are grieving. Here is a quick application: When we are with those who are grieving, let's weep with those who weep. Let's give them room to be deeply troubled, to be outraged. We don't need to have answers to questions we don't have answers to. We don't need to fix it in that moment. What we can probably do best of all is just be with them. Amen? I think sometimes as Christians we know instinctively that death is not right, that we were not made for this, that this is an invader, this is an intrusion. So we want to make it right, and in those moments of perhaps nervousness and awkwardness we are better off just to weep with those who weep.

Now let's go on to the next point. We started to make this point, but here it is.

V. You have to wait until the resurrection to get all the answers you want, verses 36 and 37.

We read this, but this is what's happening. The observers are there and they are watching this scene. They are seeing the weeping. Then they see Jesus weep with Mary and Martha and they say, "Wow, look at how much he loved them! He loved Lazarus!" Then they ask this question: "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?" That's a good question, isn't it?

Sometimes these questions are asked in scripture by religious leaders and they are trying to trap Jesus, or they are trying to expose Jesus. They are not genuine. I think that this is a genuine question. I think in the context they are asking a

question that you and I frequently ask. I mean, God loves us. God could have done something. In fact, many times when we go through a great trial, we are asking for this miracle, and sometimes we don't get the big miracle, but we look at all the small miracles that happen along the way. We step back and scratch our heads and say, "Lord, you did this. This was clearly you. You took care of this. I could have never done that. You obviously ordered these events, but you didn't give us this."

I told you last Sunday about my friend Buddy, who I visited in the previous week who fell ill. He died last Sunday morning, right before I shared that message with you. His memorial service will be this Wednesday at 2:00, here at Riverside. It's an interesting thing. I went to visit him in hospice. I made one visit. I was later told that that was the only moment in that season where he was alert, awake, and interacting. And in that moment I just clearly shared the gospel with him. I said, "Buddy, I believe you have trusted in Jesus, but I am reading to you from the gospel of John. I am telling you, if you don't die from this, you will die and your only hope is to trust in Jesus Christ. I am not talking about a religious tradition. I am not talking about trying to be good. You must trust in Jesus Christ. Have you trusted in Christ? Give your future to him and trust in him to save you." He was trying to speak to me. He was nodding. He was acknowledging. I left, and I have been told that he wasn't able to have those interactions. I see that as a grace of God. I see that as a comfort, a comfort provided for him in that moment, a reassurance in my heart, but certainly a reassurance in his wife and children.

Now we may ask, "God, why would you open that window but not heal him?" I'm going to give you the best answer I know and that is you will not know until the end. There are going to be some things that just, because God is God and you are not and I am not – God does things uniquely and wonderfully -- we will have unanswered questions. But in the end, we will have answers. We just have to wait a little bit. Some of that is due to the fact that we are just unable to get it right now. We will know so much more when we see him face to face.

I want to be careful here. I'm not going to linger on this point, but I don't want to tread upon the emotions of the trials that you have experienced. I don't in any way want you to feel that I am making light of those. "Oh, don't worry, you'll get answers later." I don't think that that would be what God wants to communicate to you through me in this moment. I think instead I want to legitimize your struggle with that and say it's real. It's real, and we see it even exhibited in Jesus here and the perplexities of the people who are observing all this happen.

Jesus is with you. You don't get all the answers you want. Let's go to #6.

VI. Jesus builds your faith by delivering you from trials, verses 38-44.

Jesus delivers you from trials many times, not always in the way you want, but many times in the way you want. The verses specifically that help us here are verses 38 through 44. I would like to look at them. Let me read them.

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "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." When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Jesus heals Lazarus. It's been commented many times that Jesus said, "Lazarus, come out." If he had not said "Lazarus," he would have emptied all the tombs there in the graveyard. The point is that Jesus' word is powerful. It's sufficient.

Sometimes we take the lessons that we've already looked at from this passage -- Jesus uses trials, Jesus uses difficulty, he shows us his love, he is with us, we don't get all the answers we want -- we bracket all of that together. Sometimes we emphasize that element of this story, and we miss the more obvious teaching. Do you know what it is? Jesus raises the dead. Jesus answers prayer. Jesus performs miracles. Jesus delivers us from trials.

I will fail you in teaching this glorious chapter if you don't leave with some expectation to say, "I'm going to ask God to do this." When you get sick, ask God to heal you. When someone you love is sick or dying, ask God to raise them up. Believe God to do the obvious good that you desire for him to do in these given situations.

I think that part of what happens is...I think John Newton got this right. I've been deeply influenced by his theology and teaching, but he emphasized that God will allow us or take us into a trial, deliver us, take us into a trial, deliver us, take us into a trial, deliver us, and that that pattern strengthens our faith. We have seen God's faithfulness exhibited so many times, through so many deliverances, that we come to a place like Abraham where we are ready to put Isaac on the altar. There is a strength.

Now, who am I to critique Newton's theology? I think at the same time, sometimes his prayer life and what he encouraged was: "Well, just accept the will of God. Just yield to it and God's going to do whatever he is going to do." Sometimes when you read his letters and read his teaching, there weren't always bold expressions of faith, saying, "God raise this person up!" I think we are encouraged to do that from scripture in the context of submitting to the overall will of God. I want to encourage you to believe God.

Can I just be very honest with you and transparent for a moment? There are some people here today who have been battling an addiction for years, for decades. I want to tell you that Jesus raises the dead. I want to tell you that Jesus is

greater than your sin, greater than your track record, greater than your history. You may be battling old emotions, patterns. I confessed to my wife an emotional struggle, and as I was sharing it with her we both said, “Wow, will I ever get free of this?” As we said that and were encouraging one another, just in my heart was this faith, “Yes, Jesus is greater than the patterns of my life, even for an old man like me.” How much more for all of you young people here? That was supposed to be funny. You were supposed to respond with, “No, you’re not old!” But certainly you see. Listen to the words of Jesus, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”

Sometimes glory is exhibited in you being faithful in the midst of the trial. You will die at some point, and dying well will glorify the Lord. But sometimes glory is seen in you not dying. How do you like that? That’s good news, isn’t it? Jesus is the resurrection, and there are times where he wants us just to believe him for the outrageous and to trust him to do it in our lives.

There is an awkward thing in this text where Jesus tells the sisters to move the stone that blocks the tomb. They are like, “Hmmm, that seems inappropriate. There’s going to be a smell.” They are expressing their faith, their submission to Jesus. If you are one of the sisters you want to say, “Jesus, could we have a moment here? Could we step over here? Could you tell us what you are going to do? Could you lay this out? Because I don’t think this is going to go well.” It takes a certain courage to ask, to believe God, and to open the window for that and to act in faith.

So am I contradicting myself? We go through trials. God uses trials. We don’t get all the answers we want. But God also sometimes miraculously delivers us. It’s all of the above. Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

Let’s go to our seventh and final principle and it is this:

VII. The cross is the only way to get to the resurrection, verses 45 through 57.

I don’t want to read all of this, but let me pick up. There is a movement now. Some are really moved and they believe in Jesus, but then there is opposition. The Pharisees gather and the council gathers. We are told in verses 47-53:

“What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

Now, here's what's fascinating. It's fascinating scripture. The Jewish leaders that are opposing Jesus at this moment come together and say, "Man, we are in trouble! Look at the miracles this guy is doing. If we're not careful, everyone is going to believe in him. Everyone is going to follow him and we'll be out of a job. We'll be out of power. Our influence will be nothing and we'll be nothing to Rome. Rome will be done with us." Wow. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine your pastors getting together saying, "Man, people are getting healed! Miracles are happening. People are getting right. We are going to be out of a job! No one needs us!" That's ridiculous, isn't it?

You see, there is deep corruption here from these religious leaders. They are not celebrating what God is doing. Now here's the amazing thing. Think of this. God has a high priest prophesy that Jesus will give his life for the nation. He wants to kill Jesus. He is opposing the purposes of God, and God is so demonstrating his sovereignty, his control, that he has Caiaphas prophesy. Here is Caiaphas' thinking. "We are going to kill to save the nation, because we want to protect the nation from him." In reality, they will kill Jesus to save the nation because Jesus will give himself for the nation. The irony of it is profound. The prophetic message is powerful, and God is delivering a message to you and me that the only way to get to the resurrection is through the cross.

We would have chosen the former strategy, right? We would have said, "Okay, Jesus has this immense popularity. Let's just have him keep doing miracles, working all these things. People will believe in him. They will all rush to believe. We will get rid of the bad leadership. We will take over. We will conquer Rome. This is how it happens. And God says, "No, no. That doesn't pay for sin. That doesn't heal people's hearts. That doesn't bring transformation. I must pay the penalty of sin." So we see here that the cross is absolutely necessary.

We read today in our worship time from Romans Chapter 8, celebrating that nothing will separate us from the love of God. Nothing will separate us, neither life nor death. Our emphasis really last week was this: You don't have to fear death. If you are in Christ, death will not separate you from God. And you don't have to fear how you are going to die, because God will walk you through it. It will be difficult, perhaps, but it will be a glorious moment where Jesus himself will carry you through that, and over that threshold. Death will not separate you.

But maybe you are in a season where it's not death that bothers you, it's life. Life is what's separating you from God. Life is getting the best of you. I want to encourage you with today's message: Jesus is the life and the resurrection, and if he abides in you, resurrection power abides in you. You can believe God for glory in this life! You were made for glory! You were made to reflect the glory of God, so get up and fight. Get up and stand for God and stand for what's right. Amen? But you can't do it without the cross. You can't do it without the full payment for your sin. So we live with these tensions.

I'm going to close by describing to you two tensions that will provide some application for you. The first one is this. You see in this passage a tension between two doctrines -- the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of sin. On the one hand, you see that mankind is made in the image of God, fearfully and wonderfully made. You see Jesus' deep love relationship with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary -- his affection, his esteem for them, his affirmation of their value. They are made in the image of God.

At the same time you see a doctrine of sin. You see the brokenness of the world. You see death. You see the hypocrisy and sin of religious leaders. You see Jesus weeping. You see Jesus angry. You see him broken over what sin has done to the world. As Christians, we live with the tension of these two doctrines.

You take a given issue, you take a person -- these two doctrines help you know how to respond. You see an entertainer, and this entertainer is unbelievably talented, but their message is maybe one of hate, or one of immorality. What you are experiencing in that moment is this tension. You can affirm: "Wow, look at the gifts! This person has amazing talent!" You can actually worship God as you see this dim reflection of God's image and you celebrate the goodness of that.

But then, you are grieved by the rejection of God, the sin, that which is opposed to God. That's how we live. So if you don't live with that tension you end up getting all out of whack. You either go over and follow this artist without discernment, without appropriately pushing back, or you are over here saying hateful things and acting like, "Oh, they can't even sing." No, that's ridiculous. There is something that can be affirmed and something that can be challenged. Do you see it?

Take the political issues of our day. Right now, really being pushed hard is the whole transgender issue. We are seeing legislation about how bathrooms should be used and how people should be identified as male and female. Scripture is very clear that we are made in the image of God. Then scripture tells us "male and female he created them." Your gender is biologically identified and you are reflecting the image of God. That's a very unpopular message, but it's clear. Listen, it's foundational. It's foundational to our existence. It's foundational to our identity. It's foundational to the fact that we reflect the image of God, male and female.

Having said that, the way we engage in that conversation is not in a hateful way. When people express opinions that differ from the word of God, we respect them, but we disagree with their opinion. We want to have the strength to say, "No, that's not right. This is foundational. I don't believe that someone who is biologically a man can just identify himself as a woman and walk into the women's locker room. I don't think that that's going to help us as a culture, but I don't want to be hateful to that person. That person is still made in the image of God. So if we don't live with the tension, we will be afraid to speak the truth on these difficult issues because it's so unpopular to do so. Or we will just get downright mean and hateful, and we don't want to do either of those things.

We even have whole churches now who line up in one of those extremes. They don't ever talk about it. They won't ever talk about it. How can you not talk about it? This is a massive issue with massive implications. Or you have churches that talk about it all the time and they are just, frankly, mean.

Well, I'm not claiming that we do it right, but we are doing pretty well, I think. Very imperfectly, we are trying to live with the tension. That's tension #1. You feel even a little tension filling the room as we begin to talk about it, right? "Ooh, wow, I can't believe he's talking about this."

The second tension is the cross and the resurrection. Living through trials, not getting the answer you want -- living through trials, getting the answer you want. The resurrection, the life which is Jesus, has entered into me. Eternal life lives in me by faith in Jesus Christ. That means that one day, if I die before Jesus comes back, I am going to be raised up. I will probably not have gray hair. I will have more hair. I can't wait. No pains, right? I don't have that yet. I am waiting for that. Many of you prayed and have prayed in life for God to do some things and change some things. You went through some things and God said, "Not yet."

But then, there are times where we experience God's resurrection power in this world. God saves our marriages, delivers us from addiction, heals our bodies, doesn't take us into death, and we live with that tension. We are asking God, "God, spare us from this, deliver us from this." But we also know that we don't get the full package until later. Again, some churches want to deny that tension, so they create language and act like they always get the miracle. Or on the other extreme, they never pray for the miracle. We want to live with the tension.

Do you know what these two tensions demonstrate? We are not God. We are not in charge. And that's kind of good, isn't it? What a mess of things we would make if we were in charge.

Now, before the worship team comes, before we move: None of this means anything without Jesus Christ. If you don't know Jesus, you will die and you will stand before him in judgment. The promise of life is found by faith in Jesus Christ. There is a moment where you have to say, "Yes" to Jesus. "Yes, Jesus, I am trusting in you. I have sinned, but I was made in your image and you came to pay for my sin so that I could be restored to relationship with you." God loves you. He has given his son for you. Trust in him. Turn from your sin. Confess it and believe in him.