

The Resurrection and the Life!

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?”

(John 11:25-26)

My father-in-law served as a fireman with the Rosewood Heights, Illinois Fire Department. Although he himself never talked very much about it, I learned that on one of their fire calls, he and his fellow fire-fighters had to helplessly watch as a mother along with her children was burned to death in an auto accident. Through the years, I came to realize that one of the reasons that my father-in-law rarely talked about this incident – was because the “*what ifs*” still plagued him. What if they had gotten to the scene of the accident just a few minutes earlier? Could they have saved the woman and her children?

Life is that way for us. We are not always in the right place at the right time, and sometimes we regret it (even though we usually have no control over it). Can you imagine the feelings which welled up inside of Martha and Mary? These sisters knew that if Jesus had only been there He could have kept their brother from dying. And Jesus knew that He could have been there, but He chose not to be. So Lazarus died. The result was confusion and bitter loss for the sisters and deep pain for the Lord, who loved Lazarus and his sisters very much.

Why did Jesus tarry two days after He heard the news of Lazarus’ illness? Why did He not immediately go to the side of His dying friend? Or, why did He not just speak the words or think the thoughts that could have brought healing to Lazarus’ body? The answer is that this was God’s will and for God’s glory. Lazarus died, yes. But that was not the ultimate result of the illness; it was only the temporary result. Ultimately, God would be glorified and Jesus’ followers would have their faith strengthened.

Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection and the life*” – what comprehensive words! What did Jesus mean by those words? “*I am the resurrection....*” Think about it. If Jesus Christ had never come, died on the cross, risen from the dead, and promised life to all who believe in

Him, what right would anyone have to expect to be resurrected? Would we even have such a word in our vocabulary, if not for the precious Word of God and the ministry of our Lord Jesus? What hope could we give to those who grieve over the loss of a loved one? What could we say? “*Well, at least you have your memories. Be thankful for the time you had.*” This is what we might have to say to the lost. But to believers we say along with the Apostle Paul: “*I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.*” (I Thessalonians 4:13-14). “*...And the life.*” Jesus Christ is the source of life. This is why He can promise eternal life. This is why He could promise that He would return to life. And this is why He can promise to resurrect our bodies.

The image shows the words "Christ is Risen!" written in a flowing, golden cursive script. The word "Christ" is on the top line, "is" is smaller and positioned between "Christ" and "Risen!", and "Risen!" is on the bottom line. The exclamation point is prominent at the end of the word.

“*Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live*” – what compassionate words! Before we believed, we were dead: “*For the wages of sin is death...*” (Romans 6:23). Notice the word “*is*” in Romans 6:23; not “*will be,*” but “*is.*” The sinner is already receiving his wages. He is already spiritually dead! So Jesus came to minister to dead people. What compassion He had! He did not seek out the holy and whole, but the sinful and needy. Remember the man who lay by the Pool of Bethesda for 38 years, trying to get into its healing waters? He couldn’t. Apparently others did. Jesus didn’t go to them: He didn’t need to. But He went to this man because this man could

not come to Him. That's how He has come to all of us who are saved; compassionately, with healing in His wings. He came to us because there was no way we could scale the mountain of God's holiness and come to Him.

“And everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die” – what comforting words! Look at John 11:11-14. Jesus said, *“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep.”* Then Jesus told them plainly, that Lazarus had died. Obviously, since God says that unbelievers are dead, He must see death differently. And He does. Go back to the Garden of Eden. God told Adam, *“In the day that you eat (of the forbidden fruit) you shall surely die.”* Yet, Adam lived 960 years. Did God lie? No. Adam did die – spiritually. Death is separation. Physical death occurs when the soul is separated from the body; spiritual death occurs when the soul is separated from God, the author and giver of life. This is why eternal damnation is called the *“second death.”*

Jesus' use of the word *“sleep”* in reference to the physical demise of saints is adopted by the New Testament writers. Throughout their writings, they use similar language. Why is this so? Because saints don't die; they depart (II Corinthians 5:8). Actually, they arrive. From our perspective, we say, *“He or she is gone.”* But in heaven, they shout, *“He's home!”* I have heard of an African tribe in which the believers take this so seriously that they never say, *“He or she is gone”* when a loved one dies. Instead they exclaim, *“He or she has arrived!”*

“Do you believe this?” – what compelling words! The truth of Jesus' statement is not in question. The only question is, *“Do you believe?”* What if we refuse to believe? Does our unbelief make it untrue? Absolutely not! Truth is objective; not subjective. Before Columbus sailed to America the world was round, even though many refused to believe it. Before Galileo, the world revolved around the sun, though people did not believe it. Truth can be discovered by faith, but it cannot be discarded by unbelief.

Jesus Christ is the Resurrection. Jesus Christ is the Life. Without Him we have no hope of either. But with Him, we have the promise – from God, who cannot lie – of both!

May God's blessings rest upon you during this Holy Week and Easter Season!!

*In Christ,
Rev. Paul Zabel*