

Jesus: Our Resurrection & Life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 April 2021

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 0 0] But if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the Gospel according to John and chapter 11. John chapter 11, and if we read again at verse 25, we read there, 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? Do you believe this?

You know, what is your only comfort in life and in death? What is your only comfort in life and in death? You know, as we've just passed the anniversary of the beginning of lockdown, in this past year we've been repeatedly confronted with the coronavirus and the details of our daily death toll.

And as we've continued to remain restricted in many ways and living in lockdown and coping with COVID, and as we've even had to stand as spectators in this race between the vaccine and the virus.

You know, this is the question that I've kept coming back to time and time and time again. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

[1 : 2 2] And you know, my friend, it's a question that you need to ask yourself as well. What is your only comfort in life and in death? Because as we've witnessed over this past year, when everything is taken from you, and when everything is taken out of your control, what are you left with?

When your independence and your interests and your income, when all these things are stripped from you and you're left in isolation, what have you got?

When this global pandemic sweeps across our world, causing confusion and chaos and crisis, and even claiming so many lives, we're reminded what is our only comfort in life and in death?

What is our only comfort in life and in death? As many of you know, this is the first question in the Heidelberg Catechism, and it's a wonderful question.

It's the most important question that you need to answer. What is your only comfort in life and in death? And the answer is not in your family, or in your friends, or in your finances, or in your physical health, because as we've been reminded time and time again, these things are all fragile.

[2 : 3 7] Therefore, your only comfort in life and in death is in this Jesus. This Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life. And the Heidelberg Catechism, it affirms that to us.

It asks the question, what is your only comfort in life and in death? And it gives this wonderful answer, that I with body and soul, both in life and in death, I'm not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins and has delivered me from the power of the devil, and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not even one hair from my head can fall.

Yea, and all things must be subservient to my salvation. And therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life and makes me sincerely willing and ready henceforth to live unto Him.

My friend, what is your only comfort in life and in death? But you know, it's not only the Heidelberg Catechism that answers that question.

Jesus answers that question here in this passage. Because Jesus, as He reveals Himself to a grieving family and also to a great following, Jesus reaffirms and He reassures us that our only comfort in life and in death is in Jesus Christ as our resurrection and life.

[4 : 13] Jesus Christ is our only comfort in life and in death. And you know, with this fifth saying in John's Gospel and also the final saying of Jesus, final sign of Jesus in John's Gospel, it's here that we fully and finally see the divine character of Jesus.

And I'd like us to consider this passage under three headings. A divine delay, a divine declaration and a divine decree. A divine delay, a divine declaration and a divine decree.

So first of all, a divine delay. We're told that it was in verse two, it was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill.

So the sister sent to Him saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill. But when Jesus heard it, He said, this illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when He heard that Lazarus was ill, He stayed two days longer in the place where He was.

[5 : 31] You know, we often say that life is uncertain, that death is sure, sin is the cause, but Christ is the cure.

And in many ways, we know that to be true, not only in our own lives, but also in the lives of others. Because there's not a week that goes by in our lives where we're not confronted with the uncertainty of life and also the reality of death.

We're constantly reminded that we do not know what a day nor an hour will bring in our lives. And that nothing is safe, nothing is secure, because everything around us, it's all affected by sin and sickness and suffering and sorrow.

My friend, life is uncertain. Death is sure, sin is the cause, but Christ is the cure. And many families in our communities, they know this to be true.

Just like this family in this community knew it to be true. Because, you know, when Mary and Martha, when they had tried everything to help their dying brother Lazarus, they knew that they were emptied of their own strength and emptied of their own sufficiency.

[6 : 45] And when the moment of extremity came and their need became so great, we see that to whom else could they go but to Jesus. My friend, they needed Jesus.

They needed Jesus. And, you know, maybe looking at your own circumstances this morning or even your own situations that you faced in your life, when you look at the situations of sin or sickness or suffering or sorrow that you have been confronted with or have caused chaos in your life, maybe you can see this morning that was the means of bringing me to Jesus.

That was the means of bringing me to Jesus. Had this sickness not been brought into my life, I would never have come to Jesus.

Had this sorrow not broken into my experience, I would never have opened the Bible for answers. Had this suffering not come upon me, I would have never cried out to God for help.

But, you know, the wonder of wonders is that the Lord brings these things into our lives and into our path where this was our path and these were our tears and this was the circumstances that he appointed for me in order to bring me to Jesus.

[8 : 05] You know, my friends, sometimes the situations that we're faced with, the situations of sin and sickness and suffering and sorrow, sometimes these are the means of bringing us to Jesus.

You know, as my good friend J.C. Ryle, he once said that affliction is one of God's medicines. By it, the Lord often teaches lessons which would be learned in no other way.

Prosperity and worldly comfort, he says, they are what we all naturally desire, but losses and crosses are far better for us if they lead us to Christ.

And that's what we see here. Mary and Martha knew that life is uncertain, death is sure, sin is the cause, but Christ is the cure. And that's why they ask for the Christ to come and cure their brother Lazarus who's ill and dying.

We read that Mary and Martha, they sent a messenger. They sent a messenger from Bethany in Jerusalem to Bethany near the Jordan. They sent this messenger over 90 miles away to another Bethany, to Bethany near the Jordan to where Jesus was.

[9 : 20] Jesus was there, you remember, because the religious leaders, they wanted to stone him to death. And Jesus had escaped from them, going to Bethany near the Jordan.

But you know, what's really interesting is that when you work out this whole time frame, the time frame of this whole event, we see that Lazarus died when Jesus left Bethany.

Lazarus died the day that Jesus left Bethany. because, you know, the distance from Bethany near Jerusalem to Bethany near the Jordan, it was 90 miles.

It was a four-day journey, which means that the messenger, this messenger, he left Lazarus and travelled the 90 miles. This four-day journey, he travelled when Lazarus had only six days to live.

And when the messenger found Jesus four days later, Lazarus was still alive. He only had two days to live. But when the messenger gave the message to Jesus from Mary and Martha, the message, Lord, he whom you love is ill, we're told that Jesus decided to delay his journey by two days.

[10 : 39] Lazarus only had two days to live and yet Jesus delayed his journey by two days. Jesus waited until Lazarus had died.

And you know, my friend, we read this and it almost goes against every instinct that we have because whenever we hear that someone is sick or suffering or sorrow, we don't hesitate.

We don't linger. We don't delay. We drop everything and we go to our loved one. It doesn't matter if they're at the other end of the country. We go to those whom we love when they need us most.

But it's not that Jesus didn't love Lazarus. Jesus did love Lazarus. We're told that Jesus loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus.

But you know, Jesus, he delayed his journey until Lazarus had died. Jesus delayed his journey by two days in order to reveal the glory of God.

[11 : 39] Jesus said, this sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God. Now we have to be clear, Jesus wasn't responsible for the death of Lazarus.

Even if Jesus had left immediately when he received the message, Lazarus would have still died and Jesus would have only been halfway there. Some say that why didn't Jesus just do what the royal official, what he did with the royal official son?

He just gave a word and the royal official son was healed. He could have done that with Lazarus and Lazarus would have been healed. But you know, what we have to see here is that it was a divine delay.

It was a divine delay. It was according to God's timing. And this sickness was not unto death but for the glory of God. And you know, the way in which John describes what happened, it seems that as the son of God, Jesus knew the exact moment Lazarus died.

Jesus didn't need to be told by anyone. Jesus didn't need to see the remains of Lazarus. Jesus didn't need to read the death certificate of Lazarus.

[12 : 55] Because you know, as soon as Lazarus had taken his last breath, Jesus knew. Jesus knew that he had died. And we see that because in verse 11, Jesus says, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep.

But I go to awaken him. And the disciples, they said to him, Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover. Now Jesus had spoken of his death but they thought that he meant taking rest and sleep.

Then Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus has died. Lazarus has died and for your sake I am glad that I was not there so that you may believe.

You know, it was a divine delay. It was a divine delay so that sinners would see the glory of God and believe in his name.

It was a divine delay. And you know, what we have to learn from these verses, my friend, is that Jesus didn't answer Mary and Martha's request immediately.

[14 : 01] Not because he didn't love them. The opposite isn't true. It was because he loved them. It was because he loved them that he didn't answer their request immediately.

Jesus knew better. Jesus had a plan and a purpose for all of this. Jesus was working out the good in this experience for his glory.

And you know, my friends, sometimes we can think that if the Lord doesn't answer our prayers immediately, it means that he doesn't love us. But the opposite is true. Because the Lord loves us.

But through the situations and circumstances that we're faced with, the Lord is teaching us to wait upon him in prayer. The Lord is always teaching us to be patient with his timing.

The Lord is teaching us that through every sin and sickness and suffering and sorrow that we encounter and experience in our lives. It's for our good. And it's ultimately working for God's glory.

[15 : 03] Because that's our chief end. That's the reason we exist. That's why we're here. That's our purpose in life. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

And you know, my Christian friend, Jesus is saying to you this morning that as a Christian, as someone who is in Christ, as someone who is safe and secure in the salvation of their Saviour, your sickness, your sickness this morning, it might bring you to encounter and experience physical death.

But not spiritual death, not eternal death. Jesus is affirming and assuring you this morning that through the power of his resurrection, this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God.

It's all working together for good and ultimately for his glory. My friend, it was a divine delay. But the divine delay, it led to a divine declaration, which is what we see secondly.

A divine declaration. So a divine delay and a divine declaration. We'll look at verse 17. Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

[16 : 32] Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.

Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. You know, as soon as Lazarus died, Jesus began his journey.

As soon as Lazarus threw his last breath, Jesus began the journey from Bethany near the Jordan to Bethany near Jerusalem. Jerusalem, which means that by the time Jesus arrived in Bethany near Jerusalem, Lazarus had been dead four days.

It was a four-day journey. So Lazarus had been dead four days. And as you know, the Jews, they would bury their dead on the same day they died, if not immediately after their loved one dies.

And you know, for the first seven days after the death, there's this period of deep mourning, and it's called the Shiva, which is the Hebrew number for seven.

[17 : 49] And during that seven-day period, the Jews, they wouldn't leave their house, they wouldn't work, they wouldn't even wash in some cases. And instead, they would just sit and mourn deeply over their loved one while all the neighbours would come around and gather with them and even bring food to them.

That's often what happens in our own setting here when someone dies. The neighbours gather with them and have worship with them. And you know, that's what's happening in this community as well and in the home of Mary and Martha.

They were those who were the neighbours and the friends that they gathered to mourn with Mary and Martha. But as we read, Jesus arrived in Bethany and he arrived four days after the funeral of Lazarus.

And in the eyes of many people, he was four days late. Now, if you loved someone, you would always try to get to their funeral. You would try and get to their funeral not just for the person who died but also for the family, to be with the family.

But for most people, they would have been surprised to see Jesus in Jerusalem so soon after he had escaped from the religious leaders. But Jesus, he was there on a divine purpose.

[19 : 09] He had divine reasons to be there. He had enacted this divine delay which caused Jesus and his disciples to arrive in Bethany near Jerusalem. They arrived four days after the event.

But in the eyes of many, Jesus was too late. Jesus was too late. You know, the Jews, they believe that when a loved one dies, they believe that the soul of their deceased, their soul hovers over the body for three days after their death.

And it hovers over the body in the hope that the body will be resuscitated or revived. But on the fourth day, on the fourth day, the soul departs because decomposition has set in and death is considered irreversible.

That's what Jewish thought was. And you know, it's because of this Jewish understanding that Jesus had enacted a divine delay. Jesus waited until he knew that there could be no human explanation for raising Lazarus from the dead apart from divine intervention.

But as we said, a divine delay, it led to a divine declaration. Because when Mary and Martha heard that Jesus had finally arrived in Bethany, Martha immediately went out to meet Jesus.

[20 : 39] And Mary, she stayed in the house. And Martha, when she saw Jesus, all she could say to Jesus was, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

You're too late. My brother Lazarus is dead. You're too late. Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And then we read that Jesus went a little further and Martha called Mary to come out to meet Jesus.

And when Mary ran to meet Jesus, she fell at the feet of Jesus. And she said the same thing that her sister Martha had said to Jesus. Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

You're too late. You're too late. my brother is dead. Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And you know, as sisters, they understandably wanted Jesus there when their brother needed him most.

But what this mourning family couldn't see was that Jesus came to Bethany when they needed him most. Mary and Martha, they wanted Jesus there when their brother needed him most.

[21 : 54] But Jesus came to Bethany when they needed him most. Jesus came to the house of mourning. That's what the name Bethany means.

Jesus came to the house of mourning when this mourning family needed him most. You know, it was Solomon who said it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.

And now we know why. Because Jesus came to the house of mourning. He came to Bethany when this mourning family needed him most. And what Jesus showed this mourning family was that amidst all their tears and all their heartache and all their sorrow and sadness, he was there at the right time.

He was there at the right time. Jesus came to the house of mourning when this mourning family needed him most. And you know what Jesus did for this mourning family in Bethany?

Bethany is what Jesus promises to do for every mourning family in Barvis and beyond. My friend, Jesus comes to our Bethany.

[23 : 04] He comes to our house of mourning when we need him most. Even though, my friend, even though you may not live your life with a thought towards Jesus, even though you may live your life without Jesus, Jesus, when you're confronted with the painful reality of death and the separation that death brings into your home, Jesus is reminding you this morning that he is more than willing to come to your Bethany.

He's more than willing to come to your house of mourning when you need him most. He's more than willing to come to you and draw near to you and to comfort you and to console you in your time of need when you need him most.

And he will come to you, my friend, if you come to him and you call upon him with all your heart. My friend, Jesus is there for you when you need him most.

And he comes to you at the right time, just like he came to Mary and Martha at the right time. He comes to mourning families in Bethany and in Barbossa and beyond.

And he comes at the right time so that you will believe in him, so that you will trust in him for time and for eternity. And that's why Jesus said to Martha in verse 23, he said, your brother will rise again.

[24 : 33] Of course, as a Jew, Martha believed in the resurrection at the last day. She believed that every grave will open at the last day. She believed that every grave would open and everyone will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account.

But you know, Jesus sought to make it clear to those in Bethany that day and in Barbossa today and beyond. Jesus sought to make it clear that the power of the resurrection resides in him.

The power of the resurrection resides in him. And Jesus made that known by his divine declaration. He said, I am the resurrection and the life.

He who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever, whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

My friend, with this divine declaration, with this fifth, I am saying Jesus is asserting and affirming that he is the source and security of resurrection.

- [25 : 42] He has the power and the promise of resurrection. He is the one who grants and even guarantees resurrection and eternal life. My friend, Jesus offers eternal life to whosoever. Don't you just love that word? I never tire of reading that word, whosoever. He offers eternal life to whosoever, to those in Bethany, to those in Barbas this morning, and to those beyond.
- Jesus offers eternal life to whosoever. The offer is as wide as possible. And all Jesus asks is, do you believe this?
- Do you believe this? Do you believe this? And as we said on many occasions while looking at John's gospel, believing in Jesus is not about intellectual assent.
- It's not about intellectual affirmation. Believing in Jesus is not what you know. It's about who you know. And you have to know Jesus. Believing in Jesus for salvation is about receiving Jesus for salvation.
- [26 : 55] And my friend, Jesus is asking you this morning, do you believe this? Do you believe this? Jesus is saying to you this morning, whether you're in Bethany or in Barbas or beyond.
- Jesus is reminding and reaffirming to you by a divine declaration. He is saying, I am the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this?
- Do you believe this? But you know, it was this fifth I am saying of Jesus that led to the final sign of Jesus.
- That final sign which fully and finally revealed the divine character of Jesus. And it was revealed by a divine decree. That's what we see lastly, a divine decree.
- So there was a divine delay which led to a divine declaration which was revealed by a divine decree. A divine decree.
- [27 : 57] Look at verse 33. We read that 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.
- And he said, where have you laid him? They said to him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Jesus wept.
- As you know, verse 35 is the shortest verse, shortest verses in the Bible. And yet, it's one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible.
- Because when Jesus stood at the grave of his friend Lazarus, when he stood with those whom he loved, we read that Jesus wept. Jesus wept.
- But Jesus wept not only because it's the Christian thing to do, to weep with those who weep. Jesus wept because he loved Lazarus.
- [28 : 55] Jesus wept because he had sympathy for the sisters. Jesus wept because he was mourning with Mary and Martha. Jesus wept because he was the son of man.
- And as the son of man, he is our advocate. He's our mediator. He's our intercessor. He is bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh. He's the one who became like us in order to redeem us.
- Jesus wept, my friend, when he saw the sting of sin. Jesus wept when he saw the destruction of death. Jesus wept when he saw the grip that the grave has upon us.
- Jesus wept, my friend, when he saw the fierceness of the fall of Adam. Jesus wept. Jesus wept as he moved with compassion and care and a concern to those who come face to face with the heartache that death brings into homes and families.
- Jesus wept. Our Lord wept. And you know, it's these words that should encourage us and enable us to see who Jesus really is.
- [30 : 05] They should remind us and reassure us that our Jesus, he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. He is able to sympathize with our weaknesses.

He was tempted like as we are yet without sin. He is, as the writer to the Hebrews says, he is our great high priest. And for that reason we are able to come to him this morning.

We're able to come to him with all our sins and sicknesses and sufferings and sorrows and we're invited to come boldly to his throne of grace that we might find mercy and find grace to help in our time of need.

My friend, we're invited to come. And you know, for Mary and Martha as they stood over the grave of their brother Lazarus, this was their time of need.

And maybe today is your time of need and you're being invited to come by this Jesus to come to his throne of grace to find grace and to find mercy in your time of need.

[31 : 12] And what we see at this graveside was that in their time of need Jesus issued a divine decree. In their time of need Jesus issued a divine decree because we read that Jesus cried out at the tomb of Lazarus.

He cried out with a loud voice Lazarus come forth. Lazarus come forth. You know, it's often said that if Jesus had only uttered the words come forth then every grave in the graveyard at Bethany would have opened because that's because Jesus has the power of the resurrection.

But you know, as a good shepherd, as the good shepherd of his own sheep, Jesus called Lazarus from the valley of the shadow of death and he called him by name.

He called him by name and that's what Jesus said he would do. He said that in John 10 that the sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and he leads them out and that's what Jesus was doing.

He was calling Lazarus by name. He was calling him out of the grave by name and he was leading him out. Lazarus come forth. Lazarus come forth and then we read in verse 44 the man who had died he came out.

[32 : 43] He came out his hands and his feet bound with linen strips and his face wrapped with a cloth and Jesus said to them unbind him and let him go.

You know death had bound him but Jesus says unbind him and let him go. That's the power of resurrection that Jesus has.

And you know some might look at this passage and read the passage and tie themselves in knots trying to work out where Lazarus was while he was dead. Some people will ask well was he asleep?

Was he in heaven? Where was Lazarus? We're not told the answer. And we're not told the answer because that's not what's important here. What's important here as we see with the crowd that were there.

What's important is our response to Jesus as the resurrection and the life. Because we read in verse 45 many of the Jews therefore who had come with Mary and had seen what he did they believed in him.

[33 : 52] They believed in him. Many responded to Jesus the resurrection and the life by believing in him. By trusting in him.

by committing their life to him. And my friend that's how we need to respond to Jesus who is our resurrection and our life.

We need to believe in him. My friend when Lazarus died there was a divine delay. There was a divine declaration and there was a divine decree so that those in Bethany and in Barvis and beyond would believe.

There was a divine delay a divine declaration and a divine decree so that those in Bethany and in Barvis and beyond would believe.

And so the question I want to leave with you this morning is the question we began with. What is your only comfort in life and in death? Where are you finding comfort this morning in this life and with the prospect of death?

[35 : 05] Maybe you don't talk to anybody about it but I'm sure you've thought about it before. Are you trusting Jesus with your life my friend? And are you trusting Jesus with your death? Because Jesus has the power of the resurrection.

Jesus has the promise of life eternal. your only comfort in life and in death my friend is in Jesus Christ. And Jesus is saying to you this morning I am the resurrection and the life.

He who believes in me though he were dead yet shall he live and whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. And Jesus leaves you this question do you believe this?

do you believe this? Do you believe this? May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord teach us to pray and that we would come before thee with the prayer of one of old saying Lord I believe but help thou mine unbelief.

[36 : 21] And Lord we pray for those who may be struggling struggling with sorrow or sickness or suffering that thou wouldst minister to them and remind them this morning that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

We pray Lord for those who are still still in sin still lost still out of Christ that they too would see that Jesus is the resurrection and the life that he promises eternal life that he has the power of resurrection and Lord we pray that we may know him and the power of his resurrection this morning.

Speak to us we pray that all sinners from death to life from darkness to light from the dungeon to liberty that they would be found in Christ for time and for eternity.

O do us good we pray for Jesus sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to our conclusion this morning by singing the words of Psalm 16.

Psalm 16 in the Sing Psalms version and we're singing from verse 8. Psalm 16 is a messianic psalm. It's a psalm. You could say it's an Easter psalm.

[37 : 34] It's the psalm of the empty tomb. The psalm that reminds us that Jesus is not in the grave. He is not here as the angel said.

He is risen. And that's what we're singing about in these concluding words. Before me constantly I set the Lord alone because he is at my right hand I'll not be overthrown.

Therefore my heart is glad my tongue with joy will sing my body too will rest secure in hope unwavering. We'll sing these verses of Psalm 16 to God's praise.

praise. For me constantly I set the Lord alone because he is at my right hand and love be overthrown.

Wherefore my heart is glad my tongue with joy will sing my body true will rest secure in hope and will be for you will not not alive my soul and death to stay nor will you give the holy heart to see the turns decay you have been known to me the power of life divine this shall

[40 : 22] I know what you write and joy from your face will shine the you you you you you you you you you you you