**We Are a Resurrection People in This Present Age**

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| **Slide** | **Sermon** |
| **1** | **Title slide** John 11:25-27, 11:45-53  “I Am the Resurrection & the Life” |
| **2** | Introduction  The setting of “I am the Resurrection & the Life” is the death & resurrection of Lazarus.  Family to Jesus – Lazarus has two sisters, Martha & Mary. They know Jesus and have followed him a large part of Jesus’ earthly ministry. They are like brother and sisters to him. Their house and belongings are his house and belongings. Like your best friend’s family. Jesus is welcome any time.  Recall when Jesus visits them and Mary & Martha are getting ready to entertain. When Jesus gets there with his disciples and many followers, Mary stops the hospitality work and sits down at Jesus’ feet to listen and to be taught by him. Today that is no big deal, but in Jesus’ day the women were to prepare food and serve the men especially the guest of the house. Now Martha complains to Jesus that Mary has left her to do the “heavy lifting,” all the hospitality work and implies it is not fair. We expect Jesus to take Martha’s side of the disagreement and return Mary to work. But as Jesus often does he surprises Martha and the whole household and says that it is right for Mary to do as she is doing! He opens the door to women having equal status to men in the Christian faith. |
| **3** | In this story of Lazarus’ death, Jesus again encounters Martha and Mary separately. This time in his conversation with Martha, Jesus is questioned about arriving too late to save Lazarus. Assumption is that if Jesus had come two days earlier he would have healed Lazarus, no questions asked. But Jesus intentionally waited until 4 days had passed, thus assuring that Lazarus was dead beyond any doubt. (Jewish tradition held that until the completion of the 3rd day after death the person’s spirit would be near the body and this could resuscitate the person. But from the 4th day forward the death was final and could not be reversed.) As Jesus talks to Martha it becomes clear that Jesus intends to do something really special, really powerful, all to bring glory to God!  Jesus’ conversation with Martha indicates she doesn’t understand what Jesus is about to do. She is talking about Lazarus’ resurrection at the end time.  But Jesus is saying that he has power over life & death.  He says, “I am the Resurrection and the Life!”  Not I was  Not I used to be  Not I will be  But he says, “I am” – remember God told Moses to tell the Hebrews that “I am is sending you.” So Jesus is linking himself to God and declaring that He has power over death and gives eternal life, now – not in the future. Jesus asks, “Do you believe this?” Martha says, “Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the son of God, who was to come into the world.”  So, in John’s gospel we have Martha declaring the clear identity and purpose of Jesus. She makes the confession of faith in clear, certain terms. (In the synoptic gospels [Matthew, Mark, Luke] it is Peter who makes this confession. But for John’s gospel it is Martha. {Note: that men & women can discern the truth of God!}) Men & women are equal partners in God’s work!  So, Jesus is the resurrection! One who brings life out of death! That is the ultimate power that other religions don’t have! This is given more certainty when Jesus rises from the dead himself. |
| **4** | So, we, who follow Jesus who too believe Jesus is the Resurrection & the Life; what does this mean?   1. Jesus has the power to take even the worst situation; even unto death & breathe forgiveness and life back into it!   ex) Think about the worst situations:   * World Trade Center Terror on 9/11 * The war in Armenia * The constant daily shooting and murder in Greensboro & Winston-Salem   Even in these awful incidents God has the power to bring life out of death.   * World Trade Center Terror – it drove people together to depend upon each other; we’ve heard story after story of heroes from that tragic day. * Armenian War – It took the lives of thousands of soldiers and civilian, drove 40,000 people from their homes without any compulsion or even time to take their possessions! These families are desperately seeking shelter and food and work in the country of Armenia. But there is hope. The UMC allocated $20,000 to buy bedding and other supplies for these people and used Nora and Project Agape to distribute these items. And, there is more hope in that Project Agape’s buildings were also taken. But through several generous gifts from UM in NC, a new site has been rented and a new warehouse with storage, office space and dormitory space is now operational. WNCC has 2 shipments ready to send and the NCC also has 2 shipments ready to send. * Every day there are multiple shooting in just Greensboro and Winston-Salem. What is happening in our towns? How can God bring life out of these situations? |
| **5** | And consider how we have made awful mistakes and how God promises to come in and bring life out of those poor decisions.   * choosing to take drugs or smoke or cheat on an exam if confessed and given to God, Christ can bring hope and renewal and health out of those poor decisions * choosing to ignore a spouse, to cast wandering eyes upon others, or even being unfaithful does not have to end in the death of a relationship but if confessed to God, God can bring hope and new life and stronger love!   Paul says the wages of sin is death! And that is true! But all who believe in Jesus as the resurrection and life can receive forgiveness and a new chance – even when they have made really bad mistakes! Not only us but also the ones harmed in the mistake!  So, a follower of Jesus can know that when they screw up really badly, that Jesus wants to bring resurrection for that mistake and give you life! This doesn’t mean we willy nilly do stuff we know is wrong and presto – we have new life. It means that even when we mess up really badly, we can confess, repent, do penance (trying to make things right) and Jesus will give us another chance. Jesus will bring us back to the life in His love! |
| **6** | Now what does a follower who experiences and believes Jesus is the resurrection and the life do as a follower? How does this make a difference in the day-to-day living? A. It means that we can live freely from the fear of death! In Jesus, death has no more power over a follower of Christ! This means we can be bold in our witness. People may hurt us, put us down, seek to degrade our reputations, but if we believe Jesus is the resurrection and the life we can withstand it all. For we know that in the end, even if we experience social, economic, even physical death, that is not the end. It is the transition to eternal life with God in what we call heaven. It means that a follower – even when they mess up badly – doing & saying things that hurt others and breaks our covenants, that - they can be restored and given renewed power to live in Christ’s example. - they can be given a new challenge to live like they profess to live and give others who fall that same chance. And that God can renew the ones hurt by the actions.  Followers of the resurrection and life get to be agents of forgiveness; sharing God’s grace to others so that they too embrace Jesus as the Resurrection & the Life. Followers become vessels of this resurrection and life as they reach out in faith and take the hatred of the fallen and raise them up to new life! |
| **7** | B. Now we read in John 11:45-54. Here not everyone welcomes this good news and power in Jesus. The religious leaders were afraid of Jesus. They felt he would bring the wrath of the Romans upon them. These leaders met and one said, “It is better that one man die than all the people,” referring it was better for Jesus to die than let the Romans come and destroy Israel. These leaders could only see their present and the threat to their authority. They chose not to believe Jesus is the resurrection & the life, even after seeing Jesus raise Lazarus!  **Conclusion**  But for us today what do we make of it? I believe every one of us here today has experienced Jesus as the resurrection & the life.   * whether in the birth of a son or daughter – grace of new life coming into the world * whether in the death of a parent or other loved one when they have moved from this physical world to an eternal life with God – (even though it is very painful) * whether in the redemption of a prisoner who came out of prison and turn his/her life to the good * or whether in the marriage that has struggled from within & without and has yet weathered the storms to reach new depths of intimacy & new life |
| **8** | We have experienced such times. And what Jesus promises to us this very day is that He is the resurrection & the life that we need and desire – especially when we are tempted to define life on our own terms – by our own might, our own wisdom, our own control!  Today – is the day to let go and let Jesus be your resurrection and your new life!   * Even if you have screwed up and hurt others, the altar is calling you * Even if you have been the victim of someone’s decisions that have killed your trust & hope, this altar is open to you * Even if you feel like you have been dead from within for many years, this altar is open to you   Jesus is here today saying let me be your resurrection & life! I died for your sins and I want you to live! |