

# Christ, the Resurrection and the Life

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 11:37-44  
**Preached on:** Sunday, November 23, 2014

It's with great joy that I open up the word of God to you this morning. Will you take your Bibles and turn to John's Gospel, chapter 11. If you are new with us today, you will soon discover that we approach the word of God verse-by-verse. We have been in the Gospel of John for many months now and so we now come to this section of Scripture that we want to examine closely and watch what the Spirit of God has to say to us through it. John 11, a wonderful story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. It is for this reason that I have entitled my discourse to you this morning "Christ, the Resurrection and the Life." Beginning in verse 37,

37 But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him who was blind, have kept this man also from dying?" 38 Jesus therefore, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me. 42 I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that Thou didst send Me." 43 When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." 44 He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

As we all know, life is filled with great difficulties. We live in a fallen world and because of this, many times we experience profound tragedies, calamities, sickness, death. Many people feel as if there is no help, as if there is no hope, you just have to make the best of it and certainly apart from a genuine, intimate, personal relationship with God, they are right, there is no hope. But for those who have trusted Christ as Savior, who have been transformed by his power and who have committed themselves to walking faithfully with him, there is joy, everlasting joy, even in the midst of great difficulties and sorrow. And what we find is that the more we know about God, the more we know Christ, the more we love him. And as we examine this passage this morning, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, we will discover many truths that speak to the glory and the majesty of Christ but also we will discover some very practical matters of faith and obedience. We're going to see profound insights into what Christ can do in our lives and how he uses us in the lives of others. But please understand, the primary emphasis of this passage of Scripture is to glorify the Father and the Son through this man's resurrection from the dead which

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will once again, validate Jesus' Messianic claims that he is indeed the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel in whom we should believe for forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Now, I wish to examine this text under four headings that hopefully will be helpful for you. We're going to see, 1. The source of the Savior's grief. Secondly, the source of the Savior's joy. Then thirdly, the source of the Savior's power. Finally, the source of the believer's life. Now, by way of context and for many of you by way of review, after a deliberate two day delay, Jesus and his disciples have traveled four days to come to Bethany so that Lazarus would have been in the grave four days. This was very important because of a Jewish superstition held by many, taught by the rabbis, who would have people believe that somehow the soul hovers over the deceased for the first three days intending to reenter it but upon discovering that decomposition was beginning to set in, then the soul would depart and at that point, there would be no point for any recovery, a person would be irreversibly dead. Such was the case now with Lazarus and so as we look at the text, we learn that a large crowd has come to console Mary and Martha at their home, indicating that they were a prominent family. We also believe that they were a wealthy family given the very costly perfume of pure nard described later on in chapter 12 that Mary used to anoint the feet of Jesus. Since Bethany was only two miles from Jerusalem, what we would call today a suburb of Jerusalem, there would have been a number of their Jewish friends come from Jerusalem including, undoubtedly many of the Jewish leaders that sought the death of Jesus. I'm sure they were among the mourners. And consistent with Jewish custom and their oral law which is called the Mishnah, at least two flute players and one professional mourning woman, wailing woman, had to be hired for even a poor person's funeral. So given the prominence and affluence of this family, there were probably lots of flutists and other instrumentalists there and perhaps many professional wailing women.

On the fourth day when they were certain that the soul had departed because of the corruption of putrefaction, their grief would intensify greatly. They would wail and mourn even louder. They would beat their breasts with loud lamentations and, folks, it is within this type of a scenario that Jesus now comes to the area of the tomb, still a ways away from the home. We know, according to the text before the one we are studying today, that Martha has already gone out to speak with Jesus briefly and she has then returned to the house to summon her sister, Mary, who was in the midst of all of the mourners, the object of their consolations. When Mary hears that Jesus is there, she very abruptly leaves the house, makes her way quickly to Jesus. The mourners think, "Oh my, she must be going back to the tomb to mourn," and so they all follow her and, of course, this is precisely what God wanted to happen so that all of these people could witness the miracle that was about to take place.

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Given the context of all this mourning, this excessive mourning, all of this chaos and, by the way, if you've ever been in the Middle East, you will hear that many times is still how they mourn, we see that Jesus is really moved with anger. He's troubled in his spirit. He's filled with a sense of indignation over the hopeless despair, the excessive mourning, all of which is animated primarily by ignorance and unbelief of the one who stood in their midst, Jesus, the resurrection and the life. So number 1: we see that this is the source of the Savior's grief. So in verse 35, we read, "Jesus wept." Indeed, he wept as we should all weep over the devastating effects of sin in this fallen world, over disease that brings death. He weeps over the callused unbelief of those who reject him. He weeps over the hopelessness of their grief that has degenerated into some type of a dark, blasphemous denial of the one who is the resurrection and the life. And undoubtedly, he is also weeping over the deep pain that his friends are experiencing over the death of their brother.

Not understanding the real source of Jesus' tears and thinking he was merely weeping over the death of his friend, in verse 36 at the end, "The Jews were saying, 'Behold how He loved him! But,'" verse 37, "some of them said said, 'Could not this man who opened the eyes of the blind, have kept this man also from dying?'" I find it interesting, Jesus suffered relentless criticism and antagonism no matter where he went. They are thinking in their mind, "Well, he's performed miracles in the past, where was he? If he loves this guy, why didn't he come here and prevent this from happening?" This is customary among unbelievers who remain ever vigilant to somehow find fault with God, especially when one of their loved one dies.

Doubtless, this further animates Jesus' sense of outrage and his emotional indignation so in verse 38 we read, "So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb." Remember, "deeply moved" in the original language really denotes this idea of an inner sense of outrage, anger, indignation. In fact, the old King James translates it this way, "Jesus therefore again groaning in himself, cometh to the grave." This reminds me, by the way, of the confession that the Jewish remnant will one day make that is recorded in Isaiah 53, one day when by God's grace, they will see Jesus for who he really is, recognize him as their Messiah. That text tells us that they will recall how he was the suffering servant; how he was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief; how he was despised and rejected by men; how he was hated without a cause; how he was wounded and bruised and afflicted and died for the iniquities of men. Here, dear friends, at this tomb, the Holy Spirit is helps us see more fully why the Savior groans; why he was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. It's because his holy nature is utterly repulsed as he beholds the consequences of sin and the evils of Satan and men's refusal to believe in him. This reminds me of the Apostle Paul's words in Romans 8. Remember, in that passage he considers the sufferings of this present time and he goes on to tell us how that the whole creation groans and suffers. He even says, "Not only this but we ourselves

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having the firstfruits of the Spirit," in other words, "we as believers, even we ourselves groan within ourselves." Don't you do that? Don't you groan within yourself? And many times groan out loud? I do, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

So, verse 38, "So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb." John tells us, "it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it." It was common for the Jews to bury their dead in caves: some were vertical; some were horizontal; some natural caves; others were carved out of maybe a rocky cleft or cliff. And every tomb was sealed by a stone and often those stones were carved in the shape of a wheel and rolled into place with the assistance of a hand hewn channel, if you will, a groove, a track that would allow the stone to stay close to the opening. Then there would be a little cut out spot and it would fall into place and be lodged there safe and secure. So this is the scene. But now, everyone has come and there is Jesus. Mary and Martha are there with him. I'm sure suddenly, all of the wailing and all of the instruments stop. You could probably hear a pin drop. Every eye is on Jesus. Some are looking upon him with seething hatred and resentment, wanting him dead. Others are looking at him with confusion and eager anticipation, wondering what this Miracle Worker might do. Then, dear friends, there are a few who look upon him as he really is, the Son of the living God, the Messiah of Israel, the resurrection and the life, the eternal Word veiled in human flesh.

As I think about that scene, those that are congregated around Jesus, it reminds me of the ratio that we have today; you have the few and you have the many. Jesus warned about this in Matthew 7, remember? There are going to be two gates, he says, that both say, "This way to heaven." One will be real, one will be false and phony. One will be narrow, the other will be wide. Only a few will enter the narrow way but most everybody else will be deceived and enter in the false way. They'll go through the broad gate that leads down the broad road to destruction. How sad. So few will strive to enter into the narrow gate of genuine repentance and faith in Christ. Most people will prefer to enter by the wide gate of self-righteousness and self-deception and take the broad road that leads to destruction.

So here we are, the air is absolutely electric with anticipation, precisely what the Father wanted as he prepared to bring glory to himself and to his Son. Bear in mind, once again, Jesus is intentionally planning on showing the Jewish nation one final, undeniable, incontrovertible, thoroughly credible miracle for two primary reasons: one to once again validate his claim that he is the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel; but secondly to prepare the nation for the triumphal entry into Jerusalem which will occur in about two weeks. Of course, they will eventually turn against him and then he will finish the work of him who had sent him.

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Verse 39, "Jesus said, 'Remove the stone.'" Now I'm sure, not a single person there expected him to say that and even though the text doesn't say it, I'm sure you could have heard some (gasp), "What did he say? Remove the stone?" Certainly this is what Martha thought. This is what you would of thought and I would have thought. In fact, the text says, "Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days.'" Now, we all know that Jesus could have removed the stone or he could have just had Lazarus walk right through the stone. He could have made the stone fly up into the air and go around in circles. He could've done anything but he asked the people to remove the stone. Why would he do that? Well, the text doesn't really say. Perhaps to lend credibility to the miracle so that people could say, "You know, this wasn't a set up, I mean, we were there. We actually removed...Lazarus was really...that was really his tomb." Well, perhaps that's true but I believe it is not far at all from the spirit of this text to see a great spiritual lesson here. Remember, the scene is one that really pictures spiritual death, the reality of our natural state, the reality of every person who refuses to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. We know according to Scripture, that those without life in Christ are not merely sick, they are not merely wounded, they are not merely in need of a little help, they are spiritually speaking, a decaying corpse, hopelessly dead, incapable of self-resurrection, utterly incapable of coming to Christ and turning to righteousness. No man can help them. No family member can regenerate an inanimate, decaying soul. Jesus must come to the tomb. Only his omnipotent voice can call forth a corrupting cadaver and make him a new creature in Christ. Yet isn't it interesting how God in his infinite wisdom chooses to use human instruments in the work of evangelism? To prepare the way for that which only he can do. Isn't it true that we cannot raise the spiritually dead? We all realize that but, dear friends, we can preach the Gospel and thereby remove the stone of ignorance and error that keeps men in the solitary confinement of their spiritual sepulchres. We can remove the stone of hatred and prejudice by loving our neighbor and showing the love of Christ to the lost. We can remove the stone of suspicion by jettisoning all vestige of hypocrisy and we can remove the stone of despair that incarcerates so many people by manifesting genuine hope and trust and joy in the Lord even in the midst of great calamity in our life. Folks, these are the works of evangelism and what a staggering truth to think that the Lord will always use us up to the limits of our spirit-empowered abilities and then his supernatural work performs that which we cannot do.

Again, verse 39, "Jesus said, 'Remove the stone.'" Focus on Martha for a moment. Martha the sister of the deceased said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days." You see, Martha simply said what everyone thought. You would've thought the same thing, so would I. Now, this would have been way beyond running the risk of ritual defilement which really motivated much of what the Jews would do whenever they were anywhere near a corpse. Folks, this was beyond that: this was macabre; this was appalling; this was ghoulish. Why would you want to do such a thing?

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And I'm sure some of them are thinking, "Why would he want to go in there?" Obviously, they are not thinking supernaturally. They are not thinking that he is about to do something that will bring glory to himself like raising him from the dead. And how often do we show similar disdain at the thought of obeying the Lord in some area of our life? Perhaps even in the area of evangelism where he asks us to go help remove the stone from some rancid grave of some sinner that we don't want to be around; some person we don't want to have anything to do with. Too often we are like Martha, we focus our attention on the corpse and on being uncomfortable rather than on Christ. We are prone by nature to think of ourselves, not the word of the Lord that calls us into action, into situations that are many times repulsive and profoundly uncomfortable. But we forget that he is the Miracle Worker. That he is the resurrection and the life and he wants to display his glory. He wants us to experience it, to be a part of it.

So Jesus said to her in verse 40, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" We've seen the source of the Savior's grief, here secondly, we see the source of the Savior's joy and that is to display the glory of God. And my friends, all through Scripture, we see that he does this most profoundly through the transforming work that he performs in the lives of those that he saves by his grace. I can hear him say to me what he is saying to Martha, "David, did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" I want you to notice the order of the verbs: we must first believe before we see. You don't see and then believe. That's not how it works. He's saying, "Martha, please trust me. I want to bless you by revealing my glory. Stop thinking within the confines of the narrow limits of your own little world. Focus on me. Obey me. Trust me. I want to show you my glory. I want to give you a foretaste of the glory that will one day be yours forever."

To be sure, even the unbelievers are about to see the glory of God. But the impact that that will have on them would really be rather insignificant, frankly, because it doesn't have anything to do with him personally. But ah, to those who are united to Christ, it is a foretaste of resurrection glory. You see, the promise of the resurrection is anchored in the glorious doctrine of our union with Christ. Remember, because we are united to Christ by grace through faith, God no longer sees our sin. He sees us clothed in the righteousness of Christ and according to Scripture, we have been crucified with Christ. We have died with Christ. We have been buried with him. We have been raised up together in Christ, Ephesians 2:6, and seated together in heavenly places in Christ. In chapter 3, verse 10 of Ephesians, we read that our life is hidden with Christ in God. You see, it is our union with Christ, dear friends, that secures our participation in all of the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ. Because of this, the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8 that "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ." 2 Corinthians 5:21, "we have become the righteousness of God in him." 1 Corinthians 1:30, in Christ we are told that we "have wisdom, righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Romans 8:10 and 11, "if

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Christ is in you, he will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who indwells you." Colossians 2:10, "in him we have been made complete." 1 Thessalonians 4:16, because of this glorious union there will be a reunion and we have these wonderful promises because he says there "the dead in Christ shall rise first." Oh child of God, how many times, how many times has our unbelief caused us to forfeit some opportunity to behold the glory of God in our life? Those times when obeying God just makes no sense to us? We are absolutely convinced that we know better. It's as if we say, "Lord, I hear what you're asking me to do but you're obviously misinformed. You don't have all the facts. You see, my case is different. My case is special. I am unique and so with all due respect, you're misguided in what you're asking me to do. Your word and your will just simply does not apply to my situation." Oh really?

But with tender rebuke, the Lord says to us what he told Martha and in essence this is what he's saying, "Martha, believe me. Focus on me. Trust me. Obey me. I want to show you my glory. Everything I do displays the glory of God. I want to give you a foretaste of that glory, that glory that will one day be yours when I conquer the one who has the power over death and I vanquish death itself because manifesting the glory of God is the source of my greatest joy and it should be and could be and will be the source of your greatest joy as well. So believe me and see. Remove the stone." Verse 41, "So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.'" We've seen the source of the Savior's grief and joy, now number 3, we see the source of the Savior's power. "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me." Obviously, Jesus had already asked for Lazarus' life and now he is merely thinking his Father for the answer which, by the way, is the perfect example for us to follow. But as you meditate upon this passage, I hope you see something that is so precious to our souls. What an amazing thing to know that even as the Son of God prayed for Lazarus while on earth, he continues to intercede for all that the Father has given him while in heaven. Oh child of God, let this thing sink in deep within your soul. Think about this, he continues to pray for you and for me as our faithful and sympathetic High Priest. The writer of Hebrews says in chapter 7, verse 25, "He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

As I was thinking about this, I started searching the Scriptures just to see the kinds of things that he would pray for on my behalf and yours. The New Testament is filled with them but certainly John reveals some of the categories later on in chapter 17, let me give you a taste of that. We see there that he prays that we might know the only true God, an intimate knowledge of him. He prays for our protection from the world and the evil one. He prays for our sanctification through the truth. He prays for the unity of believers. He prays and I love this, that his joy may be fulfilled in us. Do you get that? He's praying that the very joy that he himself experienced as a result of his perfect obedience would be something that we could subjectively experience, that abiding, unassailable joy fueled by

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his passion for the eternal purposes of God. Then finally, he prays for our ultimate glorification, that we might partake in all of the attributes and essence of the living God as the indwelling Spirit of God reveals them to us. What an amazing, unimaginable blessing to know that the Lord our God always lives to make intercession for those who trust in him as their only hope of salvation.

So he says, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me." Now, you must bear in mind that once again, this would have been a blasphemous statement for Jesus to make. For him to call God his Father was something the Jews would never do but it is important for them to witness his intimate relationship with the Father who has sent him, that which he has been preaching all along. He wants them to see that he never acts independently from the Father. He is totally dependent upon him. He is totally, absolutely obedient to his will and what is about to happen will validate all that he has claimed, that he is the Son of God sent by the Father himself.

So, with unwavering confidence, he says in verse 42, "I knew that You always hear Me." Well, let's think about that for a second. Why does the Father always hear him? The answer is: because he always does the Father's will. How this speaks to the issue of unanswered prayer. How many times I have heard people say, "You know, I just don't think God hears my prayers," and immediately where I will go with them is I will say, "Well, our you devoted to obeying his word and his will or do you just give lip service to that like most people do? If that's the case, on what basis should God answer your prayers?" People will say, "Well, but what is the will of God?" Well, it's found all through his word but let me give you the fundamentals: it is the will of God that you be saved. It is the will of God that you be Spirit filled. It is the will of God that you be sanctified. It is the will of God that you be submissive. It is the will of God that you suffer for him. Let's start there. The Psalmist says in Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart." It's literally the idea that he will give you the desires that he himself will fulfill. Why would God answer the prayers of a man who has absolutely no concern for his glory? Who just lives for himself? Who has no desire to see the glory of God? No yearning to experience the glory of God? No passion to reflect the glory of God in his life? The Psalmist said in Psalm 66:18, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear." But Jesus never had a wicked thought so the Father always answered his prayers. John understood this. In 1 John's 3, beginning in verse 21 he says, "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight." I ask you, dear friend, do you do those things that are pleasing in his sight? Or does that never really go through your mind, you only do the things that are pleasing in your sight? If that is the case, don't be surprised God does not answer your prayers.

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So being perfectly obedient to the will of the Father, he says in verse 42, "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." By the way, I'm sure some of them did. Some day I'm sure in heaven, we will meet brothers and sisters in Christ who were there and we can ask them to tell us what they saw. Verse 43, "When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.'" My friends, here is the fourth category: the source of the believer's life. What a dramatic picture, not only of physical resurrection but also of spiritual resurrection, that great doctrine of regeneration which means to be born again. That supernatural, instantaneous impartation of spiritual life to a spiritual corpse and all of us who have been born again have experienced this very thing. Once upon a time in our life, Jesus gave us life in the tomb of our old nature and we heard his call and we came forth.

It's interesting, by the way, in the original language, the wording is much more abrupt. It's simply this, "Lazarus, here. Outside." That's all it took. "Lazarus, here. Outside." It doesn't say he pointed but he probably did. Astounding. I can't help but let my imagination begin to look at the faces of all those that were around him. First the faces of Mary and Martha. What would you say if it was your loved one? And the faces of those that hated Jesus and wanted him dead. Dear friends, what they beheld was merely a preview of what would happen just a few weeks later when Jesus who is the resurrection and the life, would himself rise from the dead. May I focus on that just for a moment? Today we can look at that empty tomb and I've seen it in Israel and we see a stone that is rolled away and when you look at it and you go inside of it, it's as though you can hear the angels still speaking to the two Marys saying, "Do not be afraid for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here for he has risen just as he said. Come see the place where he was lying." And like those early saints, we stand in amazement as we stare at an empty tomb. We look in that sepulcher and we do not see a rotting corpse in the Royal bedchamber, only the linen wrappers, the wrappings that covered the Lamb of God now lay upon that cold, stone slab, a vivid reminder of what we will some day wear.

My friends, that sacred sepulcher is empty proving that the debt of sin has been paid. I know lots of people wear crosses and I appreciate that. I wish they could somehow make something that shows an empty tomb because we need to celebrate that as well, don't we? It could not hold the one who has power over death. Satan was a murderer from the beginning but Christ is the giver of life and because he lives, so too will all who have been united to him by grace through faith. And as Christians, we do not marvel at great pyramids that are deteriorating, that attempt to somehow immortalize and glorify a mere mortal whose body has long since decayed and whose soul remains imprisoned in the solitary confinement of an eternal hell, nor do we look at the Royal mausoleum of a king long departed and forgotten. But instead we behold a simple rock tomb that held the body

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of the lover of our souls but only briefly for he has risen from the dead as he promised. No wonder Peter used this as the theme of his first sermon. On the birthday of the church at Pentecost, we read about it in Acts 2:23 where he declared, "God raised him up again putting an end to the agony of death since it was impossible for him to be held in its power." Although we don't know, there would be a high probability that some of the Jews that hated Jesus and some that wondered who he was there at Lazarus' tomb, heard Peter's sermon and were saved.

"Lazarus, here. Outside." What a magnificent testimony. Israel hears the voice of the Incarnate Word giving life to the physically dead even as he gives life to the spiritually dead. Beloved, this is a miracle beyond anything we could ever imagine, even the physical miracle. Suddenly decaying cells and nerves are re-created. Instantly, pure blood begins flowing through restored veins and arteries. Decomposed muscles and rotting bones are instantly reinvigorated. The unimaginably complex central nervous system suddenly works perfectly. But here's the glory of glories: suddenly sin is vanquished. Satan's greatest weapon which is death is now powerless. Death is swallowed up in victory. Once again, what a vivid picture of our new life in Christ. John MacArthur said it this way, "At his command, the king of terrors yielded up his lawful captive. The grave was robbed of its victory. The door of death and Hades was unlocked by the one who alone holds the keys."

But dear friends, may I remind you of something very important: Jesus made it clear in other passages of Scripture that there will one day be a resurrection of the righteous, also called the resurrection of life, but there will also be a resurrection of judgment for the unrighteous. Paul spoke of this, he said, "There will certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." The word of God says that the wicked will be raised to eternal death. Daniel 12:2, for example says, "They will awake to disgrace and everlasting contempt." The wicked will be raised and will be fitted with a body suited for eternal torment and they will appear before the Great White Throne Judgment spoken of in Revelation 20 and there we read "then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire, this is the second death, the lake of fire and if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." You see, the first death is only physical and because of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, believers will never experience the second death which will be spiritual and eternal. Revelation 21:8 speaks of this, "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Oh dear friend, I pray that you have been born again. If you are born once, you'll die twice. If you're born twice, you'll die once. All because of Christ.

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# Christ, the Resurrection and the Life

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 11:37-44

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Now, notice carefully as we wrap this up this morning, verse 44, "The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth." It was customary for the Jews to lay a corpse on a linen cloth that would have been over twice the length of the person's body. Their feet would be at one end and then they would take the extra cloth and they would drape it back over, tuck it in around the feet, wrap the sides and then they would take linen strips and wrap around the ankles a little bit and they would do the same thing around the waist and the arms. They had a special cloth that they put on the face of the deceased. Lazarus would have been laid upon a hand hewn slab like a shelf and in this condition as the Lord speaks to him, he comes to life. He is bound in his grave clothes. He would be able to sit up, to turn sideways, to put his feet on the ground and to begin to kind of shuffle, perhaps hop his way out of the grave. I cannot imagine a more amazing scene. This sight would have been terrifyingly glorious, the same reaction, by the way, that we should have when we see a person born again.

Once again, Jesus could have removed the grave clothes, couldn't he? But instead, isn't it fascinating once again, he used human instruments. For the mourners to actually participate in removing the wrappings would have certainly lent credibility to the miracle but I believe there is yet another spiritual lesson to be learned here. Let me summarize it this way: even as God expects us to do all we can to remove the stones that may impede a person from responding to the Lord Jesus Christ and being born again, so too after they have been given new life, isn't it amazing how the Lord uses us to help our brothers and sisters in Christ remove the rancid grave clothes of their former life? When we are born again, bear in mind that God's grace in our soul has just begun. Yes, we are given new life but the garments of our old nature still cling to us and we are encumbered by them, impeding our progress of becoming more like Christ. Paul speaks of this in Romans 7, he says, "We may joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man but we see a different law in the members of our body, waging war against the law of our mind and making us a prisoner of the law of sin which is in our members." Although we know that there is no condemnation, we still must be liberated. We must be loosed. We must be freed from the rotten and restrictive garments of the grave, of the old nature. And isn't it interesting how God uses his word in combination with his people, the members of his body, the church, to perform this amazing work?

Dear friends, this is not the work of evangelism here as in removing the stone, this is the work of discipleship. This is the work of intentional one anothering. This is the work of shepherding, of teaching others to observe all that he has commanded us and I cannot think of a greater privilege in all of the world than serving the Lord our God in these capacities, to come along and help remove those gravestones from people who are incarcerated in the tomb of their sin. And then when God gives them new life, to come along those nasty old grave clothes and begin to help taking them off. I praise God for

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those that have done that in my life and continue to do it and I hope that you are doing that as well in the lives of others.

"Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him and let him go.'" With this, dear friends, they saw the glory of God as Jesus promised.

If you don't know Christ, oh, how I plead with you as a minister of the Gospel to run to the cross, cast yourself down in brokenness. Believe in the one who he is the resurrection and the life and you will be saved. You must first believe; believe the truth about your sin and the Savior and then you will see the glory. Dear Christian, we simply must rejoice.

And I close with what came to my mind as I meditated upon the reality of what we just studied, it's what Peter said in 1 Peter 1, "Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls." We serve a glorious God, don't we?

Let's pray together.

*Father, thank you for these eternal truths. May they bear much fruit in every heart for your glory and for our joy. Lord Jesus, come quickly we pray in your name. Amen.*

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