

**JOHN 11:25**  
**(OT: Deut 30:11-20; NT: Jn 11:17-27)**

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## INTRODUCTION

- During cold weather couple weeks ago, my HVAC decided to stop working → Just what you want when it's -3°F...
    - Long story, but temporary fix required a Shop Vac → To suck up water from our system until a professional could fix it properly.
    - Enabled our heat to keep running and our house to keep from freezing.
  - Off I went to Home Depot.
    - Got myself a Shop Vac, took it home, unpacked it all, readied myself to declare victory, and prove myself the hero of our home....
    - When I read one of most disappointing/frustrating phrases in English language:  
***Batteries not included.***
      - Brought heartbreak to millions of children on Xmas morning.
      - And, perhaps, cries of despair to a Shop-Vac-wielding pastor in the basement of his freezing home.
- You have all the equipment, but you don't have the power to make it work.***
- Joking aside, not a big deal for me – able to fix it with another trip → But it did make me wonder how many of us feel like this in our spiritual lives:
    - **We have the equipment** – we know the truth and we believe in God...
    - **Yet somehow it all lacks power:**
      - Other people seem to have it... they seem excited/alive in their faith.
      - But you can't quite lay hold of it – like chasing a balloon that somehow keeps evading your grasp.
        - Keep struggling with the same old things, year in and year out.
        - Maybe it's God's fault, maybe it's yours...
      - But for one reason or another, your **spiritual batteries... not included.**

**Transition:** Let's talk about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**CONTEXT (VV1-24):** Jesus had a friend called Lazarus, and at the start of this chapter, we read that Lazarus has been sick. But now, he's deteriorated, and is gravely ill. So, his sisters – Mary and Martha – send for Jesus, saying **V3: Lord, he whom you love is ill.** Isn't that great? **He whom you love...** You know you can bring anyone to Jesus with those words? When you bring your loved ones to Jesus in prayer – aging **parents**, struggling **friends**, depressed **spouse**, wayward **kids** – remember that he loves them as much – *in fact more* – than you do. I find great comfort in that.

Well, Jesus does love Lazarus and in **V4** he sends word back to our sisters: **This illness does not lead to death...** Good news! Things don't look great but Jesus – the Great Physician – says this illness won't end in death. We can imagine the sisters' relief.

But then we're given a weird detail: Because Jesus loved this family (**V5**) he stays where he is for two more days (**V6**). Given the **urgency** of the situation, we'd expect him to go immediately.

But he doesn't. He waits 48-hours and *then* says to his disciples: *Okay, now it's time to go*. Why is **now** the right time? Jesus tries to explain in **V11: Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.**

Understandably, the disciples don't get it. Let's not be too hard on them – their confusion makes sense – and so, they reply in **V12: Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.** A good nap is exactly what he needs! Why are we going to wake him up, in the middle of his recovery? So, Jesus tells them plainly. **V14: Lazarus has died,<sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.** This adds more confusion to the scene. Lazarus – the one Jesus loves – isn't asleep. He's dead. But apparently Jesus is glad about that. What's going on here?!

Well, in **V17** Jesus finally gets to the family. By this time, Lazarus isn't just dead, we read he's **already been in the tomb four days.** This is an important detail. Jews at this time believed that your soul would hover over your body for three days after you died. Then, once decomposition set in, the soul would depart.<sup>1</sup> So, the fact that Lazarus has already been in the tomb **four days** means he's not just dead – he's *dead, dead*. He's gone. It's over. There is no hope.

This makes sense of what Martha – one of the sisters – says to Jesus in **V21**. She rushes out to meet him and delivers what one commentator describes as a rebuke: **V21: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.**<sup>2</sup>

We can understand it, can't we? We can imagine what it was like for these sisters. **How** their brother wasn't well, so they tucked him in bed, and prayed for a full recovery. **How** concern began to rise when the illness lingered, and he didn't rebound like they'd hoped. **How** panic set in as he took a dramatic turn for the worse. **How** things became so desperate that they sent for Jesus. **How** their hearts found rest when Jesus said the sickness would not lead to death. But then **how** time began to pass... and Lazarus kept getting worse... and Jesus kept NOT showing up.

In **V23** Jesus takes Martha's rebuke and responds with a gentle word of comfort: **Your brother will rise again.** Doesn't that encourage you? If you're angry or confused or you don't know what God is up to – you can be honest with Jesus. He is big enough and loves you enough to handle it. You can tell him how you really feel. He already knows, but he's also compassionate with us.

Martha's reply came tumbling out in **V24: I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.** It feels like a "Sunday School Answer" – a bit of theology that's true but doesn't really have much hold on her. So, Jesus interrupts. **V25: I am the resurrection and the life.** Resurrection and life: That's not just something that will happen on the last day; it's not just something that I'll do; it's something that **I AM**.

**CONTENT (VV25-44):** But what does this **I AM** statement mean? Well, in the next couple of verses Jesus explains by preaching a mini-sermon on his own text. **V25: Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,<sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.** At first, this seems contradictory.<sup>3</sup> **V25: If you believe in me, though you die – you'll live. V26: If you believe in me – you'll never die.** So, which is it, Jesus? Do we die or do we never die?

Here's what Jesus is saying: Everyone will die physically. But if you believe in me, after physical death – you'll live. So, there's a sense in which you'll never die. Believe in me and I'll put a life inside of you that cannot be killed – even by physical death. The day the physical body dies is not the day the Christian dies. Believe in Jesus and you'll live forever.

Martha reports all this to her sister, and now it's Mary's turn to run to Jesus. When she gets to him, she issues the same rebuke: **V32: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.** It's like the sisters have said that line to each other in private, and now they bring it to Jesus, joined as one in their complaint.

But once again, Jesus doesn't respond with anger, instead he joins them in their grief. **V33: When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.** <sup>34</sup> And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept. The shortest verse in our English Bibles. It points us to the love of Christ, and it's about to give birth to a miracle. Are you ready for some power?

**V38: Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb...** <sup>41</sup> And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." <sup>43</sup> When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "**Lazarus, come out.**" All Jesus does is raise his voice. It's as easy for him to raise the dead as it is to rouse a loved one from a nap. Just look at what happens. **V44: The man who had died came out...** At the word of Jesus, the man who was *dead, dead* – comes *alive, alive*. The illness did NOT end in death because Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

**Transition:** And we know, of course, that what Jesus did for Lazarus was just a precursor to what he would do in himself. Remember what he said last week: **I lay down my life that I may take it up again... I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again (Jn 10:17, 18).** On the cross, Jesus was *dead, dead*. But then he rose again – he is *alive, alive*. And now the living Jesus offers us resurrection life.

**CONSEQUENCE (V26):** Do you see him doing this in our text? **V25: I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,** <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. **Do you believe this?**

**[Unbeliever]:** Throughout history, we've been fascinated with what happens after death. Human beings can't help but wonder about what comes next. But in this passage, Jesus makes it clear. All of us will die physically. Don't shy away from the reality that you will die. Have the courage to face reality. But then what? Jesus says some will go to eternal life while others will face eternal death. What's the difference between the two groups? The difference comes solely in how we answer his question. It's the question that serves as the eternal divide. It's the question that separates those who will *die, die* from those who will be saved *alive, alive*.

Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and he offers you eternal life today. If you believe in him – as the one who died and rose so that you can be forgiven from all sin – then, as he called to Lazarus, he'll call you by name. Your death won't mean the end of life – if you believe in Jesus.

**[Believer]:** Can I invite you to remember that we don't only have this hope for the **future** – we also have resurrection power here **today**. **Rom 8:11 (NLT):** The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. The hope we have is not just for the **future** – it's *alive, alive today*.

What does this mean? It means God is with us – he is in us – empowering us to do all that he calls us to do.

- In his **word**, he has shown us how to live: I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, <sup>20</sup> loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life... (**Dt 30:19-20**).
- And in the **resurrection**, he gives us the power to live it.
  - No, we can't live perfect lives that would make us worthy of salvation.
  - But we can grow in his grace and become like our Savior.
    - When God calls us to do that – to be disciples – not playing joke, as if he's calling us to do something we could never do.
    - No, he empowers us to do what he calls us to do.
      - It was his power that enabled Lazarus to obey and come out.
      - And his power will enable you to do whatever he asks in your life.

**THE CLOSE:** Personally, found such spiritual power doesn't play out in loud/dramatic ways.

- More often its simple, humble, and mundane.
  - You're faced with a struggle...
  - And you whisper: *I can't do this God, but you can. // And your Spirit, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in me. // So, I can be alive, alive today. // The batteries are included.*
- Is there somewhere in your life that you need that power today? Where do you feel stuck? Like the batteries aren't included?
  - Maybe it's in a struggle with **sin**...
    - A hidden anger or lust that has a hold on you...
    - You know it can be replaced... with love, joy, and peace.
    - You have resurrection power to fight sin → The dead places in your heart can come *alive, alive* in X.
  - Maybe it's a struggle with **brokenness**...
    - An anxiety or insecurity that's plagued you all your life.
    - You know you can heal as Jesus joins you in your grief; shows you great compassion; calls your name in love.
    - You have resurrection power to fight brokenness → The dead places in your heart can come *alive, alive* in X.
  - Maybe it's in a difficult **relationship**...
    - Friend don't know how to forgive; marriage for which there's no hope.
    - You can forgive as X has forgiven you; you can love as X loves you.
    - You have resurrection power to fight for your relationships → The dead places in your friendships/marriage can come *alive, alive* in X.
  - Maybe it's **something else**... But what is it for you? Where do you feel stuck?
- This week, whisper with me: *I can't do this God, but you can. // And your Spirit, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in me. // So, I can be alive, alive today. // The batteries are included. Do you believe this?*

## RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

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### Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John, Volumes 2 and 3*.
- John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*.
- Iain D. Campbell, *I AM... Exploring the 'I am' sayings of John's Gospel*.
- D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*.
- Matt Chandler, *I AM*.
- Ray Cortese, *To Believe*.
- Paul Jeon, *Life Eternal: The Gospel of John*.
- Timothy Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*.
- Andreas Köstenberger, *John*.
- Logos Bible Software.
- Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*.
- Tim Mackie, *Read Scripture: Illustrated Summaries of Biblical Books*.
- R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Christ: The I AM Sayings of Jesus*.
- Christian Wiman, *Zero at the Bone: Fifty Entries Against Despair*.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> See D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 411.

<sup>2</sup> See R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Christ: The I AM Sayings of Jesus – part 5*, accessed [here](#) on 5/14/20.

<sup>3</sup> I owe the exegesis of this point to the Sproul lecture referenced above.