

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE**John 11:17-27****(Read John 11:17-27)**

INTRO: You laughed last week when I talked about ABCers who were sheep lovers and how some of them even have their sheep car trained. Well, laugh no more!

Now to this week's talk. One of my oldest members of Speedwell Heights BIC when I was pastor there in the late 1980s was a little lady by the name of Anna Faus. Anna was never able to attend church because of an illness that kept her confined to a wheelchair or her bed in a rest home. In fact, few people at Speedwell even knew her because she had been confined to the Mt. Hope Home for longer than most of them had been part of the church.

The fact is, by the time I became her pastor, Anna had been afflicted with her debilitating illness for practically 70 of her almost 90 years of life. It seems that her sister and brother in law were BIC missionaries who had come home from the mission field in 1918 because he, Anna's brother in law, had become ill. The story went that Anna, who was in her teens at the time, helped her sister unpack, and she too, as a result, contracted the disease. This disease, which was some kind of fibrosis, was what prevented her from having any kind of normal life for the next 60+ years. She never dated, she never married, she never had children, and she never enjoyed grandchildren. She never ever hardly did anything – she simply could not. By the time I met her, she as practically unresponsive.

And then she died. Her funeral, which was one of my first, by the way, was a lesson in the words of John the Revelator who wrote, *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.* Revelation 14:13b. In fact, Anna's nieces and nephews who had been her guardians and were planning her funeral with me, asked me to preach on the passage from Revelation that included the verse that promises. *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.* Revelation 22:4. My previous experience with funerals had, for the most part, been sad and sober. Not so with Anna Faus's funeral – it was a celebration! It was a celebration of Anna's life in Christ and it was a celebration of the joy and promise and reality of the Resurrection. Anna was no longer ill and she was no longer confined. What she had suffered for almost 70 years was now gone for eternity.

This is the reality for Christ Followers like Anna. We have the promise of the Resurrection. And we have it on good authority from right here in our text – it's the next I AM statement where Jesus tells a grieving woman who had just lost her brother, *I am the resurrection and the life*, and it assures us that we have bright future.

Let me set this up and then we'll look at it further.

(Explain John 11:1-16)

Martha, true to form, came to Jesus loaded for bear. It was her nature. She was a woman of action. She did things by the book and expected it of others – even if it was Jesus. “. . . *if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*” John 11:21. But Martha isn't the first and she wasn't the last to say that. Many have asked the same of God – I have, and many, if not all of you have too. “God, where are you?!, Why are you not here?!” And as it was for Martha and as it is for us, the answer is, but . . .

He IS here!

- It was the truth from the get-go – Jesus was present even if he physically was a couple day's journey away. And God, is with us – he is here even in our affliction and even as we face our own mortality. When we are in Christ, we have his presence.
- Commentator, Floyd Filson comments that “*Martha failed to see the fact of the resurrection and the gift of life were present right before her.*” But she can be excused – Jesus had not raised her brother yet. We, on the other hand, have far less of an excuse – we have this account for one, where we can see an example of Jesus and his resurrection power. But more than that, we have the record right here in the Bible of the Easter where Jesus put death to death. And as Martha soon realized and what we should certainly know by now, but the reminder is always good, the truth is . . .

Death is not a deal breaker

- Jesus is mastery over death itself and this is why Christians have celebrations rather than funerals. This is why F. B. Meyer writes, “*When you stand by the grave where your cherished hopes lie buried, still dare to affirm that he is the Christ, the expression of the love of God.*” And this, *For God so loved the world*

that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16. These are not just nice words, people, they are the reality.

- Paul put it this way, *For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."* 1 Corinthians 15:53-54. It's the promise of our bodily resurrection.
- Or in Jesus's words to Martha: "**YOUR BROTHER WILL RISE AGAIN.**" Because . . .

I AM right now and always the Resurrection

- This was in response to Martha's affirmation of a belief in a general resurrection as was taught by Judaism. But Jesus assured her with, in so many words, "*Not only is that resurrection awaiting you, but here and now the resurrection is present, in fact, I AM the resurrection and the life.*"
- With that promise Jesus is promising, I AM the resurrection – present and eternal. It's not past or future, it is always for the one who believes. Jesus took a future hope and everything being put right then and he brought it into the present and into the personal – Jesus identified himself personally as the present hope of Israel. And, as we saw last week, when he showed that he is the Shepherd of all people and not just of the Jews, he is the present resurrection hope of all humanity.
- Let me hammer it home. Jesus is saying wherever I AM is resurrection. He is saying wherever I AM is life. And it's not simply eternal life but resurrection power. The resurrection is not in the future, it's now and Jesus shows that his finished work will be: THE RESURRECTION
- Am I being repetitive? You bet I am! This is good news for a dying world. Not later, Jesus is saying he is the great I AM right NOW! I love how Peterson says it in his paraphrase, *You don't have to wait for the End. I AM, RIGHT NOW, [My Emphasis] Resurrection and Life. The one who believes in me, even though he or she dies, will live. And everyone who lives believing in me does not ultimately die at all. Do you believe this?* John 11:25-26 (The Message)
- Well?

Do you believe this?

- I mean this is the difference between life abundant and eventually eternal life. So it makes a difference. It did for Martha. When she met Jesus in the street she was sad and maybe mad but she still believed. That's why she had been so disappointed about the fact that he obviously had not immediately come when he was contacted. But she would soon see that she had a lot more to believe, AND she did. She realized that, in Filson's words, *Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He can raise the dead and he gives life that death cannot touch.*
- This is the promise we have that gives us hope in the face of a crazy world. When cancer strikes, oh yeah! We fear the pain and the struggle it will bring not just for us, but for our family. But do we fear the possibility that it might be fatal? Nope! The best is yet to come. Death is not the end of us. Do you believe that? Lionel Whiston writes, *Jesus brings a reversal to the order of mortality. Life in Christ is no longer hastening toward death, but death is moving toward life.*

Conclusion: Standing at a graveside the world says "He/She is dead." The Christ Follower says "He/She is enjoying the joy of the resurrection." We can shout with Paul, "*Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*" 1 Corinthians 15:55. We have a great life ahead because Jesus is not only the great I AM, he is also the resurrection and the life. Amen.