

Remaining in Christ:

Jesus' 'I AM' Statements in the Gospel of John

Session VI

The Resurrection and the Life (John 11:1-53)

Commentary on the Passage

In different ways, the Gospels and the Epistles proclaim that resurrection is not only a one-time event that occurred to Jesus of Nazareth, but can be an experience known to his followers, not only after our physical death, but as a quality of life consistent with faith and faithfulness.

- In the Gospel of Mark, this point is made through the many times that the verb “rise” is used as an aspect of Jesus’ healings all over Galilee (Peter’s mother-in-law, 1:31; the paralytic, 2:9, 11, 12; the man with the withered hand, 3:3; Jairus’ daughter, 5:41; the boy with seizures, 9:27; Bartimaeus, 10:49).
- Jesus’ healing brings suffering people fullness of life that is as startling and life-changing as going from death to life.

But what about the Gospel of John? As you know by now, if you have been doing this study, John tells fewer stories than Mark, and John likes to linger longer with the characters.

- The family at Bethany (Mary, Martha, and Lazarus) are among the people Jesus loves and spends time with in the Gospel of John. Their home is an easy walk from Jerusalem, and Jesus clearly likes to be among them, to enjoy meals and conversation in their home.
- The story of Lazarus’ sickness and death, followed by his raising by Jesus, plays the same role that the many stories of rising play in Mark: the story of Lazarus is an invitation to us, the hearers, to allow Christ’s healing to come into our own dead places, to step out of the cave of death, to be unbound, to enter into fullness of life in relationship with Jesus.
- The promise is for now, and also after our physical death. As he says: “I am the resurrection *and* I am the life.

In the video that accompanies this lesson, I speak about the importance of the Greek word *zoē* that is used here when Jesus says, I am the *life*.”

- There I speak of the idea of eternal life (life without bounds) as both a present and future reality in John.
- Here, by putting together *resurrection* and *life*, Jesus is emphasizing the power of God to give us life in any circumstance. Even death does not prevent the God of creation from bringing life.
- This emphasis on the power of God for life was especially significant in the late first century, when the Gospel of John was composed. The people in John’s community would have been very aware of the power of the Roman Empire, a power frequently experienced as destructive.
- The *creative power* of God is greater than any human *force of destruction*. Followers of Jesus are invited to trust in the creative power of God, no matter what human force appears to threaten them.

From the Gospel of John, we learn that the resurrection of Jesus was an outpouring of the life of God not for Jesus only, but for all who are his faithful followers, now and always, no matter how profoundly we have felt cut off from life.