

“*Domine, volumus Jesum videre,*” John 12:21.

“*Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,*” Mark 9:24.

JOHN 11

¹⁷When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. ¹⁹Many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, while Mary was sitting in the house. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”

²³Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴Martha replied, “I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the Last Day.”

²⁵Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even if he dies. ²⁶And whoever lives and believes in me will never perish. Do you believe this?”

²⁷“Yes, Lord,” she told him. “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

³⁸Jesus was deeply moved again as he came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹“Take away the stone,” he said.

Martha, the dead man’s sister, told him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, because it has been four days.”

⁴⁰Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” ⁴¹So they took away the stone. Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴The man who had died came out with his feet and his hands bound with strips of linen and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus told them, “Loose him and let him go.” ⁴⁵Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what Jesus did believed in him.



So here we have it, the center point of the book of John, chapter 11 of 21; the famous chapter of raising Lazarus from the dead. You don’t have to be a Christian to know that Lazarus is almost synonymous with resurrection. You don’t have to read the Bible to know Lazarus’ name. Even the unbelieving world knows that Lazarus signifies coming back to life. Even the unbelieving world would gape open-mouthed at this kind of power.

Sometimes people ask the question: Why did Jesus say the name, “Lazarus”? Do you know? Jesus said, “*Lazarus, come forth!*” and not merely, “*Come forth!*” Why is that? The answer is that if Jesus had NOT said the name Lazarus, then the whole graveyard would have come back to life!

That’s the power He has. Jesus has incredible power. He has unlimited control over enemies. Even as a weeping, sympathetic, normal human being, a humble demonstration of His humanity; Jesus wields the boundless depths of the power of the Almighty. So Jesus had to be very direct about who should come back to life that day.

Maybe it’s a time when you need to begin to hope. Hope against death. Wrap your mind around everlasting life and your heart around the comforting words of the Son of God. Maybe you have doubted His undying ability to conquer and

defeat our last enemy. After all, He hasn't shown up to stop every awful sickness. Today the Holy Spirit wants you to know how boundless God's power is when ...

CHRIST SPEAKS LIFE INTO THE COFFIN

There are many things packed into one chapter of the Bible. I usually ask several questions of the Holy Spirit in John 11. Why did Jesus wait so long to come? He was told Lazarus was sick. Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus sent for Jesus. But Jesus lingered 2 more days where He was and wouldn't heal Lazarus. Another question: Why did Jesus weep when He would raise this man from death? But the most important question for us today is this: Why didn't anyone just ASK Jesus to raise Lazarus from the dead? That's right. No one just came out with the question, "Jesus, will you raise Lazarus back to life again?" No one figured it out.

Oh, Jesus had planted the seeds along the way. He told the messengers and the crowd gathered around Him in verse 4, "This sickness will not end in death." He also played this waiting game. By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus was four days into death. Jesus left Martha and Mary both wondering, drawing the obvious conclusion, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." They both make that statement throughout the course of the chapter. Even the crowd drew the conclusion that surely the One who had restored sight to the blind could have cured this man's sickness. But still no one came out and asked the question: "Jesus, if it is your will, would you please raise Lazarus from the dead?"

We shouldn't be surprised at that fact. To be fair, no one has any right to ask that question. After all, we have earned our deaths. The wages of sin is death, and we have sinned. At the bottom of our hearts, if not on the surface, we know what we deserve. We know by nature that we are accountable to the One true God, and we don't have to think too hard about how punishable we really are. Think of the times we worried more about death by coronavirus than we placed our worries into the hands of the Lord Jesus, who reigns over death. Think of the times we hated and cursed an enemy ... or a friend. Think of the times when we rushed in like fools where angels fear to tread, only to find our feet in our mouths and our hearts as guilty as sin. Think of the reasons we have no business praying to a compassionate, sympathetic, glorious God like this.

However, you and I know what this Jesus Christ, this Son of God, is known to do. He speaks to the coffin and He raises to life. This isn't just physical life, but spiritual life. What does it take to live a life of faith? It takes a word of Jesus Christ.

Another reason – and a very good one at that – that these believers in Jesus did not ask that bold, bold prayer is what Martha dared to confess. She said, *“I know that Lazarus will rise in the resurrection on the Last Day.”* What a pretty thing to say! What a beautiful confession of faith! She says she KNOWS it, not as a hypothesis or a deduction or a guess or a plea, but a firm certainty. Martha has heard what the prophets said,

- like Job, *“I know that my Redeemer lives and that at the end of time He will stand over the dust ... and that in my own flesh I will see God”;*
- or like Daniel, *“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”*
- She knew what Jesus had preached in John 5:39, *“They shall come forth, those who are good to the resurrection of the life; those who have done evil to be condemned,”*
- and what Jesus said in John 6:40, *“This is the will of Him that sent me; everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life, and I will raise Him up at the Last Day.”*

Likely the others at the home of Mary and Martha were continually repeating that promise of God, that confession of faith. And so Martha knew the importance of faith in such a promise.

However, Jesus had more to tell Martha, Mary, and the crowds who had gathered. He chose to point out something even more wonderful than the future power of God to raise the dead. Jesus said something even more beautiful, even prettier. Don't miss it! He said, *“I AM the resurrection and the life.”*

Don't miss that, friends. Don't fail to see how Jesus is saying just a little bit more than Martha's beautiful expression of faith. Jesus could have said, “I perform the resurrection,” or, “I do indeed raise to life,” or, “You have correctly stated the doctrine of the resurrection.” But Jesus instead says, *“I AM the resurrection and the life.”* The fact of the resurrection and life is identifiable with His own person. Christ is the OWNER of the resurrection and life. Resurrection and life is FROM HIM WHO IS the resurrection and life, and THAT is Jesus Christ. He makes the resurrection and life effective because He has merited it without failure.

So He can go on and say something that sounds crazy. On the basis that Jesus is the resurrection and life, Jesus can say that whoever *“lives and believes in Him will never die.”* How can this be? Lazarus knew the same promises as Mary and Martha and doubtless believed them. But there Lazarus was dead in the tomb. Yet Jesus says you never die.

This is how. Death has no claim. Where Jesus is, death has no power. Jesus is with you, and you are with Jesus, believer. Therefore, death is only a momentary shadow on a life that is far better. Life in a believer can never be wiped out, because nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. It will go on forever. Death isn't even an interruption of the true life a believer in Jesus has.

This only magnifies our redemption from sin. If death is defeated, then you only have to be united with Christ to have everlasting life. Repent, for Christ forgives you your hate, cursing, worry, folly, and lack of trust. He has spoken to the coffin – your coffin – and raised you to life through the forgiveness of sins. He has placed a heart of faith where there once was a dead heart, stillborn in sin. Jesus has raised you with His very words and used your name at your baptism, calling you out of darkness into His heavenly light.

Therefore, believe this, as did Martha. Do you believe this? Believe that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And repeat the promises He has spoken to the coffin whenever you like.

But be careful, because ... if you don't take care and be direct, you might forget to use the name of the person to whom you are speaking. And someone who has no hope may hear the living promises you speak. And if you're not careful, someone who wasn't even asking Jesus for the resurrection and life may shed the dead flesh of their sinful hearts and rise. And if you're not careful, a whole graveyard full of unbelievers, a whole valley of dry bones, may learn about this Jesus Christ. And if you don't watch your words, the words of the resurrection and the life, you may realize the power that comes from the name of Christ, the One who died and rose again. *“Wake up, O sleeper! And rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!”* (Eph. 5:14) For it only takes a word of the One who speaks to coffins to raise the dead. Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.