

I AM...

A Jesus Resurrection

Frankton – 3/27/16

Scripture: John 11.25-26 I AM the Resurrection...

Proposition: We don't have a Lazarus resurrection, we have a Jesus resurrection.

There are probably some folks in here who are shocked, maybe a little confused, maybe even a little mad, maybe even disappointed regarding the scripture that I chose for this morning. It's not the typical Easter "Jesus has risen from the grave" scripture. I promise, we'll get to that scripture later. But, we are actually finishing a Lenten sermon series that I have titled: [SLIDE] I AM. For the seven Sundays since Ash Wednesday, we studied the "I am" sayings of Jesus that occur in the gospel of John. In seven different situations, Jesus refers to himself as something by saying "I am..." So far, we have learned that Jesus used the Hebrew word "haya" (hay-yaw) which is the same word God used when introducing himself to Moses. In other words, he was claiming to be God. We've already talked about Jesus being the light in a world of darkness. We've talked about Jesus being the human gate that guards us. We've talked about Jesus being the good shepherd that tenderly cares for his sheep to the point of sacrificing his life for his sheep. We talked about Jesus as the bread of life. We learned that Jesus called himself the true vine that connects us all. Last week, we were supposed to learn that Jesus called himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Unfortunately, I had to miss last Sunday. Today we will teach about the last of the "I AM" statements that Jesus made: I AM the Resurrection. [25]

Our story today starts while Jesus was at the Jordan River near where John had been baptizing. John had been baptizing down near the city of Jericho, just north of the Dead Sea, about 20-22 miles from Jerusalem. While Jesus was there he received word that his friend Lazarus had fallen deathly ill. The disciples wanted him to leave right away to go see Lazarus, but Jesus waited for two whole days before he finally decided to head toward Bethany, a suburb of Jerusalem, where his friend Lazarus and Lazarus' two sisters, Martha and Mary, lived. Fearing that Lazarus had already died, the disciples tried to talk Jesus out of going, but Jesus could be pretty persuasive. Lazarus' home town of Bethany, which as I said was really a suburb of Jerusalem, which is where Jesus has already told his disciples that he will die. So Thomas, speaks up and says that he will go and DIE with Jesus and the others follow suit. So Jesus and the twelve head off to Bethany, a couple of days journey away.

When they arrived in Bethany, they discovered that Lazarus had been dead and in the tomb for four days. There were many mourners in and around Lazarus' house, all mourning their friend Lazarus. Lazarus' sister, Martha, met Jesus before he even got to the house as he was arriving and said to him, "If you had only been here." Jesus told her that her brother would rise again. She agreed on the last day that the world would exist he would indeed rise up with all of the others who had departed. But Jesus told her: [SLIDE] *I am the resurrection and the life.* He explains by adding: *Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die.* That's what Jesus means when he says: *I am the resurrection and the life.*

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Jesus goes on to the house where Lazarus and his sisters lived and found Mary, Lazarus' other sister. She says the same thing to Jesus, "If you had only been here." Then Jesus goes to the tomb and weeps. Jesus asks for a few of the men to roll the stone away from the grave opening only to have Martha say that the smell would be terrible. Jesus is insistent and the stone is rolled away. Jesus prays to his father in heaven then commands: *Lazarus, come out!* [43] Lazarus stumbles out of the cave still wrapped in his death linens. And I'm quite sure that there was a fantastic reunion between Lazarus and his two sisters as well as all the other friends who were there mourning Lazarus' death.

That's the story that you didn't come to hear. That's not the normal, "Jesus rose from the grave story" that we tell on Easter. So the story everyone expected to hear me talk about today is the story of Jesus' resurrection. Well, here it is in the Reader's Digest Condensed form, but I need to do a little set-up first. I just told you the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. That happened in John 11. Right after that, fearing that the people might unite around Jesus and try to fight against Rome, the Jewish leaders begin plotting Jesus' arrest and death. This was just a short time, maybe a couple of weeks, before the Feast of the Passover. This particular Passover was celebrated by Jesus in the Upper Room where he instituted Holy Communion. Then on Friday he was killed and Sunday he was raised. So the time span between Jesus raising Lazarus and Jesus' own resurrection was about two weeks. In other words, people were still buzzing about Lazarus dying and being raised when Jesus' own death and resurrection occurred.

In John, we see where Mary went to the tomb early on Sunday morning. Early enough that it was still dark. (Imagine going to a cemetery in the dark.) [SLIDE] She found that the stone covering the entrance to the tomb had been moved. She was evidently carrying a light because she was able to look into the tomb and see that Jesus' body wasn't there. She immediately turned around and high-tailed it back to where she and the disciples had been staying. She told Peter and John what she had seen (probably had to wake them up). All three ran back to the tomb. Peter and John enter the tomb and see what Mary saw: no body, but the linens that Jesus' body would have been wrapped in were still there – folded up nice and neat. Then Peter and John go back to the house where they were staying.

Mary stayed – probably so confused and desperate for answers she just couldn't walk away. She again looks into the tomb, doesn't go in but looks into the tomb, probably having to bend down to see inside, and sees two angels who ask her why she is crying. Her answer is important. She says someone has taken Jesus body and she doesn't know where it is. She thinks someone stole Jesus' body. She doesn't yet understand that Jesus is resurrected. She glances over her shoulder and sees the "gardener" who also asks her why she is crying. She asks him to tell her where he took Jesus' body and she will go get it herself. (Must be a pretty strong woman to be able to carry a dead body.) The "gardener" looks at her and says only one word: *Mary*. [20.16] And then Mary gets it. The sound of his voice, saying her name. She immediately knows that this person standing in front of her isn't the gardener but rather it's the risen Jesus.

So now I've just gone through two resurrection stories. Lazarus was dead, truly dead, and then was risen from the dead. Jesus was dead, truly dead, and then was risen from the dead. They have a lot of commonalities between both stories. Both men died. Both men had people who were mourning their death. Both men had been dead for a few days: Lazarus four days and Jesus three

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days. Both men had been buried. Both men had a stone rolled in front of their grave opening to seal the opening. And finally, both men were resurrected.

But the resurrections are where the commonalities in the stories end. And here's why. In the first story, Lazarus' resurrection, Lazarus was raised from the dead back to human life. He was alive when Jesus died. He was probably one of those who mourned Jesus' death. And he was probably one of those who celebrated Jesus' resurrection. But here's the problem that Lazarus had. In the end, Lazarus was going to physically die again. At some point, Lazarus was going to have to go through the process of dying all over again. Almost every human being dies (there are a couple of exceptions in the Old Testament). Even the human Jesus died. Lazarus has the keen distinction of being one of just a handful of people who get to die a human death twice (there are a few other people mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments).

Jesus, on the other hand, does not have to suffer through a death again. His resurrection was to an eternal body which spent some time here on earth (about 40 days) and then ascended into heaven. And because Jesus was the resurrection he claimed to be, remember *I AM the resurrection*, we get the same kind of resurrection Jesus got. When we die here on earth, we'll inherit an eternal body, not a human body. We'll live with Jesus in heaven, wherever that is. We'll never die. We'll never have to die again like Lazarus did. We get to live forever. I don't claim to know how. I just know that Jesus promised it so it true.

There is one caveat to this. Back in the story of Lazarus' being raised from the dead, Jesus speaks a line that is of vital importance regarding resurrection. While he is talking to Lazarus' sister Martha, he says the line we've talked about today: *I AM the resurrection and the life*. But then he goes on to ask something of Martha that is absolutely critical. He asks: [SLIDE] *Do you believe this, Martha?* [26] In other words, he's asking Martha if she believes his is the resurrection. Does she believe that he is the one, the Messiah, the one who holds the keys to life and death? Her answer is equally important. [SLIDE] *Yes*, she says.

That *Yes* is critically important. We have to be able to answer Jesus' question to Martha the same way that Martha answered it: *Yes*. Do you believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life? *Yes*. Do you believe that Jesus holds the keys to life and death? *Yes*. Do you believe that Jesus' resurrection paves the way for your resurrection? *Yes*. That's what we need to understand this Easter Sunday. Do you understand what these stories mean for us today? That Jesus is the resurrection and because he was resurrected, we will be too. That's what makes Christians smile on Easter Sunday.