

Lunchtime Service - I am the Resurrection and the Life

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[0:00] So we're continuing our series in the seven I am statements in John's gospel. And in these words, in all these I am statements, we are seeing who Jesus says he is.

! So all of this, this is Jesus opening up his identity to us. And Jesus isn't doing this just to kind of give us trivia facts about himself.

No, he's doing this because when you know who Jesus is, it changes your life. The Christian faith and salvation, it's not just knowledge of facts.

No, it is knowing this person. And as we come to the next I am statement, I want us to realize that to know Jesus changes everything about your hope in life.

And it's all there in those remarkable words in verse 25. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life.

[1:00] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. In this story of Lazarus, we see something very important about who Jesus is and what he's come to do.

And we see his identity. It's all about the great need and the great problem that has been plaguing this world and plaguing our lives ever since that moment in the garden.

Who Jesus is must be understood against the problem of death. So just like we saw back with I am the light of the world.

Do you remember in order to define light, you need to define it in contrast to darkness. Well, to identify Jesus, you must do so in contrast to death.

When we are confronted with the painful reality of the grave and death, in contrast, Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life.

[2:03] Just like light is opposite to darkness. Just like light is the answer to darkness. So Jesus is the answer to death itself.

So if you want to know Jesus, this is who Jesus says he is. He is not only your help in death. He's not only your comfort in death. But actually, Jesus is the answer to death.

And this is just the one big thing I want us to see today. Jesus is the answer to death. A few years back, one of my very, very good friends lost both of his parents in the space of three years.

And he was young when it happened. He was in his 20s. And I remember I called him on the first Christmas day without them. And I asked him how he was doing.

And he said, I remember these words. He said, I feel completely unmoored. Unmoored. It means untethered, just adrift.

[3:09] And that word really captures what death has done in this world. When death hits, with that phone call or that diagnosis, we can feel like boats untethered from the moor, drifting away, aimlessly lost at sea.

And we just have nothing to hold on to. No anchor, no stability. It feels like we're drowning and we just want something to grab on to.

Death is like this unstoppable force that invades our life. We can't do anything about it. We don't invite it in. And it just renders us completely helpless.

Just alone at sea. And sometimes we can drift into those waters over a while. When an illness takes its time.

Or we can just suddenly be thrown into the deep. But either way, we just want something to help. Something to bring us back in. When death hits, we so desperately want an answer.

[4:17] But this world has no answer. Many tears, many cries. But no actual answer to any of it. We might exercise to gain distance from the problem of death.

We call the doctor to delay it. We watch screens or drink or do anything to forget about it. But it's not an answer.

The mortality rate graphs, they go down with technology. But the line never disappears. And the world has no answer.

And so no wonder we can just feel so unmoored. Death is just the end of the road and we have to put up with it. The grave is just the painful full stop at the end of everyone's story.

And we just have to then shut the book and move on. But we know, we know that's not good enough. We might dry the tears away, but in our pain, we know there shouldn't be an end to this road.

[5 : 23] We know the story shouldn't have that full stop. And so we are longing, this whole world is longing for an answer to this problem.

And these two sisters, Mary and Martha, they're looking for that answer too. Their brother is at death's door. The medication isn't working.

He's not recovering as they hoped. But they feel that drift into the deep. And so the sisters reach out for something to hold on to. They send for Jesus, verse 3.

So the sisters sent to Jesus saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill. Now they aren't just sending a text to Jesus here saying, just letting you know this is happening.

No, this is two women coming to Jesus for an answer to the problem. And not just hoping for an answer, but they know that there is an answer.

[6 : 20] Because these women know that Jesus can actually do something about this. Because look how Martha reacts when Jesus arrives. Verse 21. Her brother has now just died.

He's been in the grave four days now. But she knows it's not just close the book, move on. Look at verse 21. Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you. Now, this isn't Martha doubting Jesus or complaining.

No, these are actually words of faith in who Jesus is. Lord, if you had been here, we would have had an answer to this illness. She knows Jesus can heal.

But now Lazarus is dead. She actually knows there is still an answer. Even now, I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.

[7 : 25] But Jesus pushes that further. He wants her to unpack what exactly that answer to death is. Verse 23. Jesus said to her, your brother will rise again.

Martha said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection from the last day. Martha knows her Bible. She knows her theology well. And so she knows one day in the future there will be the resurrection of the dead.

That belief didn't just come with the New Testament. That this has always been God's plan of salvation. Because this has always been God's plan in creation.

Death was never a part of the design. Death was not encoded into creation. No, it's a bug in the system. C.S. Lewis, he wrote on the unnaturalness of death.

Death, he said, we know that we were not made for it. We know how it crept into our destiny as an intruder. There's an intruder in this world.

[8 : 37] There was never meant to be an end of the road. Every story was meant to keep on going. And so God's plan of salvation has always been to not only forgive sins.

But to undo the curse of death. To answer death by raising the dead. To bring bodies back from the grave to new life.

This is the only true answer to death. Not just to cope with grief. But to reverse death itself.

And that day is coming. When this age has its last day. And so Martha hears Jesus say, your brother will rise again.

And her mind goes straight to that final day. Well, yes, I know that Jesus. The answer, it's in that far off time.

[9 : 37] I know the answer will come one day in that resurrection. And in one sense, she's right. But she hasn't got the full picture.

Because the answer is closer than she thinks. Because Jesus immediately jumps in with who he is. Yes, Martha, there really is an answer to death.

There is life beyond the grave. There really is a resurrection. But do you realise who I am? Verse 25. I am the resurrection and the life.

Martha, the answer is not merely an event or a time far off. No, the answer is a person. It's here. It's me. You are right to think that resurrection is the answer. But it's not found off out there. No, it's found in Jesus. When we feel unmoored and lost and we're drowning in the deep.

[10 : 42] There is something, someone right now to hold on to. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. This is his identity.

He is the resurrection and the life. Resurrection is not just this far off concept. No, it's all found in him.

When Jesus left that tomb on that Easter Sunday. Leaving the grave behind him. Never to go back in. On that day, he became the very source of eternal life for a dying world.

The world only has medicine and pills to delay death. But the Lord Jesus has in his hands the keys to death and Hades itself.

The world can only slow its walk into the grave. But Jesus can actually pull us back out. The world has no answer to death.

[11 : 44] But the Son of God has the authority to raise the dead. And so Martha doesn't realise how close the answer has been all along.

It's not far off. It's right in front of her. And so with Jesus there, she actually witnesses this authority, this life in action.

Verse 43. Jesus cried out with a loud voice. Lazarus, come out. He calls out to death itself.

He commands death to leave and for life to come in again. And it listens. This unstoppable force stops at the voice of Jesus.

And it turns around and it transforms everything. Breath enters the lungs of Lazarus. His heart has a first beat again.

[12 : 49] His muscle fibres twitch. And he gets up and he walks out that tomb. And the grave and death now become resurrection and life.

It is what Martha was longing for. And it is the answer this unmoored world is crying out for. And so this resurrection life, he isn't just keeping it for himself.

No. It is for all who believe in him. Verse 25. 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. Knowing who Jesus is and trusting in him, it changes everything. It means that even though you may die.

Though one day you may have that full stop this side of heaven. Yet even then your story won't end there.

[14 : 00] Though he die, yet shall he live. With Christ there will be life in heaven. And we will be raised on that last day. And from then on, there will be no end of the road.

No closed book. Just life. True life. Everlasting. And so as we all get older. And death increasingly becomes something that we realise that we will have to face soon.

And maybe you are just thinking about it more and more. You're thinking about your will more. You think about what you'll leave behind. What you'll have to face in the future.

And it can be easy to worry. Easy to be scared. And so we need to hear these words of Jesus. With him, there is nothing to fear. Because though you die, yet shall you live.

His resurrection that Easter Sunday, it secured your future for you. And just like he left the grave, so will you.

[15 : 11] It's like a football team leaving the tunnel to go onto the pitch. So you know, as they all leave the tunnel, and the captain heads out first, doesn't he? And he's dressed in his kit.

And as soon as he emerges, you know the rest of the team are going to be dressed just the same, don't you? Well, just as Christ left the grave in a glorified, resurrected body, so will we.

Death has already been answered, and the captain has led the way. I am the resurrection and the life. And so if you feel unmoored, and in the grief, you are just lost and don't know where to turn.

And Christ is saying here, you can hold on to someone. You can hold on to Christ. You don't need to wait for some help in the future. No, the answer is here and now.

And when you believe in him, put your trust in him. He will carry you and put your feet on solid ground. Because he's the only answer to death. He's the only one who has overcome it and can guide you through even the darkest of valleys.

[16 : 25] We can try to run from death. We can try to bury our heads in the sand and forget about it. We can try to wipe away the tears and pretend everything's okay.

But it never works. No, Christ is the only answer. And he's offering you hope today. Trust in him and you will never be left unmoored.

You will never be without hope. Even in death, we know this is not the end. Because the son of God said these words.

I am the resurrection and the life. Let's pray. Lord God.

In this dark world. And in this. In the troubles that we face. And the valleys that we walk in. Where death is all around.

[17 : 28] And it is so easy to be scared or overwhelmed. Lord, we thank you. We praise you that there is a hope. That there is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the resurrection and the life. Lord, please give us every confidence in death. Give us hope in this life. Do give us a longing for the future.

But would we also have great comfort knowing. That we have the Lord Jesus now. We have someone to hold on to. He is with us. He is our life.

Lord, would we look to him today. And in his name we pray. Amen.