

John 11:25-26

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Preacher: David MacPherson

[0 : 00] This morning we were giving some thought to Mark's account of the resurrection.

We did so from a particular perspective, possibly a somewhat uncommon perspective, because we were focusing on the role played by the young man or the angel as a messenger from heaven. And so really all our attention revolved around His participation and perhaps lessons that we could draw from that. We spent very little time, almost no time, considering the significance and implications of the resurrection itself.

And in some ways, you know, that's a big, what would we say, a big theme to leave unconsidered when your passage is about the resurrection.

So what we want to do this evening is maybe spend a little time doing that, not from the same passage that we were looking at this morning, but think a little bit about the implications of the resurrection, at least one or two of them, not an exhaustive kind of survey.

[1 : 18] It is important to be clear on the historicity of the resurrection. And that is something we did stress this morning, that Jesus being raised from the dead is presented in the Bible.

And we believe that to be true, a historic event. It's something that actually happened. In conservative, evangelical circles, whatever language you want to use, we sometimes speak of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

And the reason that language is used is precisely to be very explicit in our conviction that Jesus died and then rose again bodily from the dead.

It's not that in some vague way His Spirit lives on in the lives of His followers, but that the one who was dead rose again from the dead, was raised from the dead.

And so in the face of the protests that dead men don't come back to life, we firmly contend that this dead man did.

[2 : 27] Jesus was raised from the dead. But as well as affirming the historicity of the resurrection, it's important to give thought to the implications of the resurrection for us as believers.

Again, here there's an interesting, I don't know, contrast that we could draw. But as a rule, we spend much more time considering the implications of the death of Jesus, the implications of His atoning death in our place and all that His death secured for all who believe.

And of course it is right and proper that we should focus with great attention to the implications of Jesus' death, what His death secures for us.

But it's also true that His resurrection secures benefits for us that we need to give some thought to. And that's what we want to do this evening.

But as I say, focusing in on one particular statement of Jesus that allows us to perhaps identify some of the implications. And I want to do this in the light of words that Jesus directed to Martha, words that He directed to Martha before He was crucified, before He was raised from the dead.

[3 : 46] We've read the passage where these words are found. We're going to read them again, the words, the particular words that we want to think about this evening. So in chapter 11 of John's gospel and verses 25 and 26, 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. Do you believe this? And in these words, Jesus touches on what we might describe as three core aspects of immortality or resurrection life in the experience of the believer.

Immortality or resurrection life secured for the believer by the resurrection of Jesus. And these three aspects that we want to just notice are as follows.

First of all, the source of resurrection life is established by Jesus here in what He says. Also, the nature of resurrection life is touched upon in these words of Jesus.

And then also, thirdly, that the key to a resurrection life is identified. And these are the three things we want to notice this evening. So first of all, the source of resurrection life.

[5 : 04] There in verse 25, Jesus says to Martha, I am the resurrection and the life. I am the resurrection and the life.

And familiar, though the words are, and sometimes familiarity takes away some of the impact of words. And maybe that's the case here. We're very familiar with these words.

But even though they are so familiar, we have to acknowledge that these words of Jesus are nothing if not as spectacular. The claim He makes is bold and some might even say outrageous. I am the resurrection and the life. It's almost as if Jesus is addressing generations of human inquiry and responding to that stubbornly ever-present question as to where we can find immortality or eternal life.

Throughout history, across cultures, this has been a common theme. How men and women have a longing for immortality.

[6 : 06] A longing for something beyond the grave. And here Jesus would seem to be addressing that perennial longing with these words.

I am the resurrection and the life. He addresses the question and how does He respond to it? To where does He point for those who are thirsting for eternal life?

Well, He points to Himself. I am the resurrection and the life. It's as if He is saying to Martha and any others who listen in, like ourselves this evening.

He's saying, look no further. If that is what you thirst for, look no further. I am the resurrection and the life. Now we need to explore this claim of Jesus a little bit more.

And I think we can describe it as a two-fold claim. There is in these words of Jesus, first of all, a claim to be God, but also a claim to be life. If we think of each of these in turn.

[7 : 10] So first of all, there's a claim to be God. This claim in John's Gospel is one of the seven I am sayings of Jesus recorded for us in the Gospel of John.

John is perhaps, the Gospel of John is well known for that. That John obviously very deliberately has drawn together in his Gospel.

And we find periodically in the account that he gives us these I am sayings of Jesus. I am the bread of life. I am the door. I am the resurrection and the life.

And we could go on. Now each individually, each of these claims individually, and especially all of them collectively, are to be understood in the context of the divine name revealed or explained to Moses in Exodus.

And together they constitute a claim to be God. Let's just remind ourselves again, the passage in Exodus is also a familiar one.

[8 : 18] I'll just read the two verses in Exodus 3, verses 13 and 14. Moses said to God, Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you.

And they ask me, What is his name? Then what shall I tell them? God said to Moses, I am who I am. That is what you are to say to the Israelites.

I am has sent me to you. And so when Jesus deliberately and pointedly speaks of himself employing the language of the divine name, I am, he is making a claim to divinity.

And such a claim does, of course, serve as the necessary foundation to his claim to be life. Who but God could claim to be the source of life.

So there is in these words, first of all, a claim to be God. But there is also, as we've just noticed, and it follows on from that, a claim to be life. And Jesus doesn't just claim to be the purveyor of life, but to be life itself.

[9 : 24] He's not just the one who has the power to resurrect, but is in himself the resurrection. One of the features of the I am sayings of Jesus is the manner in which they point to who Jesus is, as opposed to what he can do or give.

Of course, what he can and does do and give flows from who he is. But the core element is who he is, his identity.

And then his actions flow from that, correspond to that. So, for example, if we think another of the I am sayings, when Jesus stated, I am the bread of life.

He's not simply saying that I can provide bread. He certainly can do that. He's saying much more than that. He's saying, I am the bread of life. And so, too, with this declaration.

I am the resurrection and the life. I not only can give life, but I am life. Jesus' concern is that Martha and you and me look beyond the gift to the giver.

[10:36] And so, the stress is on this call, this invitation. Look to me. Come to me. Believe in me. That's the insistent plea of Jesus.

Jesus turns the spotlight squarely on himself. Something that if anybody else did, we would be uncomfortable with. We would think they were arrogant.

We would think they were overly self-centered. But in Jesus, there is this constant turning the spotlight on himself. Follow me.

Come to me. Believe in me. I am. I am. I am. And here are the words that we're giving thought to. I am the resurrection and the life.

So, in the words, these words, I am the resurrection and the life, we have a claim to be God and a claim to be a life. And before we move on, let's notice a necessary implication of this two-fold claim, which in turn is a claim in itself.

[11:39] And that's a claim to what we might call exclusivity. Jesus and Jesus alone is the resurrection and the life. Only Jesus, who is life, or the author of life, in the word that Peter uses at Pentecost, only Jesus can grant life.

Only Jesus can grant resurrection life. In the following I am saying, just chronologically in John's account, that exclusive claim is even more explicit.

The following I am claim that we find in John's gospel is, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

There is this exclusive claim to be what he describes himself to be. So, if you crave life, if you crave immortality, if you crave resurrection life, then look no further than to the person of Jesus.

So, that is perhaps what we can say with regard to the source of resurrection life. But we also want to move on and see what Jesus says with regard to the nature of resurrection life for us as believers.

[12:57] And what we want to do here is to explore the significance of Jesus declaring himself to be the resurrection and the life. And notice how the significance of each of the words used is immediately developed by Jesus in a way that throws light on resurrection life.

And I suppose the question that we're posing and want to grapple with is, why does Jesus say, I am the resurrection and the life? Why these two words?

Is there a distinction between them? Is there a significance in him using these two words? And his use of these two words has been variously explained by folks who are, you know, honestly grappling with this.

What did Jesus mean by calling himself the resurrection and the life? Some have suggested that really the two words are synonymous and we shouldn't be maybe looking for or trying to distinguish between them.

Just two ways of saying the same thing. Well, that's possible. Others have suggested it's really a question of logical order. And so, the first word resurrection is the one that would come before life.

[14:12] So, you're resurrected to this new life, to eternal life. And so, that is really what Jesus has in mind in using the two words.

But I think a more helpful way of understanding why Jesus uses two words is to be found in the text itself. And in the manner in which Jesus, having made the claim, immediately goes on to explain or elucidate what he means by it.

And so, let's just turn there to see what he does. Then in verse 25, Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. And then these two claims, one claim in two parts, I am the resurrection and the life is then explained.

The first part, I am the resurrection, is explained in the words, he who believes in me will live even though he dies. And the claim to be the life is explained in what follows and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Let's just, you know, explore that a little bit more. The word resurrection, the first part of the claim, I am the resurrection, points to a future experience for the believer.

[15:31] It's an experience that will occur after our physical death. In a very real and obvious sense, resurrection is impossible in the absence of death. You know, in one sense, it's impossible for us to talk about resurrection life if we haven't died yet.

You need to die before you can experience resurrection. So, hence the recognition by Jesus that we will die.

There he says it very clearly. He who believes in me will live even though he dies. So, he's acknowledging, yes, you will die. That will be your experience. You will die. However, because I am the resurrection, then you have this hope of future life, of resurrection life.

You will die, but you will rise again or you will be raised back to life. And that is our hope as we look to the future. On the basis of this claim of Jesus, I am the resurrection.

You will die. Jesus states it clearly. But even though you die, you will live. You will be raised to life again. So, that's, I think, the emphasis of the first part of the claim, I am the resurrection.

[16:44] It points to a future hope. But then the word life, as explained by Jesus, I think brings us to the present, to our present. Because notice how that is explained in the second part of his explanation.

And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Jesus is taking Martha gently by the hand from the reality of future resurrection that she already believes in.

She's already made it clear that she believes in a future resurrection. He's now bringing her into her present. Into the present reality of the believer being granted, in a sense, immortality or eternal life in the here and now.

Whoever lives and believes in Jesus now will never die. This life, this eternal life, is to be experienced by the believer in the here and now.

And in that sense, there is the hope and there is the promise that he who believes in me will never die. From this point, there will be this experience, this gift received of eternal life.

[17:57] Now, this way of understanding the claim of Jesus, to look at the word resurrection and life, the first pointing to a future hope following our physical death and then being raised from the dead.

And thinking of it in terms of, or the word life, in terms of our present experience of being granted eternal life. A new dimension of living. This way of distinguishing the two words.

At one level, you might say it's, or you may not, but you might think that it's a neat way of understanding the claim. Some might say a little bit too neat.

But I think it is legitimate or certainly can be defended. And I think it does resolve that the seeming contradiction of Jesus in the same breath, speaking of believers both dying and never dying.

You see, you read what Jesus says and you think, well, that seems odd. He's saying, in the one breath, he's saying, you're going to die. In the ninth breath, he says, you'll never die. Well, what's going on? Can you not make his mind up? Well, it's not that there's any contradiction.

[18:59] It's just that in these two statements, he's speaking about different realities. He's speaking about the physical death we will experience to be followed by resurrection. And he's speaking about the eternal spiritual life that we will secure will be given to us in the here and now that will, in a very real sense, mean that we will not die spiritually.

And so, what seems to be a contradiction is, in fact, not the case. So, we see, I suppose you could call it the twofold nature of resurrection life, the future reality of physical resurrection and the present reality and experience of the life that Jesus gives.

Well, what about us here this evening? What about you? Do you have this hope of future resurrection to new life? Has death lost its sting for you as you contemplate future glory? What about today? Is eternal life a current possession and experience for you? Can you say with grateful confidence, I will never die?

So, the source of resurrection life, the nature of resurrection life, and then finally, let's just notice what Jesus says about what we're calling the key to resurrection life. In explaining the future and present nature of resurrection life, there is a common thread or theme, and it is that of believing.

[20:23] Belief is key. We might call it the key to resurrection life in the sense that it is that which opens the door in our experience to resurrection life.

This is about how we respond to Jesus, to the one who declares, I am the resurrection and the life. This is about how we can not only ponder on or admire abstract truth, but also experience resurrection life, eternal life.

So, put it simply, but also biblically, you've got to believe. And what is this believing all about?

Without maybe falling into the danger, I hope, of overanalyzing the demand of Jesus to believe, I think we can notice how Jesus touches on two overlapping but distinct aspects of biblical belief or

saving faith in His words to Martha.

Firstly, in His question to Martha, there at the end of the little section that we read, do you believe this? He doesn't just say, do you believe?

He says, do you believe this? The obvious question is, well, what's this? What is the this that Martha has to believe? Well, clearly, the this is the truth that Jesus has been declaring about Himself and about what we need to do in response.

[21 : 44] Do you believe this? It's an important question. Do you believe the facts that constitute the gospel? Do you believe that Jesus is the eternal Son of God? Do you believe that He died for sinners?

Do you believe that He was raised from the dead? Do you believe this? So, Jesus has stated some truth. He's saying, well, what's the deal, Martha? Do you believe this? You know, what I've told you about who I am, do you believe this?

And then we could add to that all the core facts concerning the gospel. Do you believe these things to be true? And it's necessary for us to believe these things to be true.

But I think there's another manner in which Jesus speaks of believing. Notice in these very same words, He uses another or a different kind of language.

There in verse 25, He says, He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. So, to Martha, He poses the question, do you believe this, these truths concerning myself?

[22 : 52] But then, in what He's just said, He uses this different language, or somewhat different language, do you believe in Me? Well, He doesn't pose it as a question, but He speaks about the reality of believing in Jesus.

This construction to believe in is very much New Testament language. It's a distinctly Christian concept.

It implies personal trust and commitment to believe in Jesus. It goes beyond believing about Jesus. It goes beyond affirming to be true certain gospel facts.

That is necessary. The this, do you believe this? And it goes to this element of personal commitment to, do you believe in Me? Do you believe in Jesus?

We are to rest in Him. We are to trust in Him. We are to cling to His person and His righteousness. We are to trust in Him. We must believe this.

[23 : 50] We must believe the facts. But we must also believe in Jesus. We must continually put our trust in Jesus, the one in whom we enjoy resurrection life.

Now, we do have to be careful not to artificially divorce these two aspects of belief. They are, in a sense, two sides of the same coin. And it's interesting that John himself presents them as inextricably intertwined when he expresses the purpose of the gospel.

In chapter 20 of John's gospel in verse 31, where he's really summarizing everything that he's been about in giving this record of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, he says this, You see how there he's got these two elements of belief, that you would believe the facts, who Jesus is, and that you might, in believing the facts, be brought to believe in Him, to trust in Him, to commit to Him.

So, you have in these words of Jesus, I am the resurrection and the life. This identifying by Jesus Himself the source of life.

It is in Himself. There's an exploring of the nature of resurrection life, that there is this future hope that is ours, that though we will die, our bodies will, you know, will decompose in due course when the time comes, unless the Lord returns before that happens.

[25 : 27] But we have the hope of resurrection. But it's not only a future hope, there is an eternal life that is to be experienced in the here and now as we trust in and commit to Jesus.

So, is death the end of the story? Well, it wasn't for Jesus, as we were reminded this morning, and it's not for us. 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? Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank You for Your Word. We thank You for the facts of the Gospel. We thank You for the death and burial and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus, our Savior.

And we thank You also for all that has been secured for us by His life and death and resurrection. We thank You that in Jesus we have one who was able to declare with a quiet and yet firm confidence, I am the resurrection and the life.

[26 : 36] And we thank You for the hope that that holds out for us as we would trust in Him and rest in Him and commit to Him. And we pray that You would help us to be ever trusting in Jesus and that our trust in Him would deepen and grow day by day.

And as we are made aware and as we are grateful for all that we have been granted on the grounds of Jesus' resurrection, help us to be those who gladly share this good news with others, that others too might experience what it is to have this hope and to live this life.

And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing to close our service this evening. We're going to sing Psalm 23, but the arrangement of that psalm by Stuart Townend and the words are on the screen.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me lie in pastures green. He leads me by the still, still waters. His goodness restores my soul. Let's stand and sing.

Amen.