“I Am The Resurrection and the Life”

John 11:25-26

“I am the resurrection and the life.” These words by Jesus are spoken in the middle of the divine drama demonstrating our Lord’s power over death. His friend, Lazarus had died. And Jesus was going to raise him from the dead. It seemed like a slam dunk victory for Lazarus. But, did you ever wonder if this was really a bonus for Lazarus – to be raised from the dead? I mean, Scripture clearly teaches us that at death our souls go immediately into the presence of God. It doesn’t get any better than that. And now Jesus brings Lazarus back to life in a world that is defined by sin and suffering and death. None the less, even on this side of the grave Lazarus was still in the presence of God as he stood in the presence of Jesus.

In the movie Jesus Christ Superstar, Jesus says to a somewhat misguided Simon the Zealot, “To conquer death you only have to die.” Now, Jesus never really said that. That’s a bit of theatrical license. Besides if that were the case everyone ever born would conquer death because everyone ever born dies. And if our own death was the means of life, who would need Jesus? We can die very well on our own, thank you very much. No, in order to conquer death we need life. We need the personification of life – Jesus Christ. After all Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

In our lesson from John we see that the word ‘life’ can be used in two senses when it is applied to human life, when it is applied to our life. It speaks of one kind of life that we’re going to lose but get back again – “He who believes in me will live even though he dies.” And then it speaks of another kind of life that we don’t have to lose at all – “whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

The first, of course is bodily life, the one characterized by such things as walking, talking, breathing and muscular movement. That is the one we lose for a while, at death, but because of Christ, we get it back again better than before. The second is spiritual life, the one characterized by such things as loving God more than anything else and loving our neighbor as our self. That is the one which, if we have it, even death cannot take it away from us. It goes on even when the body dies and decays.

The Easter promise assures us that Christ’s bodily resurrection makes us sure of having both kinds of life. In Romans 6:4 Paul writes, “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Christ’s resurrection guarantees us eternal bodily life, and Christ’s resurrection guarantees us eternal spiritual life.

Christ is the personification of life, our life, because He became the personification of death, our death. Ironically, Jesus is the life because Jesus became our death. It’s one thing to die for a friend. That’s the stuff of which heroes are made. It’s quite another thing to die for an enemy. That is what we were because of our sin – enemies of God. Paul writes in Romans 5:10, “For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” We have been saved through his life because Jesus is the life.

I mentioned a moment ago that if we have it, if we have spiritual life, not even death can take it away from us. Notice the big “if” there – if we have it. There is a possibility that one does not have it. In fact, not one person was ever born with it. And a lot of people go through life without ever getting it. We can breathe, eat, walk around and make a living, we can get up in the morning feeling super-duper saying “It’s a great day to be alive!” and yet we can still lack the spiritual life I’m talking about. We can be in the prime of life, and still be without this life. For the life I’m talking about is the very life God Himself has, the life characterized by such things as perfect holiness and perfect love. And that life? Well, without Christ we just don’t have it.

Without Christ we instead have spiritual death. That death was ushered in by mankind’s fall into sin. The result of that fall, that original disobedience toward God, was a sickness unto death that affected all mankind that affected you and me. If spiritual life is characterized by God’s perfect holiness and perfect love, then spiritual death is characterized by sin and separation.

But, the type of death Jesus dealt with Lazarus was a physical death. Jesus and His disciples got word that Lazarus was sick. But, Jesus didn’t rush to save him – not yet at least. He stayed put a couple of days and then headed off to see Mary and Martha. By the time He got there Lazarus had been dead four days. But, why? You see physical death is sometimes determined by duration. The longer one is not breathing the better chance that person is really dead. Jesus’ delay in coming to the rescue was to ensure everyone that Lazarus was really dead. This would not be a resuscitation of one who, in the words of Monty Python, was not quite dead yet. This may also point us to the reason Jesus was in the grave three days after His crucifixion – proof positive that He was really dead, as if we needed more proof than the mortal wounds of His scourging and the finality of the soldier’s spear through our Lord’s heart. This delay by Jesus allowed confirmation of Lazarus’ death and allowed opportunity for Mary and Martha to grieve the reality of that death. In addition the delay by Jesus allowed the audience to be greatly impacted by the reality of the miracle of the resurrection and life.

When Martha heard that Jesus was there she went out to meet Him. This is when Jesus comforted her with His assurance saying, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” Then Jesus asked Martha, “Do you believe this?” Martha believed Jesus. She believed what He could do because she believed who He was. She said, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God.” She got it right just like Peter did when Jesus asked him, “Who do you say that I am?” And Peter also said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus makes His identity clear. It is because Jesus can say, “I am the Son of the living God” that he can do and say, “I am the resurrection and the life.” After all, with God all things are possible, even victory over death.

Jesus also makes our identity clear. He said, “Whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” As disciples, we are pointed to the joyful realization that at death our soul is immediately in the presence of our risen Lord and savior. But, it also gives us hope and confidence now because Christ has defeated death on both sides of the grave. That’s the spiritual life we’re talking about. Whoever lives believing in Jesus will never die. Death for a Christian is not a period ending the sentence of life, but a comma providing a continuum of life from here to heaven.

(Add Testimony Here)

Our response to Jesus being the resurrection and the life is one of trust. The Christian trusts who Jesus is – the Son of the living God. The Christian trusts what Jesus did – He died for our sins and rose again on the third day. And the Christian trusts what Jesus will do – He will return to take us to be where He’s at in the glory of heaven. The Christian trusts.

And our response to the promise of our own resurrection is that we can stand firm in our faith and hope. Stand firm and realize the greatness of what’s ahead. Stand firm and reflect, humbly confessing and secure in forgiveness. Stand firm and rejoice. That promise of our own resurrection enables us to let nothing move us. In football practice we used to have a number of meat drills. In one such drill a defensive linemen would stand between two pylons and take on blockers head to head – one right after the other until he was moved out. Similarly we go head to head with our doubts. We go head to head with skeptics and deceivers. Let nothing move you. The promise of our own resurrection enables us to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord. The Greek word for “give yourselves fully” literally means to exceed a fixed number. There is no limit to the work of the Lord. And just like our resurrection is both physical and spiritual, so also the work of the Lord is directed toward both physical and spiritual needs. Give yourselves fully to feeding the hungry, clothing the needy, visiting the lonely. Give yourselves fully to proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the resurrection and the life both in your personal life and through your church life.

Because of who Jesus is that is what we can do. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. His resurrection precedes and causes our resurrection. His life precedes and causes our life. Because Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life” He will also say to you and me one day, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Come and share your Master’s happiness.”