

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, October 10, 2010 – 11:00 AM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

Series: Portraits of Jesus

Jesus - The Resurrection and the Life - John 11:18-27

Introduction: As we have walked through the gallery of John's Gospel, we've seen that it is filled with many portraits of Jesus, and every one is a masterpiece of His greatness and His glory. Today, we're going to look at a portrait of Jesus that displays His greatest miracle of all. If all His other miracles were stricken from the Gospel record and all we were left with was this great miracle, we would have enough to conclude that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. For in the events surrounding the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, we can see the power of Jesus over death.

This morning, we'll get a glimpse of Jesus as The Resurrection and The Life. As we gaze at this portrait in Scripture, I hope you will see just how Jesus can make all the difference in your life now and in eternity. I hope you will discover why Jesus is worthy of your faith and what He can do in your life if you'll only trust Him. I hope you can see that because Jesus made this claim, you do not have to live in misery or fear wondering what's going to happen to you when you die. Let's read the account of Jesus: The Resurrection and the Life:

18 Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem,

19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.

20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;

26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

John 11:18-27 (NIV)

Prayer

As we have this encounter with Jesus this morning, let me warn you; In order to talk about Jesus as the Resurrection and Life, we must confront the subject of death. So the approach I want to take today is not a very popular one. Death is something hardly anyone likes to talk about, but in order to understand Jesus' claim as the Resurrection and the Life, we must understand something about death. First, I want us to notice:

1. The Problem of Death

"'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'" **John 11:21 (NIV)**

Lazarus' death had caused a big problem for his sisters, Mary and Martha as grief had invaded their once happy home. The one whom they had loved so dearly was snatched from their presence and they were devastated. And besides that, it appears that there was some finger pointing going on as Martha was insinuating that if Jesus had shown up sooner, their brother wouldn't have died in the first place.

The point is that when death comes, it brings with it certain problems. There are three things about death that makes it such a problem. First:

A. Death is Universal - Hebrews 9:27 (NIV) tells us that *"Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment."* God told Adam in **Genesis 3:19 (NIV)** *"...for dust you are and to dust you will return."* These verses all speak of the reality of death. One day, whether we like it or not; or even whether we believe it or not, we will all die. One out of every one person dies and that's a fact.

You do know that death is getting steadily closer to you every minute. One day, your time will run out - Someone has mathematically calculated a schedule that compares the average lifetime with a single day, beginning at 7 a.m. If your age is:

15, the time is 10:25 a.m.

25, the time is 12:42 p.m.

35, the time is 3:00 p.m.

45, the time is 5:16 p.m.

55, the time is 7:34 p.m.

65, the time is 9:55 p.m.

70, the time is 11:00 p.m. It's always later than you think!

But another thing that makes death such a problem is that:

B. Death Can Be Ugly – As we see portrayed in this account of the death of Lazarus, when death invades our lives, it can bring with it division, discouragement, disillusionment and defeat. When someone dies, it's like a part of us is literally ripped out of our very being, and we're left in intense sorrow.

In the movie *"Ghost"* from a few years back, the death of the hero is depicted as something that is warm and peaceful, almost inviting the viewer to experience it with the actor. On the other hand, the death of the bad guy was depicted as these hideous shadowy creatures coming up from the sewers to grab the kicking and screaming guy and take him away into the darkness.

In my calling, I've witnessed too many scenes of death for my taste. It is definitely NOT one of my favorite parts of ministry because even though for some, death comes about in an almost peaceful way as the person just stops breathing, for others, it is an obviously painful, agonizing, and frightful experience.

The latter depiction is what most people envision death to be – an ugly and fearful end to what is, for the most part, a beautiful life. It is something that leaves emptiness, heartache, and a defeated attitude for the living to endure. A third thing that makes death such a problem is that:

C. Death Can Be Unexpected - Martha and Mary probably thought that by calling for Jesus to come, their brother Lazarus would get better and everything would return to normal. But death had other ideas!

Even though we know death is coming, it still seems to take us by surprise. According to an old fable, a man made an unusual agreement with Death. He told the grim reaper that he would willingly accompany him when it came time to die, but only on one condition--that Death would send a messenger well in advance to warn him. The agreement was made. Weeks turned into months, and months into years. Then one winter evening, as the man sat alone thinking about all his material possessions, Death suddenly entered the room and tapped him on the shoulder. The man was startled and cried out in despair, *"You're here so soon and without warning! I thought we had an agreement."* Death replied, *"I've kept my part. I've sent you many messengers. Look at yourself in the mirror! See your hair! It used to be full and black, now it is thin and white. Look at the way you have to lean your ear just to hear my voice now. See how you have to squint just to see yourself clearly in the mirror. Yes, I've sent many messengers through the years. It's too bad you're not ready for me, but it's time to go."*

The rich farmer in the Bible thought that he'd live a long time and enjoy his life and his riches, but death came and found him unprepared, and for that the Bible called him a fool. So don't be foolish by putting off the most important thing.

You can put off paying taxes until April 15th. You can put off changing your oil until you get to 3,000 miles. But you can't put off salvation. No one knows when their time will be up. When death comes, it will be too late to prepare for it. So don't be guilty of letting death catch you unprepared. Make your preparations now and you won't be trying to make excuses later.

The story is told of a family that moved into a new area. A local pastor promptly visited the family and invited them to his church. The man started making excuses as to why he couldn't come, but he assured the pastor that his family would be there and that he would come as soon as he got straightened out.

Well, several months passed, and the man still had not come to church, so the minister called again and repeated his invitation. But he received the same reply. The fellow hadn't yet gotten everything straightened out.

A few weeks later he died, and his widow asked to have the funeral services in the church. When a church member asked the pastor if the man was a Christian, he answered, *"He never attended services here, and no one can recall ever hearing him give a testimony of his faith in Christ, so I can't say. I only know he was a man of his word. He promised to come to church just as soon as he got straightened out - and well, he did!"* Next, let's see:

2. The Power over Death

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.'"

John 11:25 (NIV)

When Jesus claimed to be the Resurrection and the Life, He was claiming to have power over death. In fact, Jesus was claiming to have this power within Himself. But the question is, what right does Jesus have to make

such a claim? Well, let's look at what the Bible says about Jesus and His life giving power.

First, we read where Jesus raised others from the dead. He raised Jairus' daughter; He raised a widow's son; and He raised Lazarus back to life. Jesus proved His power over death and the grave by raising these people from the dead.

But the Bible also says that Jesus promised to raise His followers from the dead – **1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 (NIV)** *13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*

Those who trust Jesus as their personal Savior know that Jesus will one day resurrect their bodies from the grave.

Then, the Bible says that Jesus raised Himself from the dead. If the story of Jesus ended with His death on the cross, it would be a tragedy. But, thank God, according to Matthew 28:1-6, three days later, Jesus came out of His tomb, victorious over death.

So all these evidences helps believers face death with confidence, knowing that even though our bodies will be gone, our spirits will live on.

We see this truth vividly played out in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). In this story, Jesus lifted the veil that separates us from death and showed us what happens after death. Every believer goes to be with the Lord and those who refuse to come to Jesus in this life can only look forward to an eternity in Hell. Finally, let's look at:

3. The Promise about Death

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die....’” **John 11:25-26 (NIV)**

The promise Jesus makes about spiritual death is that He alone has the cure. **Ephesians 2:1 & 4-5 (NIV)** says, *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.”*

This passage assures us that Jesus has the power to take a life that's been wrecked and junked by sin and give it a complete makeover. That is in essence what He did for Lazarus. When Lazarus died, everything he had known in life was over for him. There was to be no more family gatherings, no more friends to hang out with, and no more of life's joys to share. His life was over until Jesus came and that made the difference between the end and a new beginning. In John 12, we find Lazarus sitting at the table and dining with the Lord Jesus. Jesus gave him a new life, and He can do the same for you.

So everyone who places their faith in Jesus Christ will never die! According to John 5:24 & 8:51, the believer passes from death unto life, and will live forever.

But the key operative for this to happen is found in the word *“believe.”* In order to receive the promise of Christ and be rescued from spiritual death, you have to believe on Jesus. That is, you must trust Jesus and Him alone for your salvation. Here is how you do that: **Romans 10:9-10 (NIV)** says, *“... if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”*

It's not about turning over a new leaf or working our way to heaven. It's not about how good we are or how much money we give or how often we attend church. Salvation comes only through faith in Christ. Paul wrote in **Eph. 2:8-9 (NIV)** *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

When Jesus said, *“It is finished!”* just before He breathed His last breath, He meant that salvation's plan was completely finished for all men. Now, anyone who receives Jesus finds that salvation has been prepared and paid for in full. All the lost person has to do is believe that what Jesus accomplished in His death and resurrection is sufficient to save Him, and then receive that finished work of Jesus as his own.

Conclusion: After Jesus brought Lazarus back to life, He turned to Martha and asked about her faith. He asked, *“Do you believe this?”*

You see, it didn't matter what she had heard or seen. What mattered in the end was that her faith was placed in Jesus and in Jesus alone for salvation. Why is this so important?

It's important because our faith in Jesus is what gets us into heaven. **Acts 4:12 (NIV)** says, *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”*

It's also important because sin carries with it a heavy price tag. In fact, people are weighed down with sin's consequences as soon as they come into the world. Putting our faith in Jesus to forgive us is what guarantees that we will be free from the **Power of Sin - Romans 6:14 (NIV)** *“For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”*

Putting our faith in Jesus to forgive us is what guarantees that we will be free from the **Penalty of Sin - Romans 5:9 (NIV)** *“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!”*

And putting our faith in Jesus to forgive us is what guarantees that we will be free from the **Presence of Sin.** John wrote about eternity with Jesus in heaven in **Revelation 21:27 (NIV)**. He said, *“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.”*

Just as Jesus asked Martha, *“Do you believe this,”* He's asking you the same thing today. Your response to that question will determine your eternity. If you learn nothing else this morning, at least learn that you must be born again, and have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ if you expect to go to Heaven and experience the life that can only be found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you do not know Jesus, then I invite you to come to Him right now. He loves you and will receive you, and He will give you everlasting life without charge. So if you are ready to receive Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life, I urge you to come to Him today.