

Jesus plus death equals resurrection. This is our equation as Christians. We live and die by the that statement being true. This is what we mean when we confess in the words of the Nicene Creed, “I believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” We see that resurrection is how Jesus operates. We see this in our Gospel text today. **RESURRECTION IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN JESUS MEETS DEATH.** Jesus plus death equals resurrection.

Our text starts with a line that could be ripped right from our newspapers: “**Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany...**” Illness is the keyword of the day. As of Wednesday the 25<sup>th</sup>, there are almost half a million cases of coronavirus worldwide, and over 20,000 deaths. We’re getting sick of the world being sick.

One of the things we learn from this whole passage is I. Death is an enemy to be mourned and hated. Yet it sometimes seems that Jesus doesn’t care. Jesus seems pretty unfazed by Lazarus’ sickness. “**So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.**” That’s kind of the opposite of what we would do, right? If your loved one was dying, you would risk anything, even coronavirus to go see them. You’d get on the next plane flight.

Yet by the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus had been dead four days. Mary and Martha both confess that if Jesus would have been there, Lazarus wouldn’t have died. Some of the Jews comment, “**Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?**”

And maybe we wonder that too. Where is Jesus in all of this? Why has Coronavirus taken the lives of thousands? Why does Jesus seem to be twiddling His thumbs? Why did my loved one die? Where was Jesus in the middle of *that* crisis?

All these things we may not have answers to at the moment. But we do know this: “**Jesus wept.**” This is the shortest verse in the English Bible. Two words but so much meaning. In these words, Jesus tells us that He cares for us. He knows what it’s like to lose a loved one. Jesus isn’t happy with COVID-19 shutting things down across the world. Jesus is mourning alongside us with our inability to meet together in person for worship.

But Jesus plus death equals resurrection. II. Jesus Himself is life. Unlike us who mourn death but have no solutions, Jesus Himself brings the fix. He tells Martha, “**I am the resurrection and the life.**” When Jesus tells Martha this, He is telling resurrection and life are part of His very being.

What would you say if someone told you, “It’s a chair, but you can’t actually sit in it.” What’s wrong with that statement? Part of what makes a chair a chair is the ability to sit on it! A chair you can’t sit on is either broken or it’s not a chair.

What makes Jesus, Jesus is the fact that He Himself is life. He is the creator and author of life. It’s almost as if He can’t help it when he does things like raise

the widow's son, Jairus' daughter, or even Lazarus Himself. Jesus plus death equals resurrection.

Jesus is God. The Gospel of John goes at pains to explain this. Jesus is the same as the Lord Yahweh who created the Heavens and the Earth with the sound of His voice. And so it comes as no surprise that Jesus raises Lazarus, even stinky, been in the tomb four days Lazarus. Jesus raises Lazarus with just the sound of His voice. He says, "**Lazarus, come out,**" and Lazarus comes out obediently.

Jesus is fully God and fully man. On the Transfiguration mount we see a glimpse of the radiance of Jesus' divinity. And the real miracle is not the Transfiguration mount, the real miracle is that Jesus can hide it so well all the other times. Jesus is light. Jesus is life. He is God Himself.

And so too, this miracle becomes an opportunity for us to see a glimpse of who Jesus really is. He is really is life. And life cannot be overcome by death. When death tries to overcome Jesus who is the life, we get what you call resurrection. Jesus plus death equals resurrection.

And this is how Jesus explains all of this. Why is He letting Lazarus die? "**This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.**" He goes on to say, "**Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.**" At the end of the reading we read, "**Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.**"

Through the death of Lazarus, the people get to see a resurrection. Jesus plus death equals resurrection. It's not good that Lazarus died. We too mourn the death of loved ones. We mourn the deaths from coronavirus. But we believe that something good will come out of it. We believe that some way, somehow, the Son of God will be glorified through it.

All this because III. United to Christ, we too will rise. Jesus plus death equals resurrection. So a good place to be on the day you die is in Christ. "**I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.**" We have been united to Christ through Baptism.

Baptism unites us inseparably to Jesus. Like a branch being grafted into a tree. Like two bars of iron being twisted, heated, and pounded together. Like fruit that have been baked throughout a cake. There's no way to separate us from Christ without tearing us apart. Christ has a grip on us. Jesus says, "**I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.**"

Jesus plus death equals resurrection. If we are so tied to Christ who is the life and the resurrection, we too will rise again. Death tried to swallow Jesus on the cross, but spit Him out and said, "You can have him back!" Satan tried to kill Jesus, but Satan was defeated in his attempts to overcome Jesus.

Every single thing sin, death, and the devil throws at God, He turns it into His glory because that is who He is. The death of Lazarus turned into his resurrection and it was regarded as one of Jesus' greatest miracles. The greatest miracle of Jesus came out of the worst of Satan's attacks: the cross led to the empty tomb.

Even the worst day of your life, your death, will become cause for celebration and the glory of God because you have been baked into one loaf with Jesus. Through faith in Him, and trust in His words, you too will rise again, but even more gloriously than Lazarus. In Christ, you will rise again with a new body that will never decay or die and you will be with the Lord forever.

And so too, as we gather remotely to ward off the spread of COVID-19, the devil may be laughing at us. He is mocking us while we mourn what seems to be the death of our ability to worship together, commune together, and fellowship together. But he will not have the last laugh.

Jesus plus death equals resurrection. And we believe that still God will work His glory through this terrible pandemic. He will resurrect His church from these trying times and will get us through it yet. Every single thing sin, death, and the devil throws at God, He turns it into His glory because that is who He is. Jesus says, **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”** Amen.