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## "I Am the Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25)

For those involved in the 2016 regular session it is likely that they have (or will) receive the unwelcome (or welcome depending upon your perspective) news that a particular piece of legislation is "dead on arrival", "on life support" or just plain "dead". To the average citizen not familiar with the workings of government this news can be devastating, extinguishing their hope for a positive outcome and shaking their belief in the democratic process. Veterans of the legislative process at the Capitol however, know there are multiple avenues available to bring a bill back to life. Rules can be suspended, legislation can be recalled, unanimous consent can be given and bills can be discharged in committee or be amended into other legislation if ruled germane.

As recounted in the Gospel of John, Mary and Martha had only one option (Jesus of Nazareth) as they watched their brother Lazarus dying. **"Lord, behold he whom you love is sick"** John 11:3

### LAZARUS OF BETHANY

As we begin the story of Lazarus we find his sisters, Mary and Martha sending word to Jesus that His beloved friend is deathly ill. They knew that Jesus loved them and they had witnessed or had knowledge of His previous miracles. He was their only hope. Jesus' initial response to their plea for help surprises everyone.

**"Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was." (John 11:5, 6).**

Counting the delay and travel time, when Jesus finally arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had already been in the grave for four days. So why the delay? Jesus gives us a preview of what is to come and why with His response upon first receiving the news of His friends illness:

**"This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it." (John 11:4).**

Jesus knew Lazarus would be dead, but He was about to perform the most spectacular of all His miracles, strengthening the faith of His followers and providing hope for all believers.

### BELIEVE AND RECEIVE

As Jesus nears Bethany Martha comes to meet Him and not surprisingly her first words are **"Lord, if You had been here my brother would not have died."** (John 11:21).

At face value, this statement may just be an indication of her faith in His power to heal. However, given the circumstances and human nature, it is likely that Martha and Mary (who later makes the same statement) are

struggling to understand why Jesus was unable to prevent their brother's death.

Jesus then tells Martha that her brother will rise again and based upon her response she assumes He is speaking of the future resurrection of the dead on the last day. But Jesus isn't talking about the future He is talking about the present and He is about to reveal the only one who has power over life and death and the only way to a spiritual life that death cannot defeat when He says to her, **"I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"**

The word believe appears three times in these two verses and as we learned in an earlier study the word believe is used 98 times in the Gospel of John. We know John's gospel was written, **"That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:31)** We know from Martha's response that she answers correctly **(John 11:27)**. Jesus is however, about to take that belief to a whole new level.

What does it mean to believe? According to Webster, to believe is to accept or regard something as true. The belief Jesus is seeking however is not just an intellectual acknowledgement of the facts but also a heartfelt, emotional commitment to receiving all that He has to offer.

**"...That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." (John 9:10).**

## DEATH IS INEVITABLE

The funeral of Lazarus is a stark reminder that all of us are bound by sin and death the second we enter this world. Death is not something we like to think about. It evokes thoughts of tragedy and suffering, emotions of grief and fear. Yet, we must acknowledge the reality of death and know that we will experience its force someday.

***"Who can live and not see death, or who can escape the power of the grave?" (Psalms 89:48).***

Remember Jesus' words when He learned that Lazarus was sick. He said ***"This illness does not end in death."*** (John 11:4). It is true that Lazarus' sickness led to his death, but it did not end in his death. Because Jesus planned to resurrect his friend it ended in life for the glory of God. As a believer in Jesus Christ, our life is not going to end in death either, it will lead to death, but because of Jesus' power over death, we have security and hope for the future.

## I WANT YOU TO KNOW

It is clear from scripture that as Jesus approached the tomb of Lazarus He experienced a wide range of emotions. ***"He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled."*** ***"Jesus wept."*** ***"So Jesus again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb."*** (John 11:33, 35, 38).

Remembering that Jesus is both fully man and fully God the emphasis on His emotional state is understandable. His ministry on earth is nearing its end and He has worked hard to share God's message through His teachings, miracles and by personal example. The results have been mixed and at times frustrating.

Rather than speculating on what He was feeling and why, let us imagine instead what He may have wanted us to know as He stands before the tomb of Lazarus with Martha, Mary and hundreds of mourners looking on.

- I am the Messiah, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in my name.
- While this life leads to death, it does not end in death.
- There is hope for a future free from the shame of sin and the fear of death through Me.
- I love you and soon I am going to prove it by going to the cross to die for your sins rising from the grave on the third day
- I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

Emotions and words are effective means by which we communicate but sometimes action is needed to back them up. What Jesus is about to do takes the phrase "actions speak louder than words" to a whole new level.

## CHRIST RAISES LAZARUS

A resolute Jesus approached the tomb and ordered those present, ***"Remove the stone"*** (John 11:39).

Death can seem so final to the living especially at the funeral of a loved one. When the casket closes and is lowered into the ground or the ashes are scattered into the wind we may still be grieving but for most a sense of closure begins. Imagine the shock and concern of onlookers as Jesus has the stone removed exposing a now decomposing body entombed for four days. He now has their undivided attention.

**After giving thanks to the Father, "He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus come forth." (John 11:43).**

There is a popular mantra that exhorts us to "Live like there is no tomorrow." As believers shouldn't we instead be living like there is a tomorrow? Should we not live with the confident expectation that after we experience physical death the first voice we hear calling our name and the first person we see is Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

Still wrapped in grave clothes, the formerly dead but now very much alive Lazarus emerges from the tomb. ***"Jesus said to them unbind him and let him go."*** (John 11:44).

These are fitting words for one who has now not only been raised from the grave but released forever from the fear of death. Do you remember Jesus' question to Martha? (John 11:26) For those present at the tomb they have now gone beyond believing to knowing. They are eyewitnesses to Jesus' power over life and death and have just seen a preview of what will be the greatest event to ever occur in the history of mankind.

## DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?

All of us must answer Jesus' question to Martha, "Do you believe this?" For those present the day Jesus raised Lazarus, they saw and really had little choice but to believe. But what about Christians today 2000 years removed from this important miracle? ***"Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."*** (John 20:29).

There are many procedural and parliamentary tricks that can revive a dead piece of legislation here at the Capitol. There is however, only one way to overcome the physical death we all must face and that is through the one who is ***"the Resurrection and the Life"***, Jesus.

It is because of Christ's resurrection, our belief that He is the Son of God and our receiving Him into our lives that we are assured of eternal life. When we believe these things we can find great comfort in Jesus' words, ***"Because I live you will live also."*** (John 14:19).

## BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays,

8:00 AM Governor's Conference Room (Sec. of State's Ofc)

12:00 Noon Treasurer's Conference Room (EB54,

Basement of East Wing)