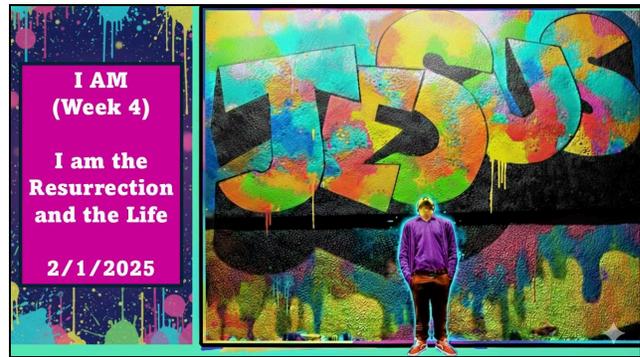


I AM (Week 4) - I Am the Resurrection and the Light Yesterday's Sermon Summary

1. Over the course of this series in which we're letting Jesus define Himself for us, instead of taking Jesus on our terms, we hope that each of us in our own way is beginning to feel in some small measure like the great Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky, when he wrote in a personal letter, "In such moments I have formulated my creed, wherein all is clear and holy to me. This creed is extremely simple; here it is: I believe there is nothing lovelier, deeper, more sympathetic, and more perfect than the Savior; I say to myself...that not only is there no one else like Him, but that there could be no one else like Him...There is in the world only one figure of absolute beauty – Christ. That infinitely lovely figure is...an infinite marvel."



2. The fourth "I am" statement in John's gospel occurs near the beginning of Holy Week in a little town two miles east of Jerusalem, Bethany, and involves a family - two sisters, Martha and Mary, and a brother, Lazarus - that Jesus loves. We find this "I am" statement in Jn. 11.25-26: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?'"

3. These verses occur in the middle of a much larger story that occupies all of John 11...you can read it below in the next section. They are said by Jesus after Martha runs out to the outskirts of town to greet Him as He arrives. She laments that He wasn't on the scene to heal her brother and prevent his death. Immediately prior to these verses ([11.23-24](#)) they both affirm belief in a final resurrection to life on the last day, a common Jewish belief in Jesus' day.

4. When we read John 11.25-26, it's easy to misunderstand the concept of "believe." It's not impersonal nor merely rational. To read it more accurately, replace it with "trust," relational trust like you have for a good friend or confidant. The passage then reads, "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who trust Me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and trusts Me will never die. Do you trust Me about this?'"

5. This helps us realize that this long story about Lazarus' resuscitation in John 11 is not only about Lazarus, but the two sisters - Martha and Mary. When Jesus asks, "Do you trust Me about this?," the "you" in that question is Martha, not the dead Lazarus. And the readers of John's gospel - in this case, you and me - are meant to hear Jesus asking them that question too. Do you - 2000 years removed from these events - trust Me about this?

6. By saying "I am the resurrection and the life," Jesus is pulling together concepts that a 1st-century Jewish person would have thought separate and distinct - life here and now and the life to come beyond death. And Jesus is tying both concepts to Himself. As biblical scholar N. T. Wright puts it, "What was thought to be a future event – 'resurrection' – is pulled into the present. And Jesus does not say "I give you resurrection and life," but "I am the resurrection and the life. So resurrection and eternal life are not events, they are a Person."

7. The takeaways from this cannot be underestimated. From time to time we all ask questions like, "I wonder what heaven will be like?," or, "I wonder where God is taking the world and what the end result will be?," or, "I wonder what a meaningful, joyous, purposeful life looks like?" According to John 11.25-26, the answer to each is the same - look to Jesus, what you see embodied in Him, and what you hear Him teach.

8. In his 2018 book [Eternity Is Now In Session](#), pastor/author John Ortberg shows us how "life" and "resurrection" aren't completely separate for us either: "Eternal life isn't just about the future. We can have it now. It's not just about there. We can have it here. It isn't something we simply receive through a transaction that arranges for our future destination. It's something we experience now through becoming Jesus' disciples, which death is then unable to stop...In the New Testament, the terms salvation and eternal life and Kingdom of God all speak to this same life-altering reality – they aren't about getting you into heaven; they're about getting heaven into you..."

9. St. Athanasius of Alexandria, one of the most important Christian leaders of the 300s CE, wrote that Jesus says to each of us "I am the voice of life that wakens the dead." And because, biblically speaking, "death" is not only about when heart and breathing stop but also the negative, poisonous, ruinous cost of our choices and wounds before that occurs, we know that Christ's voice rings out to each of us every day, calling us toward life and away from death. Christ continues to ask, as He did Martha so long ago: "Do you trust Me about this?"

Explore More This Week

- Spend time this week enjoying the larger story told in John 11...it's an extraordinary narrative, full of human pathos and even some humor:
 - [John 11 NRSVUE](#)
 - [John 11 MSG](#)
- Here are three of devotionals to scatter across your week, both speak to the present, not merely future, possibility of resurrection...the third comes with discussion questions, making it good for a small group or class:
 - [Living the Risen Life](#)
 - [Victorious](#)
 - [Daily Devotional for Small Group Discussion: Do You Believe in Lazarus? - United Church of Christ Do You Believe in Lazarus?](#)
- If you're intrigued by this crucial New Testament idea that "resurrection" and "eternal life" are not merely future events, but also available to us and able to be experienced in part now, The Bible Project does a good job of laying it out in these short animated videos:
 - [What is Eternal Life?](#)
 - [The New Humanity • The New Kind of Existence We're Invited To \(Spiritual Beings Series Episode 7\)](#)
- Here's the prayer we used to end the sermon yesterday, you can use it this week...it tries to put the key takeaways from this "I am" statement into the form of a prayer:

"Good God, I come to You now with the words of Your Son etched on my heart. Surely, He is the resurrection and the life to all who will trust Him.

I thank You that this doesn't rest on a concept, but on the living person of Jesus.

I acknowledge that even though I choose death too often instead of life and live in its cold shadow, the hope of resurrection and life remains sure.

Your Son asked "Do you trust Me about this?" and today my answer is "Yes!"

Quiet my fears, strengthen my resolve, keep me close to Christ, and help me to live every day a resurrected life that not even death can defeat, amen."