

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 24th January 2010

'I am the Resurrection and the Life'

John ch.11:1-44

Introduction

As we celebrated Christmas recently here in this church, I tried to make the connection between Christmas and Easter. I stressed the fact that Jesus was born to die. We can't make sense out of Christmas, unless we see it in the context of Easter.

Christians like to make a fuss about Easter because it celebrates a very important part of our faith – the Death, Burial and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. If it wasn't for the events which Easter celebrates we would have no faith at all.

Just think for a moment:

- If Christ had never died.
- If he had never taken our sins upon himself and died in our place.
- If the Good Shepherd had never laid down his life for the sheep.

We would still be in our sin.

- A perfect sacrifice would never have been made for our sins.
- We would still be condemned.
- We would have no hope of salvation.

But Christ has died – *“the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.”*

Christ has died, but more than that, **Christ has risen again.**

He didn't stay in the tomb, he rose again from the dead.

Death could not hold him.

He broke the power of death, and came to life again himself.

As we saw last week in John 10:17-18 Jesus said,

'The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No-one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.

This command I received from my Father.'

But because he broke the power of death by rising again, ordinary men and women like you and me can have victory over death as well.

That's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 vs.20-26.

Paul talks about *“Christ the firstfruits”* –

Jesus was the only man who came alive never to die again.

(Unlike Jairus' daughter, widow of Nain's son, and Lazarus: They died again!)

But Jesus is actually the first of many who will come alive and never die again!

Read on in 1 Corinthians 15 vs.50-57.

In v.53 he says *“This mortal must put on immortality.”*

In other words, one day we will be given a body that will never die.

If Christ was the firstfruit of resurrection, we're going to be the rest of the crop!

One day we will rise from the dead never to die again, we will live forever with the Lord! This Victory over death can be ours, but only through the Lord Jesus Christ (v.57).

*“Thanks be to God who **gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!**”*

That’s why Jesus could say in John 11:25,

“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.”

This glorious resurrection, this wonderful eternal life, this victory over our greatest enemy – death, can be ours, but only if we believe personally in the Lord Jesus Christ!

We have been making our way through the “I am’s of Christ” on Sunday nights recently: I am the Bread of Life, I am the Light of the World, I am the gate for the Sheep, I am the Good Shepherd. Now we come to the fifth ‘I am’ saying:

Jesus said, “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. Do you believe this?” (v.25-26)

Those words are often read at the beginning of a funeral service, and they are usually taken as a blanket expression of the idea that everyone will rise again someday, and everyone will end up in heaven.

But, you know, that is only partly true: Yes, everybody **will** rise again one day, but **not** everybody will end up in Heaven!

There will be a resurrection for all, but some will be raised to enter into eternal life, others will be raised to stand before Jesus as their Judge, and then to be condemned to an eternity in Hell! (See John 5:24-30).

“I am the Resurrection and the Life” is one of the Seven “I am sayings” of Christ in John’s Gospel. Seven things that Jesus claimed about himself! Many people take them **all** as blanket statements that apply to everyone. I wish that was so, but it’s not.

These sayings, these claims of Christ, are only true for those who *personally* trust in Christ as their Saviour and Lord. That’s a point that each one of us has to come to in our lives for ourselves. There’s nobody else can do it for us!

Let me show you what I mean as we look at this statement of Jesus tonight:

Jesus said, “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. Do you believe this?” (v.25-26).

As with all the “I am” sayings, it breaks up very simply into three parts:

1. Who Jesus claimed to be.
2. What Jesus claimed about himself.
3. How Jesus claimed he could save us.

1. Who Jesus claimed to be: “I am”

Again Jesus takes upon himself the Old Testament name for God – “I am.”
Away back at the burning bush in the Old Testament, when God called Moses to lead his people out of Egypt, into the Promised Land, Moses asked God,

“How do I know who you are?”

“When I go to Pharaoh who will I say has sent me?”

And God said,

“I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites:

I AM has sent me to you.”

That was the name by which he was to be known. “*The Great I AM*” - The God who is always present, and always up-to-date. Not a God of the past. Not someone who can be disposed off in the 21st C as out of date. But a God who is always active in the present tense – “I am”.

Some 3500 yrs after the Burning Bush, Jesus came onto this scene of time, and he claimed that he was God come in the flesh. And when he took this ancient name for God from the OT upon his own lips, (something no Jew would ever have dreamt of doing), he was claiming to be God! - And rightly so, for He is God! That’s why the Jews wanted to kill him in John 10:33-39.

But if you think about it, He **has** to be God to be able to do what he said in these verses:

2. What Jesus claimed about himself: “I am the resurrection and the life.”

He claimed to be the one who could give life, and raise dead men back to life again. He’d have to be God to be able to do all that!

- Only God can give life.
- Only God can take away life.
- That’s what makes him God.

As Job said in the Old Testament, when he lost his whole family one day:

***“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away,
may the name of the Lord be praised.” (Job 1:21).***

This has implications for the whole euthanasia debate that is going on these days, but we as Christians, firmly believe that only God can give life and so only God has the right to take life away. That’s what makes him God! And that’s what Jesus claimed for himself.

He must have been God come in the flesh, because only God can perform resurrections – and that is exactly what Jesus did:

- * He raised Lazarus from the dead. (John 11:43,44).
- * He raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead (Luke 8:54),
- * He raised the widow of Nain’s son out of his coffin (Luke 7:14-15).

So there are 3 living proofs (if you like) that Jesus really was (and is)
The Resurrection and the Life! - His claim has been proven to be true 3 times!

But let's look a little more closely at the account of Lazarus' resurrection for a moment: Immediately after Jesus claims to be the Resurrection and the Life he goes to a tomb. Notice that in all his humanity he weeps (v.35) and yet in all his deity he raises a dead man to life! (v.43,44). Yet again we see that Jesus was fully God and fully man.

But how do we know that Lazarus was really dead?

(Maybe there are some sceptics here tonight?)

Well let's look at the evidence:

- (i) He had been sick (v.3)
- (ii) Jesus said plainly, "*Lazarus is dead*" (v.14)
- (iii) Lazarus has been in the tomb for 4 days (v.17)
- (iv) A stone sealed the tomb so no air could get in. (v.38)
(So Lazarus' body has been 4 days without air!)
- (v) Lazarus' face has been wrapped tightly with a cloth for 4 days.
(v.44) There was no way that he could have been breathing.
- (vi) There was actually the smell of death and decay. (v.39)
- (vii) The Jews (Jesus' enemies) were convinced that a miracle had taken place (v.45-48) - That's why they wanted to kill him!

So Jesus definitely gave resurrection life to Lazarus. The evidence proves it!
But there's more...

Because on the third day after his own death on the cross, on that first Easter Sunday morning, Jesus himself rose again from the dead! And today He is alive forevermore! He lives in the power of an endless life!
He has won the victory over death!

But listen to this in 1 Corinthians 15:20.

***"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead,
the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep."***

This means there are going to be more raised to life – You and me one day!

Jesus is the first-fruits of the Resurrection. That means the rest of the crop is still to come. One day, if Jesus doesn't come back for us first, all of us are going to die, and all our bodies are going to be put into a grave in some church yard or cemetery.

But on the Last Day, when God calls "Time!" When this world is all over, the Trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised – that means ALL of us! And we will stand (body and soul reunited) before the Lord to be judged. And then He will pronounce the verdict:

Either He will welcome us into Heaven with himself, or we will be banished to hell forever. Either he will say, "*Come you who are blessed by my Father,*

enter into the joy of the Lord.” Or He will say, “Depart from me, I never knew you!” (Matt 25:34; 7:23).

But what makes the difference?

Why will some go to heaven, and others to Hell?

Well that brings me to my third and final point:

3. How Jesus claimed he could save us.

I started this evening by saying that a lot of people take these words of Jesus as a blanket statement.

But I think if you look a little more closely you will find they are not a blanket statement at all. In fact these words require a very personal response.

Yes Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection and the life,”*

But then He added,

***“He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.
And whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”***

In other words if you want to experience not only this resurrection that Jesus has been talking about, but also the eternal life that he offers, then you personally must believe in Jesus for yourself while you’re still alive in this world. For after your death it is forever too late! There are no second chances!

These words were actually said by Jesus to Lazarus’ sister, Martha.

When he said them he got very personal with Martha, because he said to her.... (v.26): ***“Do you believe this?”***

He was asking her did she believe that He was the resurrection and the life?

She replied in a very clear confession of faith:

***“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God,
who was to come into the world.” (v.27)***

So can I get personal with each of you this evening?

Can I ask you the question Jesus asked Martha?

“Do you believe this?” - That Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

Who he claimed to be; What he claimed he could do; and How he claimed he could save you? - ***Do you believe this?***

Can I urge you to trust in Jesus for yourself, and make sure you’re right with God tonight? So that when it comes to the end of your life, these words really will apply to you too!

It makes all the difference for the minister conducting your funeral, trying to comfort your family, but more importantly it makes all the difference to you for all eternity!

Because you will hear those words from God,

“Enter into the joy of your Lord!”

Instead of,

“Depart from me, I never knew you!”

Conclusion

So tonight we have thought about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, but we have also thought of Jesus' own resurrection.

The question is, will you be part of the resurrection and the eternal life that is still to come? – That's a question that only you can answer.

**“Jesus said, 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.**

Do you believe this?”

I hope you do! If you don't, start believing it today! Trust in Christ today!

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