

“I Am the Resurrection and the Life” // John 11:25–26 // “I AM” #4¹

Introduction

Happy Easter! I hope you’re excited to be here. If you're not a Summit regular, a guest, so to speak, I really want to welcome you. But I hesitate to call you a guest because I don’t want to think of you as a guest, because when we have guests over to our house, we have an expectation that at some point they’re gonna leave. I have an introvert friend who likes having people over to his house, but almost doesn’t do it because he’s afraid they won’t leave when it’s time. Do you ever have that happen? For people like my wife, you could stay all night and talk. For introverts, they need a cut off time. So, this guy’s wife bought him one of those party banners that says, **“Welcome: (PIC) Please leave by 9.”** The point is: guests *leave*, but we don’t want you to *leave*, so I’m not gonna consider you a guest. I’m going to consider you ‘future family,’ you just don’t know it yet. Listen, we’re here every week, so I hope you’ll be back. And you chose a great week for your first week, btw, because I have some very good news for you!

Listen: let me just acknowledge this up front: Today signifies something outrageous that Christians believe, and we might as well just acknowledge that. We’re here celebrating that a man in an

obscure place rose from the dead 2000 years ago and somehow that radically transforms our lives today. And we believe it actually happened! That an actual flesh and blood man was placed in an actual grave for 3 actual days and then he actually walked out of that grave and actual people saw him and touched and ate with him and then he ascended in front of their actual eyes with his actual, resurrected body into heaven. That’s a crazy bold claim; it is crazy now; it was crazy back then when they first made it. But, there’s actual, good reason to believe it, and if it’s true, it changes everything.

I heard a story about an elderly couple who went to the Holy Land together. And they were one of those couples that just constantly fought and bickered, as if no one else were around. Well, sadly, while they were in the Holy Land, the man died. So, the wife went to a local undertaker and asked if he could help her ship her husband’s body back to the US. He said, “Sure, ma’am, but it’ll cost you around \$5,000.” “But,” the undertaker said, “I COULD bury him right here in the Holy Land for only \$250.” And she said, “No, it’s OK. I’ll ship him back.” And the undertaker said, “But ma’am, I don’t understand. I mean, you could bury him right here in the Holy Land, in the land of Jesus and the Apostles and the prophets, and save \$4700.” And the woman said, “Yeah... but 2,000 years ago a man was buried here, and he rose again... and I just don’t think I wanna take that chance.” Just kidding. That’s not a true story. And that’s not what Easter is about.

¹ Works consulted: Tim Keller, “Out from the Grave, March 2, 2014, Redeemer Presbyterian; Tyler Staton, “I am the Resurrection and the Life”, February 5, 2023, Bridgetown Church; Joby Martin, “Lazarus”, May 14, 2023, The Church of Eleven22; David Jeremiah; [Andy Stanley](#); Josh Moody, *John*

1–12 for You; Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*; Grant R. Osborne, *John: Verse by Verse*; Tim Keller, “Message after 9/11,” in *Tim Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation* (Audible edition), and others as noted throughout.

But what is the main point of the Easter story and how it is relevant to us?

John 11, if you have your Bibles. For the last several weeks here at **The Summit, we have been looking at the** 7x in the Gospel of John that Jesus takes the loftiest name of God in the Old Testament--I AM (or, Jehovah)--and claims it for himself. What makes these claims so significant to us is that each time Jesus takes the name of God, he applies it to one of our most acute places of felt-need. For example, to those who are hungry, he says, "I AM the bread of life"; to those in darkness, he says, "I AM the light." To those who feel lost, he says "I AM the door." Every "I AM" claim Jesus makes in John starts with a human problem.

And today, we come to the ultimate human problem: DEATH. To which Jesus says in **John 11:25, Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live."**

Death, or fear of death, is probably our most acute felt-needs. Death is one of those ever-present realities for us that we can ignore, at times, until we can't. Two years ago, our church celebrated Easter at the Walnut Creek amphitheater down in Raleigh. There are many reasons I'll never forget that Easter, but the main one is that it was the same week that my mother died. We'd done her funeral on Good Friday, and I don't think I'll ever be able to go into another Easter without the reminder that the grave ultimately takes everyone and everything we care about.

Maybe something like that has happened to you this year. Maybe you've lost someone, or you *are* losing someone--a parent; a mother; maybe a spouse; or a good friend, maybe a child. And the isolation; the cold loneliness that accompanies that loss seems almost unbearable.

Jesus' "I AM" claim here in John 11:25 obviously addresses that, and we'll get to that, but this claim also addresses another felt-need, I'll show you, one that some of you perhaps feel even more poignantly right now, and that is **disappointment with God**. I mean a deep, unsettling question about why God didn't do something that you thought that he should have done. I mean, it just didn't make any sense: *You prayed. You believed. You trusted in him. And you did all the things you were supposed to do.* But God didn't seem to do his part. The person still died. The marriage still disintegrated. You didn't get the job. And maybe you're not even sure how to think about all this anymore. If God is loving and he's good, like you've always been taught, why didn't he help *you* in your moment of crisis? Where was he for you? And yeah, you're here this morning, but honestly, you're not even sure how much you believe this stuff anymore.

When Ted Turner, media mogul and multi-billionaire (the man who founded CNN and TBS)--when Ted was in high school, he was on fire for Jesus. Most people don't know that about him, but he was. In fact, he felt called to be a missionary. But when he was 15, his younger sister, Mary Jane, aged 12, contracted lupus, a degenerative tissue disease, and for the next several years her body was racked with pain. Ted regularly came home from school, sat by her bed, held her hand and tried to comfort her. He prayed for her recovery, but after several years of misery, she died. Ted's dad, Ed Turner, the family's spiritual

anchor, said, "If that's the type of God he is, I want nothing to do with him," and when Ted saw his dad crumble, Ted lost his own faith. He said in an interview later, *"I was taught that God was love and God was powerful, and I couldn't understand, if that was true, how someone so innocent should be allowed to suffer like that."*

Shew. That's hard for me to read. But my guess is that there's a number of you in here with questions of your own like that.

This story in John 11 starts with a question so many of us have asked at some point: Jesus, where were you? If you really love me, why didn't you show up when... or, "Where were you when...?" Or, "How can I trust you after...?"

Here's how the story goes: Lazarus, Jesus' friend, got sick. Now, Jesus loved everybody, of course, but he was especially close to Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha. They seemed to be some of his favorite people--he had a deep, personal connection with them; it's likely they had grown up as childhood friends. And they believed in him and supported his ministry.

Well, Lazarus had gotten sick, and it quickly became obvious that this was no ordinary sickness--it was serious, so Martha sent for Jesus. You see, by this point Jesus had a reputation for being a miracle worker. They'd all heard how he'd multiplied food for the hungry crowd; how he'd walked on water through a storm to rescue his disciples from drowning; how he'd healed a blind man.

But, there was another reality, too: Jesus didn't heal every sick person in Israel; in fact, he seemed to be rather selective in who healed,

almost as if the point was not his ability to end every disease immediately, but other things he was trying to teach through the healings.

And yet surely, they thought, surely, he'd heal Lazarus. If there's anybody Jesus would be sure to heal, it would be his longtime friend Lazarus. So Martha sent for Jesus-- *"Jesus, hurry, it's urgent; our brother doesn't have long; please come immediately."* And they waited. And they waited. But Jesus never showed. And Lazarus died.

Maybe most confusingly, we find out that Jesus' delay was **intentional. Look at vs. 5: Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.** (*Do those 2 sentences make any sense together? Now Jesus loved... so when he heard Lazarus was ill, he STAYED...*) You'd expect it to say, "Now Jesus loved Martha and Mary, so when he heard Lazarus was ill, he **immediately rushed there...**" **But that's not what it says.** It says "he loved them, SO he stayed."

In fact, when his disciples, who were with him, saw that he delayed going, they couldn't understand it. And when they found out that Lazarus was dead, they were like Jesus, "What's the deal?" And he said, vs. 15 **...for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe.**

- Here's the central question of this whole story: "Believe what?" I'm going to show you that.
- **But get your mind around this right from the start: There are some things about Jesus that are SO IMPORTANT that Jesus is going to let one of his friends die and let the hearts of two of his**

other friends be temporarily broken so that the disciples could understand and believe some things about Jesus.²

- And, btw, while we're at it: Who is the "YOU" Jesus is thinking about in that sentence? ("I am glad that I was not there so that **YOU** may believe.") It's not just "you," the disciples there in that story. It's also "you," people at the Summit Church today.
- This story is written so that you could *believe*. Jesus is saying, "*I am going to allow the events of this story to play out in a certain way so that you, disciples, and YOU, believers at the Summit Church 2000 years later, might better understand and believe in ME.*"
- Because, see, there will be times when all of us will think, "Where is God?" and he wants us to be able to hold on to him in those moments.
- Listen (PAUSE). *He let the story go down specifically this way for the sake of you who've lost their faith, who used to believe in God until the bitterness of life just crushed it out of you. He set this story up for you, so that YOU might believe.*
- Jesus in this story affirms what you felt when God didn't show up for you. God, where were you? Through this story he says to you, "Yeah, I know you felt that way," and he doesn't even condemn you for feeling like that. In fact, he meets you there, and lets this story unfold in a certain way so that YOU might *believe*.

Here's how it goes down: By the time Jesus finally gets there, Lazarus has been dead for 4 days. He's long since been put in the grave. Martha hears that Jesus is on his way, and she runs out to meet him, and when she sees him she verbalizes that thought so many of us have had when we're disappointed with God: **21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.** "Why didn't you show up, Jesus? You could have shown up. We did

what we were supposed to do; we've been loyal to you; when others departed from you, we stayed faithful to you. Why didn't you show up for us?"

Have you ever asked that? I know you have. What happens next is your answer.

Tim Keller, who pastored for years in NYC, preached on this passage the Sunday after terrorists flew planes into the twin towers on Sept 11, 2001 killing 3000 people in their community, many of whom had been part of Dr. Keller's church. Dr. Keller said that Jesus in this story shows us 4 things about himself that he wants us to hold onto in any tragedy. *The first is...*

1. Tears

- Vs. 35 is the shortest verse in the Bible. **Jesus wept.** When Jesus saw the grief of Mary and Martha at the death of their brother, he wept.
- (*Listen, y'all know that the little divisions in your Bible between chapters and verses and the numbers were added years later—when John was first written it was all one flowing manuscript. Well, it's interesting to me that whoever determined the numbers thought that these two words belonged in their own verse; what happened here is so significant that these words needed to stand alone. And I agree with that.*)
- The Son of God, who placed the stars in the sky, wept with two broken-hearted sisters.

² I owe this insight to Andy Stanley!

- But to be honest, Jesus' tears here are almost a little confusing to me, here. You see, Jesus knew that in 10 minutes Lazarus would be out of the grave and everyone would be reunited and rejoicing. Vs 4 tells you that he knew that from the very beginning. So, here's the question: if he knew it was going to end like this, why take time to cry right here?
 - I mean, if you were together, and you were brokenhearted about something, and I knew that in just a matter of seconds whatever you were upset about was going to be fixed, I'd say, "Don't cry! It's all about to get together!"
 - I've been totally into March Madness this year, but so many of the games I'm interested in have taken place when I had some prior obligation. So I set my TV to record it, and I try to get home w/o finding out. But I don't know what it is--I just can't make it home without somebody saying something, getting a text, seeing a big old smile on someone's face and knowing what it's about. I've just told people. Don't look at me. Don't smile. Don't frown. I don't want to know. But somehow I always find out. But here's the thing: one benefit of knowing that the team I want to win has won, when I'm watching the game and the other team goes on a run or whatever, I'm like, "It don't matter. It's still gonna be a great day to be a Tarheel." Or, "No worries, the Pack will come back!"
- So, why does Jesus weep with Mary if he knows that in 10 minutes the issue is going to be resolved?
 - It's because Jesus wants you to understand how he feels about you, in your pain. Even when Jesus knows the pain is temporary, he knows what it feels like for you, and he weeps with you.

- Let's be honest: 1000 years is not that much different to Jesus than 10 minutes. Which means Jesus can already see the beautiful resolution to your story; he can already see that beautiful moment when you are reunited to lost loved ones and all the sad things in your life become untrue.
- He can already see that, but in the moment, the Son of God still weeps with you. Because his heart is knit to yours. Isa 49 says he has engraved us on the palms of his hands, which means what hurts us, hurts him. He feels deeply what I feel, like I feel deeply what my kids feel.
- And I can tell you from experience, sometimes that is a great consolation. To know that I have a Savior who has entered into my pain; that the tears in my eyes are matched with tears in his. *"Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every sorrow, so take it to the Lord in prayer. What a friend we have in Jesus!"*

Tears. Here's the 2nd word...

2. Anger

- vs. 33 says, "When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled."
 - That word for "deeply moved," in Greek, is *embriMAŌmi*. We translate it as "deeply moved," but scholars say that that's not a great translation--there is no great English translation; it means, 'he got indignant,' some scholars say the best translating is 'snorted'; like an animal snorting in anger right as it is about to charge.

- Jesus in this moment shifts from ‘weeping friend’ to conquering warrior. He’s about to go into battle.
- Jesus walks toward the grave and, again, vs. 38, John repeats that he was “deeply moved,” and then in vs. 43 Jesus shouts at death with a loud voice.
 - John Calvin said Jesus in this moment is entering the ring *“...like a wrestler preparing for a contest with a hated foe. The violent tyranny of death which he came to overcome now stands before his eyes.”*
 - If you were writing the soundtrack for this story, this is where you’d start to play the Rocky theme. Or “Avengers Assemble,” for your millennials.
 - And, BTW, can I just add here--it’s ok for you to be angry at death. To be angry at suffering and cancer. Jesus was. The world is not supposed to be like this, and you’re not supposed to get used to it. Don’t whitewash these realities as “a necessary rhythm of life”: “Well, we all have to say goodbye sometime.” When you’re standing beside the grave of a child and something rises up in you that says, “This is not right!,” that emotion is valid. Anger in the face of injustice and suffering is *right*.
- Jesus goes into battle with the most hated, most dreadful enemy ever known by mankind, and in so doing he’s going to offer something no other religious leader, or political leader, or scientist, has ever been able to offer.
- I mentioned this last week--it’s become accepted wisdom to say that all religions are basically the same; they all generally lead to the same place; they may teach different names for God and encourage different rituals, but the core of them is all the same. But that’s not true. Jesus promised something that no other religious or political leader in the world has ever been able to promise, and that is to erase death.
- I remember a few years ago hearing the tragic story of a grandmother who was home babysitting her 2 year old grandson when, apparently, she looked out the window and saw that he’d gotten out of the house and she saw him stumble into the deep end of the pool. She went after him to rescue him. But tragically, 2 hours later, they pulled the bodies of both the grandmother and grandson out of the pool, because, you see, the grandmother hadn’t been able to swim either. **We deeply admire the grandmother’s desire to save her grandson, but the truth is that those who would do the rescuing can’t have the same problem as those who need to be rescued.**
- Moses, and Abraham, and Buddha and Mohammad all taught some great things, but the truth is, they all died. And I’m not trying to be catty about that, but none of them ever claimed to be able to overcome death.
- Human history has produced all kinds of great leaders and thinkers and inventors, but the death rate in the modern world holds steady at 100%. Death is the one, great, unconquerable enemy of the human race. As **Aristotle** said, “Death is a dreadful thing, for it is the end.” Or, the famous skeptic Aldous Huxley: “If you’re a film-going, newspaper-reading, chocolate-eating modern, death is hell.”
- Only one Person in history has ever gone into the darkness of the grave and walked out by his own power. And now he’s standing there in front of Mary and Martha saying, **I AM the resurrection and the life.**
- And he says to them, “Do you believe this?”

Which leads me to the 3rd word:

3. Truth

- Jesus makes a promise in this verse. Vs. [25] ~~Jesus said to her,~~ “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live [26] and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”
- Of course this doesn’t mean no Christian ever dies. I mean, the whole point of this story is that Lazarus believed in Jesus and he died. And even after being raised from the dead here, Lazarus died again one day. He’s here still hanging out in a cave somewhere like the Knight Templar in Indiana Jones’ Last Crusade.
- What Jesus meant is that, for the follower of Jesus, death is not really death--not in the final sense, not in the eternal sense. And one day, like Lazarus, we’re going to wake up from death like we’re waking up from a bad dream.
- And in that moment, all the sad things in our lives will come untrue. What God is offering us is not some pie-in-the-sky consolation for all our troubles; he’s saying he will reverse and undo all the negative consequences of death.
- JRR Tolkien has that famous phrase describing the resurrection. It’s from book 3 of *Lord of the Rings*. On that day, he says, “all the sad things in our lives come untrue.” It will be like waking up from a bad dream.
- Tim Keller used to say that about *once every year or so, he’d have a recurring nightmare that his wife said she felt very flattered by. In this nightmare, his wife died. Something has happened to her, Tim said, and in my dream I’m desperately trying to figure out how*

to make it without her. My wife says she is flattered because the recurrence of this dream means that her death is obviously my greatest fear. “But let me tell you something really weird,” he said: “I almost like having the nightmare now... Because the first minute after I wake up is so unbelievably great! To wake up and say, ‘Oh my, it was only a bad dream. Everything bad I thought I was living through has come untrue.’ It is not like I’m awakened just to have someone give me something to make the pain better. It’s not like when I awake someone says, “Sorry your wife died. Here’s another wife.” (Like a consolation) No. In waking up, the dream itself becomes untrue. **It is a wonderful feeling to say, “It is morning. It was only a bad dream!”** Dr. Keller then says: “Do you know what Jesus Christ is saying when he says, “I am the resurrection”? He is not saying that he will give us a nicer place, like some kind of consolation for the pain. No, he is going to make everything that happened in our pain seem like a bad dream. He’ll make everything bad come untrue. **Jesus Christ is not giving us consolation, he’s giving us resurrection.**”

- For those who live and believe in Jesus, this is what he promises. Jesus then asks the question to Martha, and to us: **Do you believe this?**

Billy Graham said shortly before he died: **“One fine day you will hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don’t you believe it. I’ll be more alive than ever, I will just have changed addresses.”** (PIC)

Do you believe this?

In vv 38–44, Jesus goes on to raise Lazarus; it’s an incredible scene. Jesus prays to the Father, vs 42, and says, “Do this, Father, so they will believe that you sent me,” and then Jesus yells Lazarus’ name

down into the grave, and suddenly there was a stirring down there, and Lazarus walked out. ***I mean, can you just imagine that moment?*** African American Pastor Charles Blake famously said, “It’s a good thing Jesus used Lazarus’ first name, or every dead man in that cemetery would have come out.”

(BTW, one little detail you might overlook--John points out that this happens on the 4th day after Lazarus has died. The reason that is significant is Jews believed that the spirit hung around the body sometimes for about 3 days. But on the 4th day, when decomposition had really started, that was when the spirit was gone for good. IOW, in the Jewish mind, Lazarus was not just dead, he was dead, dead. Really dead. Mega dead. And yet, Jesus calls him back to life like he’s waking somebody up out of a nap.)

Then Jesus says, “Take off his graveclothes,” and they all rejoice and marvel at Jesus’ power. And you might think the story is over, “Yea, Jesus!” But it’s not. See, **in vs 45**, the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, they hear about this miracle and they call an emergency session, and in that session they decide that this is the final straw--this miracle is going to give people false hope and give Jesus too much authority. **[53] So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.** And in less than 2 weeks, Jesus will be executed.

It’s not accidental that John ties these 2 things together because he’s showing us that **to break up this funeral, you see, Jesus had to start his own.** *And that leads to our 4th and final word:*

4. Grace

- In order for US to never die, Jesus had to die in our place. You see, God had said back in the Garden of Eden, at the dawn of time, that the penalty of sin, the consequence of sin, was death. *“The soul that sins,”* he said, *“it shall die.”*
- Sin separates us from God, and God is the source of life. I mean, imagine if earth rebelled from its orbit and began to drift off into space. Death would be inevitable. That’s what sin is like. It separated us from God, and put upon us the curse of death.
- (BOOK) Let this book represent my curse of death. Because I have sinned, because I have voluntarily chosen to walk away from God, I carry this curse around with me. I may have times in my life where I feel closer to God, where life is going well; and other times where I don’t feel that way. But whether I feel close or far away, the curse of death between us remains.
- The gospel--the central Christian message--is that on the cross God made Jesus, who knew no sin, to become sin for us. (TRANSFER) **God placed my sin upon Jesus.** As the prophet Isaiah predicted, *“He would be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace would be put upon him... so that by his stripes I could be healed.”*
- Jesus can be the resurrection and life for me because he became death for me. He broke up Lazarus’ funeral by starting his own.
- I told this story that Easter that my mom died--it’s a story about a dad who was driving down the interstate with his little 3-year old daughter in the back in the car seat, when suddenly she began to scream, “Daddy, daddy a bee!” She was terrified of bees, and, her father knew, she was also deathly allergic to them. So the dad rolled down the windows and was trying to shoo the yellow jacket

out. Dads, we've all done this. But it wasn't working, and the dad was panicking, so he pulled the car over, got out and jumped in the backseat and trapped the bee against the glass with his hand. After a moment, he pulled his hand back and the bee flew away. The little girl started to scream again, "Daddy, daddy, the bee, the bee!" But the dad said, "Sweetheart, that bee cannot hurt you anymore." And he opened his palm and showed her the bee's stinger lodged in the palm of his hand.

- **On the cross, Jesus took the stinger of death into his hands so that when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, there would be no stinger left for me.**
- "Oh death," Paul says, "where is your sting?" "Oh grave, where is your victory?" The stinger is gone and the grave has been vanquished. Jesus, by his death, put death to death, and now offers resurrection life to all who will believe in him.

Do. You. Believe. This? Which brings us back to what Jesus said that the whole point of this encounter was: **15 ...so that you may believe.** In vs. 42, Jesus makes his aim in this even clearer. Look at it--When Jesus is asking the Father to raise Lazarus, he says, **42 ...**("Do this, Father) **that they may believe that you sent me.**" "Do it, Father, so they see that I come from you and represent you."

VAMP

Imagine you'd been one of Jesus' disciples there that day and you heard Jesus pray, "Father, we did it this way so that they would understand you sent me." You might say, "*Jesus, you're telling us that*

*you engineered this entire event just so we could understand who sent you? And Jesus would say, unhesitatingly, "Yes." And you might say, "But is understanding that such a big deal that it's worth all of this pain and grief?" And Jesus would say, "Absolutely."*³ You see, the true knowledge of God is the single most valuable thing in the world.

And Jesus through this story gives us the picture of what the Father is like. What Jesus teaches over and over in the Gospel of John is, "Like Son, like Father." "*If you've seen me, and experienced me,*" he says, "*you've experienced the Father.*" What Jesus was to Mary and Martha, the Father is to us.

So what Jesus wants you to believe in your pain is that there is a Heavenly Father who stands beside you and weeps with you. (And, by the way, some of you are sitting there saying, "*But J.D., you don't understand. My pain is my fault. I brought all this on myself.*" "*My marriage is in shambles because of me.*" Or, "*I lost my job because of me.*" "*My life is ruined because of me.*" That doesn't matter. When the prodigal son had walked away from the Father into the far country, the Father still stood at the gates every day looking out with broken heart out in his direction. Oh, he hurts for you right now, whatever the source of your pain.

Jesus showed us how much the Father loved the world--so much that he sent his only begotten Son to destroy our greatest enemy, death. And the only way he could do that was by taking on the enemy in our place. And so he came for it, literally snorted and yelled at it, wrestled it into the grave and absorbed its stinger into himself.

³ I owe this insight to Andy Stanley

And now he promises us that if we live and believe in him, we will never die. Death, for believers, when we experience it, will never have that fatally bitter taste that it does for so many. It's like I often tell grieving families at a funeral, *"You haven't lost that loved one, you've just lost contact with them for a little while.* And oh, btw, if you could just see them now, you wouldn't feel sad for them; they feel sad for you! But soon and very soon you'll see them again, and this nightmare will be over."

One day, soon and very soon, this whole veil of tears we call life will come to an end, and we'll see that Jesus wasn't absent after all. And we'll see that life wasn't meaningless chaos, either. He's going to end it all in resurrection, but he sometimes 'delayed' because there were things we learned to believe about God and his goodness in the pain that we couldn't have learned any other way. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul says, *"Death is swallowed up in victory." Swallowed up.* When you swallow something, it becomes part of you! Our experiences of pain and suffering and waiting become a part of the glory we experience in eternity.

And I know you say, *"But why? Why do it this way?"* I don't know if I can fully answer that. But I do know everything in your Bible teaches that. **I've told you before:** It doesn't totally make sense to me why Jesus made the disciples wait until the 3rd day for his resurrection. I get at least waiting to resurrect until the next morning... I mean, if he died in the afternoon, give it a night to prove that he's dead; plus the imagery of the resurrection at sunrise works really well. But why wait a whole extra day in the middle? ***I mean, talk about a miserable day!*** The disciples were completely confused. This Messiah whom they had

thought was the Son of God had DIED. It seemed like total failure. They felt LOST. Why make them wait a full extra day in that condition before the resurrection?

I don't know the full answer to that, but I know, in part, it's because that's what our lives often feel like now. We live in that 2nd day of waiting, where we say, like Mary and Martha, "Where are you, God?"

But see, there's an empty tomb in Jerusalem that assures us that he hasn't forgotten us. We may feel like we're in a pointless Saturday of suffering, but Resurrection Sunday is just around the corner. It will be here before you know it. And in the meantime, he stands by the grave of your disappointment and weeps with you, praying for you, Paul says with groanings too deep for human words

Jesus set this whole story up in a particular way so that when you feel disappointed with God, you'd still believe. [\(So that you'd be able to say--no matter how chaotic life feels--I have a Savior who hasn't forgotten me and who will keep every promise for good he's ever made to me.](#)

[In 1871 Horatio Spafford, a 43 year old businessman, suffered complete financial ruin in the Great Chicago fire. Just before the fire he and his wife had lost their son to scarlet fever. Filled with grief, they decided to take a vacation in England. Horatio had a few work things to tie up first, so sent his wife and four daughters ahead on the SS Ville du Havre. He was supposed to follow in just a few days.](#)

But on its way to England, their ship was struck by another ship and sank within 12 minutes. 226 lives were lost in the tragedy, including all four of Horatio's daughters.

Horatio booked passage on the next ship and asked the captain to notify him when they reached the point where his 4 daughters had drowned. He stood out on deck looking, for a while, at that mighty ocean, and then returned to his cabin and wrote these words:

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say
It is well, it is well, with my soul!

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh trump of the angel! Oh voice of the Lord!
Blessèd hope, blessèd rest of my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.)

Jesus set up this whole story in a certain way so you could say that. So you sing that when you are weeping by the grave of your Lazarus.) So that brings us back to Jesus' central question: **"Do you believe this?" (11:26)** Because if you do, there's a promise: **...everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. (vs 26)**

It's a promise that he will give you the power of his resurrection, but you have to believe it and receive it for yourself. The invitation John sets up his entire Gospel with is this--this is the point to every story: **"But to as many received him, to them he gave the power to become the children of God, to those who believe on his name." (John 1:12)**

You have to choose to receive him: You ask, **"What does it mean to receive him?"**

- I can tell you what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean living a life that makes you good enough to earn the title, "child of God." That's not receiving, that's earning.
- It doesn't mean going through a church ritual like baptism or confirmation. Oh, sure, those have their place as a way of signifying and formalizing your relationship with God. But those aren't receiving, they are accomplishing.
- Receiving him means exactly what you think it means. It means you receive him like you'd receive a gift being offered to you. If someone offers you a gift, you take out your hands and receive it.
- Or think of it like a bride and groom receive each other on their wedding day. One says, "I want you in my life. Do you receive me?" And the other says, "Yes, I receive you. From now on, you and I go *together*. Where you go, I go. From this point onward, I belong to you, and you belong to me."
- That's what it means to receive him. I don't know what you think it means to be a Christian. A lot of people think it means obeying the rules--a good faith effort at keeping the Commandments. Or they think it means being regular at church. But that's not the essence of what it means to be a Christian. The essence of being a Christian is having a personal relationship with Jesus. Do you have that? Have you ever received him for yourself, let him come into

your life and take full control, and made him your personal Savior?

You can do that today. Right now.

- BOW HEADS TO PRAY.
- Now text "READY" to 33933.