

“More to Life”

John 11:1-46

I am so excited that today is finally here! I confess that I have been looking forward to this day for the past three weeks. It has felt somewhat like a Christmas that just couldn't get here fast enough. There are many things that are associated with Easter. Perhaps you think of the spring flowers, the Easter egg hunts, the time with family, a delicious lunch, the perfect spring apparel, the sunnier days, and warmer temperatures, etc. There are many things that we have culturally come to enjoy about Easter, but I remind you the real reason that we celebrate is not because of these things. The reason that we celebrate and the reason that we have joy is because of what Jesus did over 2,000 years ago. What Jesus did way back then still powerfully impacts our lives today.

Over the past 16 years of pastoring, I have preached many sermons about the resurrection of Christ. Most would anticipate that on this specific day we would read one of the passages that describe His resurrection, but today I believe God wants us to do something a little different. I believe God wants us to look back at an event that occurred before the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The fact that Jesus rose again was not an afterthought of God. God didn't look down suddenly and say, "Well, I guess since they crucified Jesus, I should raise Him from the grave." The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus was God's plan all along to provide a way for all mankind to experience the gift of eternal life and the peace and fulfillment of abundant life. This is why Jesus came. In **John 10:10** Jesus tells us about the enemy's plan for our life, but then He also tells us about what He brings to our life. He said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Jesus didn't come to get things from us, but instead to give to us. He came to give abundant and eternal life. In fact, the word for "abundant" means "beyond measure, more, superfluous." Jesus wasn't speaking about this in physical terms. After all, a man can have everything that the world has to offer and be miserable in his soul. I can have power in the world and yet inwardly be overwhelmed with defeat and discouragement. When Jesus spoke of this abundant life, He was saying that the life He gives is meaningful, purposeful, fulfilling, and eternal. I believe this is the message that God wants us to hear today. There is **MORE TO LIFE** than the things that we see with our physical eyes. There is **MORE TO LIFE** than the things that Hollywood is constantly putting before us. There is **MORE TO LIFE** than the images and stories that we see on social media. There is **MORE TO LIFE** than the hurts of the past or even the hopes of our future. There is **MORE TO LIFE**, right here, right now, today. This is the message that God wants us to hear. This is the message that Jesus gave to the people in John 11.

Show **John 11:1-6, 11b-15, 17-27**

Have you ever wondered if there was more to life? We can ask this question when we are facing just about everything. Many face various difficulties and trials in their life and they wonder, "Will I ever get a break? Is there more to life than the struggles that I seem to always face?" It may come as a surprise, though, to find that they aren't alone. There are also many people who live very mundane, routine lives. They live day-to-day doing the same old thing in the same old way and they wonder, "Is there more to life?" Even at the far other end of the spectrum we also see this. In

an interview with Tom Brady, who had recently won his third Super Bowl, he confessed, “Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there’s something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, ‘Hey man, this is what is.’ I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think: ‘God, it’s gotta be more than this.’ I mean this can’t be what it’s all cracked up to be. I mean I’ve done it. I’m 27. And what else is there for me?” Then when asked what he thought it was that he was missing, Brady said, “I wish I knew. I really wish I knew....” Deep within so many of us is a nagging question, a deeper longing, “There’s gotta be more than this.” I believe we find the key to experiencing More to Life in John 11. As we look at this passage of Scripture and study what Jesus did, what He said, and Who He was, I want us to see four specific truths:

I. There Is More to Life Than the Final Consequence of Sin (vs. 11-17)

As we read the text, we discover something that each of us can likely relate to. I would expect that almost everyone here can grasp the difficulty of the situation. We have all experienced the hardship of seeing someone be very sick or the sorrow and grief of a seeing a loved one pass away. Most of us can relate to the grief and sorrow of the moment that is described in John 11. As the passage begins, we learn about the man, Lazarus, who was very sick. We also learn that his two sisters, Mary and Martha, sent word for Jesus to inform Him of what was going on. Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and treated them like family. One would think that Jesus would have dropped everything to get to Lazarus immediately to heal him, but this isn’t what Jesus did. Immediately upon hearing the news, Jesus gave a simple but powerful summary. He said, “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.” Then He stayed two days longer, ministering where He was located in the Bethabara region, about 25 miles away. By the time that Jesus determines to go back towards the city of Bethany Lazarus has already died. It is a sad, somber, and even confusing scene. Think of it for a moment. Jesus said that this situation would not end in death, but by verse 14 He tells the disciples, “Lazarus is dead.” What is going on? By the time Jesus arrives in the city of Bethany, Lazarus has been dead for four days. He has already been buried in the tomb. We see the impact of death as Lazarus’ loved ones mourned and grieved and wept over his loss. Jesus, too, was stirred and moved and He, too, would weep. There was deep hurt, sorrow, and grief over death.

We all understand that there are consequences of sin. ****ILL:** A child can grasp this as they learn that there are consequences for bad behavior. An adult knows this every time we get in a car to drive. If we speed, we are likely to get caught and suffer the consequences. In the same way, there is a very real result of sin. I believe it is important for us to remember that death was not God’s plan or will for mankind. **God is not the author of death.** God created man in the Garden of Eden and desired that man would live with Him in perfect fellowship forever. That was God’s will. However, God gave man a free will to choose. We could love God and obey, or we could reject God and disobey. The Bible says that Satan, in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve to sin and she convinced Adam to sin. In **Genesis 2:17** when speaking of disobedience God had warned Adam saying, “From the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” Adam and Eve were clearly warned, but they also clearly chose their own way. They did sin and therefore death entered the world. Because of Adam’s sin, sin and death has passed on to all mankind. **Romans 5:12** says it this way, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Now, you may not like it or think it is fair, but I’m convinced that if you and I would’ve

been in Adam and Eve's shoes we would've sadly made the same decision. If you wonder why I say that, it should be obvious. Haven't we each had at least one single moment in our lives where we have all knowingly chosen to go our own way? We knew that we shouldn't do something, but we did it anyway. We have all pridefully and selfishly rejected God's will at one moment or another. The Bible clearly says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. It only takes one sin to be a sinner. It only took one sin for death to enter the world. All have sinned and **Romans 6:23a** says that, "The wages of sin is death." In other words, death is a direct result of sin.

One of the sad, but real, consequences of sin is that we, too, will die. We can't change it, fix it, or avoid it. **Ecclesiastes 8:8a** says, "No man has authority to restrain the wind with the wind, or authority over the day of death." **Hebrews 9:27**, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." This is a fact. I'm sure that someone is probably thinking, "Pastor, that's not very encouraging. I was hoping for some encouraging news." Nobody likes to think of death, but as sinners we must consider it because it is our reality. I don't like it any more than you do, but I'd rather face it realistically than simply ignore it. ****ILL:** Can you imagine a cancer patient just trying to ignore all the signs day after day after day? Ignoring the disease doesn't make it go away. And even the discouragement of it doesn't take it away. If you want to beat it, you have to do certain things. The illustration, though, falls apart there because there isn't a complete cure for cancer. However, there is a remedy to man's sin problem. There is a remedy to death.

Death is a result, a consequence, of sin that God Himself warned us of. Since we will all die, it is vitally important that we discover that there is more to life than merely the consequences of sin. The key to discovering this is found in Jesus. Jesus alone is the remedy for our sin. He is the only way that we can overcome death. He said in **verse 25b**, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies." Jesus is saying, "I am greater than sin and its consequences, and I am the key to discovering more to life." Yes, death is painful and can be overwhelming, but Jesus knew Who He was and what He was going to do. So, He said in **verse 15a**, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe." Please understand that Jesus wasn't glad for Lazarus' death, but He was glad that He was about to show them, and us today, that there is more to life than just the sad fact of death. There is more to this life than living and dying. Through Jesus we can experience the amazing gift of eternal life because He is the Resurrection and the Life.

II. There Is More to Life Than the Circumstances You Are In (vs. 18-21)

Jesus and His disciples make their way to Bethany. By the time they get to the city, Lazarus has died, his body has already been prepared, they have had his funeral, and his body has been buried in a tomb that has already been sealed. Can you imagine the scene as Mary and Martha grieve and sit in confusion? I'm sure they had questions. They had sent word of his sickness. They had requested Jesus to come. They expected Him to do so. They completely believed that Lazarus would be healed. Can you imagine their disappointment as the messenger comes back without Jesus? The servant has merely brought the word, "This sickness won't end in death, but for the glory of God." So, Mary and Martha have waited by his bedside waiting any minute for the miracle to come, but none of this happened. They must have sat in disbelief when he died. It seemed that Jesus' words hadn't been true. Where was God while they were struggling? They prepared their brother's body for burial and conducted the memorial service and, still, there was no sign of Jesus.

The Lord had promised that this would lead to God's glory. Was it true? Where was God's glory in this? Here in this moment all they can do is wait and cling to the Word of the Lord and trust that it was true, but there was a lot going on that seemed to refute it. All she could feel was pain. Have you ever been there? Are you there today? Mary and Martha were in a great circumstance.

Finally, word reached Martha that Jesus was on His way. It certainly seemed like He was too late. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him. Why did she go out to meet Jesus instead of waiting for Him to come to the house? I believe she felt like she had some things that she had to get off her chest without the crowd of people around her. Martha was dealing with grief and was overwhelmed at all the emotions and thoughts running through her mind. Basically, she is giving Jesus a piece of her mind. She doesn't say, "Hello." She doesn't say, "Thank you so much for coming." She doesn't say, "Jesus, Lazarus has died." Instead, she said, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died." Can you hear the frustration and the accusation in her words? She is basically saying, "Jesus, it's Your fault. You should have been here. You should have done something. You shouldn't have let this happen." Have you ever been there? What would you have done if you were in her shoes? Please understand this morning that as a pastor who has personally grieved and has ministered to countless people in moments of grief, I can sympathize with Martha's feelings. It is a painful thing when a loved one passes, and it hurts even more when we can't make sense of why. There are many things that happen in this sin-cursed, broken world that we can't fully explain, but we know, as we have seen already, this was not God's original plan. When sin came into the world it promised pleasure and enjoyment. It did deliver on that, but it also brought pain, death, and destruction in unimaginable ways. We see this in our lives today. We all face trials and circumstances that remind us that this isn't heaven. This isn't a perfect world. **Job 14:1** said it simply, "Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil." **Job 5:7**, "For man is born for trouble, as sparks fly upward." This is the way it is in a fallen, sin-cursed world. It shouldn't surprise us when we face circumstances. It should surprise us when we don't.

Thankfully, Jesus didn't leave them alone in their circumstance. He didn't have to visit Mary and Martha at all, but He cared for them and it was the Father's will that He go. So, Jesus went to minister to them in their circumstance. When Martha vented and accused, Jesus didn't get impatient or defensive or retaliate. In fact, He didn't say anything initially. He simply looked at Martha. As she is expressing her doubts and frustrations, He is just looking at her as if to say, "Martha, I'm here. I care about you. It's going to be ok. I know you are hurting and grieving. I know you are confused, but I came to show you that there is more to life than the circumstance that you are currently in. I know you don't understand, but trust Me, I am here." Jesus is just looking at her and suddenly the truth in her head begins to override the emotions in her heart and she confesses, "Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." She knows that her circumstance is real, but she also recognizes that Jesus is greater than her circumstance. We vividly see the struggle that is happening between her heart and her hurt. Make no mistake about it, though, Jesus is there to show her that He offers more to life than the circumstance that she currently faced.

III. There Is More to Life Than the Conclusion At the End (vs. 23-24)

Once Martha remembers Who is there with her and recognizes that He is greater than her circumstance, Jesus gives her a word of encouragement. He said, “Your brother will rise again.” This was a wonderful promise, but it was one that she clearly didn’t understand. She jumped to conclusions. She said, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” This simple fact shows us that Martha was certainly a woman with a clear understanding of God’s ultimate plan. Yes, she knew Jesus and followed Him, but she also knew the Old Testament and the many lessons that Jesus had taught about the resurrection. There were many in that day who said, “When you die, you die and that’s it.” There are many in our culture who say the same thing. Remember, though, that **Hebrews 9:27** says, “And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgement.” There is life after death, but that isn’t all. The Bible also talks about what will happen in the last days to the bodies of those that have died. In **Daniel 12:2** the Bible says, “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.” Even Jesus talked about this in **John 5:28-29**, “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” In other words, one day these old, decaying, rotten bodies will be brought out of the grave. Those who have believed in Jesus and experienced salvation will be given a glorified, perfect body for heaven. Those who have rejected Jesus will be given a defiled body that will be tormented for all eternity in hell. Jesus says, “Your brother will be resurrected. You will see him again.” Martha misunderstood Jesus’ statement. She was thinking of the resurrection of the body that would occur in the future. She was thinking, “Of course, I know I will see him in heaven one day. I know that we will be together for eternity.” Jesus, though, wasn’t talking about the future. He was talking about the immediate situation. He was saying, “Martha, I am going to raise up your brother now.” In this moment Jesus was changing the doctrine of the resurrection from the future to the present. Yes, there would still be a future resurrection for all believers, but Jesus is saying, “Don’t miss the truth, that the dead can be raised to life today.”

Isn’t this often like us in our moments of disappointment, doubt, fear, and frustration? We can easily find ourselves in a place where we aren’t in tune with what the Lord is saying. Jesus was making a bold statement of assurance, “I will raise him back to life,” but she was missing it. Why was she missing it? **Martha missed what God was doing because of the hurts of the past and hopelessness of the future.** Think of it, because she was focused on the end result of what had already happened, she concluded that nothing could change what’s been done. Lazarus was dead and that was that. Jesus didn’t heal him and that was that. The pain of the past prevented her from seeing what God was wanting to do. Then her limited knowledge of the future also caused her to misunderstand. She believed that she would see Lazarus again in heaven, but frankly heaven seemed a long way away. She was kind of stuck, caught between the disappointments of the past and the discouragements of waiting for the future. But, again, Who Jesus was and what He came to do shows us that there was more to life than even the final end of heaven. When Jesus answered Martha, He was saying, “Martha, don’t be consumed by the past, I am still in control. And don’t get so focused on the future that you have no hope in the present. I am the resurrection and the life.” In other words, Who Jesus is impacts us today, in this moment. Who Jesus is isn’t just about our future in heaven. Who Jesus is, and the life He gives, impacts us and changes us today.

IV. There Is More to Life Because of the Life That Jesus Gives (vs. 25-26, 38-46)

Why is there more to life than death and circumstances and even heaven in the future? Why is there more to life today? There is more to life because of Who Jesus is and what He came to give. Jesus said plainly, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.” He was and is the resurrection and the life and wherever He is, God’s resurrection power is available in the present – NOW! Jesus is showing us that He has the key to life beyond the grave. He came to this earth to give eternal life, so that we may live forever with Him. Jesus said in **John 6:47**, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.” That’s why Jesus made the next statement in **verse 26**. He is not saying that a man won’t die physically. He had already established the fact that death was the consequence of sin. He was describing a spiritual death. He was showing us that everyone who believes in Him will experience eternal life, that no matter what happens to our physical life, our soul will be saved for all of eternity. Jesus said it clearly in **John 3:16, 36**, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life...He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” That is a powerful claim. So, how can this be true if his friend Lazarus is still laying dead in a grave? Well, lets look through the rest of the story to see what happened. After Jesus’ conversation with Martha, she went and told Mary that Jesus was there. Mary immediately went out to talk with Jesus and said basically the same thing that Martha had said. Now, let’s pick up the story from **verses 38-46 (SHOW TEXT)**.

Here in the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus fully displays His power to give life. Already in the Gospels He has raised two people back to life, but this one certainly stands out. In the case of Lazarus, there is no debate or denial because of the public nature of the miracle and because of the amount of time that had passed. It had been four days. Everyone knew that Lazarus was dead. They had prepared the body, wrapped him up, sealed him away, and were grieving over him. Notice the account. Jesus said, “Remove the stone.” Immediately in **verse 39** Martha objected, “Lord, by this time there will be a stench,” because he’s been dead four days. This group of people, including Mary and Martha, had no idea that they were going to become eye witnesses of the Lord’s resurrecting power and would soon be telling the story to all who would listen. Jesus looked at Martha and said, “Didn’t I tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” It’s like He is saying, “Martha, don’t you get it? I am about to give life where there is none. I am the resurrection and the life. Just believe.” This was the point of the whole event. It wasn’t just about the faith of Mary and Martha. It was about the faith of everyone there that day who witnessed it. It was about the faith of everyone here today that is hearing it. The disciples rolled the stone away and Jesus prayed, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that you always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.” Are you hearing this today? Jesus is doing this for the glory of the Father and for the good of the people around Him. He is doing this so that they might believe. He did this so that we will believe. We see three powerful things that occur over the next three verses.

A. Jesus Raised Him from the Dead

Jesus simply spoke the words, “Lazarus, come forth” and immediately Lazarus came back to life and rose from the dead. Immediately, Lazarus was alive again. This was an unquestioned miracle that nobody could deny. At the command of Jesus, instantly he went from death to life.

B. Jesus Released Him from His Bondage

Death no longer held Lazarus back. He was standing, alive and breathing, before the very crowd that had just buried him. The only thing remaining that could hinder Lazarus was the wrappings that they had placed around his arms and legs and face. He was now alive, but he was limited because of the old grave clothes that held him bound. But, even these final reminders of death would be removed at the very word of Jesus. He said, “Unbind him (meaning “let him loose”) and let him go.”

Yes, this was a real event that really happened, but this miracle serves as a powerful picture of what happens in the life of every single person that believes in Jesus Christ for eternal life. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Without Him as the Lord of our lives, the Bible says that we are spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins. The only way we can experience eternal life is by believing in Jesus as the resurrection and the life. The very moment we believe, we are given the gift of eternal life. We are raised to new life in Christ and we are set free from the old life of sin and death. **Ephesians 2:4-6** says it well, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Even as Lazarus was raised from the dead and his grave clothes were removed so, too, has every person who believes in Jesus. We are raised to new life and set free from our old ways that we might live the new life found only in Jesus Christ.

C. Jesus Revealed Who He Is

What did Jesus claim in verse 25? And what did He do in verses 43-44? The end result is found in verse 45. Jesus’ miracle had given proof to His claim. He revealed that His claim was true and many believed. The greatest evidence that His claim was true, however, would occur just eight chapters later in the book of John, where Jesus Himself would give His own life on the cross. His body was prepared for burial, anointed with spices, carefully wrapped, and laid in a tomb. Then three days later, just as He said He would, He rose again from the grave. Sin couldn’t defeat Him, and the grave couldn’t hold Him. Why? Because He is indeed the resurrection and the life. There is no doubt Who Jesus is and what He can give to us today. He is the resurrection and the life and He gives eternal life to all who believe in Him. The only question is this, “Do you believe?” In fact, I close by asking you the same question that Jesus asked of Martha, “Do you believe this?” She answered well. She answered in faith, “Yes, Lord. I believe that You are the Savior, the Son of God who has come into the world to save me.” Will you answer the same way today? There is more to life because of the life that Jesus offers, but the only way to receive it is through Jesus Christ – the Resurrection and the Life.