

## **I am the resurrection and the life**

In John's gospel there are 7 affirmations made by Jesus about his identity, his person and his mission. We call them the "I am's" of Jesus. And what is interesting to note is that each of his assertions is directly related to the situation where Jesus is. Each statement is used to transform a desperate situation: Chapter 6 - People are dying of spiritual hunger. Jesus says to them: I am the bread of life. This bread transforms despair. It feeds and gives life.

Chapter 8 - people live in spiritual darkness. They do not see where they are going. Jesus comes and shines his light in the darkness and people can see. The light transforms darkness.

Chapter 10 - people are like sheep lost, endangered and Jesus said I am the door of the sheepfold. Enter through me. I am the good shepherd. I give my life for you. I guide you, I protect you. The life of the sheep is transformed by the presence of the Good Shepherd.

So in each of these situations, the presence of Jesus transforms a terrible reality. And the situation in which Jesus is found this morning is more desperate than the others. In this chapter Jesus is not in the presence of hunger or darkness or danger. He is confronted by death, the greatest of our enemies.

Disease, hunger and loss, these are terrible things but death is the greatest enemy of mankind. Death signals the end of our life, a separation from all that we know. Death snatches people from their families, their loved ones, their lives. It leaves us grieving with a real sense of loss. Death leaves us with a hole in our heart and many struggle to recover from this.

The scene before us in this chapter is a scene of sadness and desolation. 19 - many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them. 21 - we see the grief of Martha Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 33 - Jesus sees Mary When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he groaned in his spirit and was troubled. Verse 35 - Jesus wept. His love for Lazarus was obvious.

Nobody in this situation is not thinking 'calm down, everything will be fine. Jesus will resurrect him.' Nobody expects that Lazarus will leave the tomb. And it is this sad situation that Jesus is about to transform with his assertion: I am the resurrection and the life. And studying these verses this morning we will see how Jesus transforms this situation but also how it changes even the worst of all our situations.

## **Jesus' Plan**

At first sight, one could say that Jesus could and should have reacted faster to go to Lazarus. He hears the news of the illness of his friend but he doesn't return immediately to Bethany. Verse 6 tells us that he remained 2 days where he was. He did not hurry. He does not seem in any rush. He hears the news and remains where he is.

Yet it is not a lack of love for Lazarus that Jesus did not react. Verse 5 speaks of Jesus' love for this family. The message of the sisters also said: The one you love is sick.

How then are we to understand the timing of Jesus? Why does he not immediately respond? You should know that everything that Jesus Christ does, he does it for a reason. He does nothing by chance. There is always a reason. Jesus always has a plan. And his plan is seen in verse 4: This sickness is not to death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. The plan of Jesus is to reveal his glory. Jesus wants to manifest His glory in this situation of sorrow and suffering.

Jesus manages this situation perfectly according to his plan. And his plan is the supreme manifestation of his glory.

The illness and death of Lazarus are part of Jesus' plan. He could prevent the death but he doesn't. He could say a word and Lazarus would be healed but he doesn't. Mary and Martha want him to act. They have a lot of difficulty understanding why he does not act sooner, why it takes so long to come to help Lazarus. They do not understand the plan of Jesus.

And what we learn here is that in every situation in our lives, God is at work to accomplish His eternal purpose. He is trying to accomplish his plan. And sometimes we get to see and understand his plan, but sometimes his plan remains hidden from view.

Sometimes God help us to see and understand, sometimes he asks us to trust him. But biblical stories show us that God is always at work for His glory and for the good of his people. Joseph, sold into slavery in Egypt, thrown in jail. Why does God allow these things? Does God forget Joseph? At the end of the Joseph story can tell his brothers who had sold him into slavery: You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now taking place, the saving of many people.

And of course, the supreme example of how God acts for His glory in the worst of situations is the cross of Jesus Christ. Religious leaders conspired together against Jesus to kill him. They organized everything. Yet Peter said in Acts 2.23 "this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" The prayer of believers in Acts 4.27-28 : for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

Often contrary to appearances, God is at work in His eternal plan for His glory and for the good of his people.

Maybe today he is "delaying" in your life. He's making you wait and you do not understand why. What are you asking him to do this morning? He asks you to trust him. He has a plan, and perhaps in his plan there will be suffering, periods of waiting or disappointment, but God is working for his glory and for your good. Mary and Martha wanted Jesus to heal their brother. Jesus had planned something much bigger. Are you willing to wait, to trust Jesus? He gave his life for you. He loves you and he will always act for your ultimate good and for his glory. Are you ready to accept God's plan for His glory in your life, knowing that it is rare that suffering is not part of God's plan? Are you ready to submit and say "Not my will but your will be done."?

Jesus chose not to come earlier while Lazarus was still sick. Jesus knew what he was doing. He perfectly managed this situation so that His glory and power would be obvious to all. And it is the same Jesus who is at work in us.

## **Jesus' Power**

It's good to know that God has a plan of redemption for his people, he has a plan for the glory of his name. Having a plan is a good thing. But having a plan is useless if it is not able to accomplish it. We all plan our lives, our future but we are not always able to realize our plans. There is the will to accomplish but we are often powerless in face of the circumstances of life.

But this is not the case with Jesus. He has a plan and he has the power and authority to carry it out.

Jesus is not just a Rabbi with great intelligence. He is all powerful and he proves it here when he raises Lazarus from death. The greatest power in the universe is at work here against the power of death and that power is victorious over death. Jesus stands before the tomb of Lazarus and says amazing words. He dares to say 'no' to death. He claims to have a power that is greater than that of death.

His plan is to manifest his glory and he realizes this plan by ordering Lazarus out of the tomb. By a word of power, Jesus brings a dead man to life. Nobody else has ever done that in the history of this world. No one has defied and defeated death in this way.

This episode takes place a week before Jesus death. And he wants to show his power to overcome death. Several times in the Gospels Jesus says he must die and rise again from death. This is a major claim. But here he shows that he does have the power to do it.

"I am the resurrection and the life. I am more powerful than death. I, Jesus Christ, Son of God, I have the power to overcome death. I will do for Lazarus and I'll do myself in a few days."

And that is why Jesus Christ stands alone among all the great founders of world religions because he alone is able to conquer death. He is the only who raised others and which was resurrected himself.

Jesus is God, and as God, his power transforms any situation, even death. John's gospel is the gospel of the 7 miracles. John calls them signs. The resurrection of Lazarus is the seventh. And that is the ultimate sign of the divinity of Jesus, of his power to save. And saying that he is the resurrection and the life Jesus not only speaks of a resurrection of the body and physical life. He also speaks of a spiritual resurrection and spiritual life.

Yes, he has the power to resurrect physically as he did with Lazarus, but he also has the power to do it spiritually. Every true Christian has already experienced this resurrection power. The Bible says that when we become Christians, we pass from death to life. Jesus enters into the lives of people who are dead in their sin and he brings them to life. The Bible says we are born again. By his power, he gives us life, spiritual life, eternal life.

Ephesians 2: You were dead in trespasses and sins, but God, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

So the same power that was at work in Lazarus is at work in all those who are born again in Jesus Christ. Just as he did to Lazarus, he speaks to spiritual corpses and by his power he enables these bodies to respond to his call. he gives them life by his saving power. Jesus can do for us what he did to Lazarus. And this week, we will be going out to speak to corpses. We will tell people who are dead to come to Jesus and believe in Jesus. Why do something so stupid? We would never go to the cemetery to invite the dead to come to a party at the church. Yet we are going to speak to spiritual corpses, we proclaim the gospel to those who are dead?

Why? We do this because Jesus is powerful because Jesus has the power and authority to give life to those who are dead. Jesus is powerful. He told Lazarus "Come out" and Lazarus came out. The power of Jesus gives life to this dead man and this same power can restore life to anyone. This week, we will announce the gospel. Paul tells us in Romans 1 that the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation." Do we believe it? We pray God to save a friend, a family member. Why ask that? Because God is powerful. And praying shows that we recognise that we are powerless but He is powerful. One could say that all we do in the Christian life, we do it through the power of Jesus Christ in us. Let us make the prayer of the Apostle Paul our prayer: "All I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection" Philippians 3:10. Let us pray that Jesus reveals himself in power with us this week. Pray that he act with power in the neighbourhoods around us, in the hearts of those who read Réflexions and with whom we speak.

### **Jesus' promise**

In verse 23, Jesus gives a wonderful promise to Martha. He says, "Your brother will rise." And to her credit, Martha shows the faith she has in Jesus. She doubtless knows the promises of the Old Testament that speak of the resurrection. She doubtless knows the words of Job, the great man of God: For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, Job 19:25-26

So in verse 24 Martha says, I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

She believes. She has faith. She is convinced of the reality of the resurrection. However, she does not realize that Jesus himself is the one who makes the resurrection and the life possible. Jesus explains that the source of this resurrection and all life is Jesus himself.

And he explains by giving a simple promise. Verses 25 and 26: Jesus said to her, "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. He promises life, life now, life after death and life forever.

One author explains what Jesus is doing, "Jesus brings Martha from an abstract belief in the resurrection to a personal trust in him as the only one able to raise the dead."

You see the promise? He who believes in me will live. His body will perhaps die but not his soul and then his body will be resurrected on the last day. That certainty can be said with absolute assurance. The Christian can say: In Jesus Christ I have eternal life. It starts here, a heart, a life transformed by Jesus. God raised me from my spiritual death by His power. God made me to live again. And even if my body dies, my soul will live in the presence of Christ. And when Christ returns, my body will be resurrected and reunited with my soul for all eternity. And it is Jesus and Jesus alone who says: I am the source of this life, this resurrection.

I ask a simple question: Are you a Christian today? Are you born again in Jesus Christ? If the answer is yes, then Jesus says to you, I am your resurrection and your life. With me you'll live forever.

By my death, your sin is forgiven. With my death, you have life. Through my resurrection, your resurrection is sure and certain. That is the promise of Jesus Christ.

But if your answer to this question is "no, I am not a Christian. I'm not born again" Jesus says to you: You have no hope for this life and though you will be resurrected on my return but it will not be for eternal life. It will be for the judgment of God against your sin. Jesus tells you this morning, you are dead in your sins but I am life. I am the resurrection, I can give you life. This is what Jesus promises you this morning.

How then do you receive this promise and the blessings of that promise? Jesus says he is the resurrection and the life, but how can this become yours?

The answer is simple: Jesus gives it to you in three words: believe in me. Verse 25: He who believes in me will live.

Verse 26: whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

What does it mean to believe in him? Believe that he existed? Have an intellectual knowledge? No, that's not it. Even Satan believes in that sense.

When Jesus says "believe in me" he says, believe in me, Son of God, the Messiah of God, crucified and risen. Believe that I love you and I died in your place, I suffered the punishment you deserve. Believe that through my death, your sin can be forgiven for you to be reconciled with God. Believe my resurrection confirms that my death was accepted by God and that I have conquered sin and death for you.

This brings us to the heart of the Gospel of John. John does not describe all the miracles of Jesus. He chooses 7. And at the end of his book he tells us why: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" John 20:31

Jesus asks Martha in verse 26: Do you believe this? He asks the same question this morning. Do you believe?

I said at the beginning of the preaching that Jesus' presence transforms a terrible reality. The terrible reality for us all is death, God's judgment against sin. But Jesus transforms this reality by saying: I am the resurrection and the life.