



from the desk of ...

**Rande Wayne Smith**

D.Min., Th.M., M.Div.

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**I AM - 7**  
**Easter**

## **I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE**

**John 11:17-44**

On 27 November 1969 ... Thanksgiving night ... as I was saying good-bye to my Dad, he hugged me, & cried. (6:00 the next morning I was inducted into the Army.)

2 things have ingrained that scene into my mind.

1<sup>st</sup>, my Dad never hugged me;

my Mom was the physically affectionate one.

And 2<sup>ndly</sup>, I had never seen my Dad cry before.

I then drove the 50 miles to Pittsburgh where I spent the night at my cousin's, who took me to the Federal Building early Friday morning. But by the time I arrived at her house my Dad had already called to apologize for crying. He said, "men aren't supposed to cry ... at least not in front of other people."

Obviously, Jesus never heard that "rule" because, as we will see in our Gospel lesson today, He openly wept in front of a crowd. I'm specifically talking about John 11:35 ... the shortest verse in the Bible.

Good News, as recorded by John, to you who have come on this Easter morning to worship our risen Savior. Within your hearing now comes the Word of the Lord ...

**(video ... #17 ... 1:32:53-1:38:40)**

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had been buried four days before. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Judeans had come to see Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother's death.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died! But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask him for."

"Your brother will rise to life," Jesus told her.

"I know," she replied, "that he will rise to life on the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die; and those who live and believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord!" she answered. "I do believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

After Martha said this, she went back and called her sister Mary privately. "The Teacher is here," she told her, "and is asking for you." When Mary heard this, she got up and hurried out to meet him. (Jesus had not yet arrived in the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.) The people who were in the house with Mary comforting her followed her when they saw her get up and hurry out. They thought that she was going to the grave to weep there.

Mary arrived where Jesus was, and as soon as she saw him, she fell at his feet. "Lord," she said, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died!"

Jesus saw her weeping, and he saw how the people with her were weeping also; his heart was touched, and he was deeply moved. "Where have you buried him?" he asked them.

"Come and see, Lord," they answered.

Jesus wept. "See how much he loved him!" the people said.

But some of them said, "He gave sight to the blind man, didn't he? Could he not have kept Lazarus from dying?"

Deeply moved once more, Jesus went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone placed at the entrance. "Take the stone away!" Jesus ordered.

Martha, the dead man's sister, answered, "There will be a bad smell, Lord. He has been buried four days!"

Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believed?" They took the stone away. Jesus looked up and said, "I thank you, Father, that you listen to me. I know that you always listen to me, but I say this for the sake of the people here, so that they will believe that you sent me." After he had said this, he called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" He came out, his hands and feet wrapped in grave cloths, and with a cloth around his face. "Untie him," Jesus told them, "and let him go." (John 11:17-44)

**May the Lord grant that we may engage in contemplating the mysteries of His Heavenly wisdom with really increasing devotion, to His glory and to our edification. Amen**

I remember when I was in S.S., especially 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, & 6<sup>th</sup> grades. We had to memorize a Bible verse every week. Now the girls would always come with these great passages that probably had lots of theological significance ... but we boys ... we spent way too much time searching the Scriptures for brevity.

So, our favorite verses to memorize became:

1 Thessalonians 5:16 ... "Be joyful always."

Or, Luke 17:32 ... "Remember Lot's wife!"

And the most popular of all, John 11:35 ... "Jesus wept."

Well, there are a couple of reasons why Jesus wasn't embarrassed for weeping in front of a crowd. For one thing, crying was expected by men in Jesus' day under certain conditions. The Jews had elevated mourning & grieving to an art form.

The rabbis wrote a religious rule book for everyday living called The Talmud. One of the "rules" was that men were required to mourn for 30 days.

In fact, the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 days they were to weep uncontrollably. For the rest of the week they were to lament out loud, & then, for the remainder of the 30 days, the men were to go without shaving & bathing ... (which, I'm sure, brought tears to everybody else's eyes).

So, it wasn't an unusual thing in Jesus' day for men to cry.

A 2<sup>nd</sup> reason why the crowd certainly wouldn't make "fun" of Jesus at this moment was that Lazarus was one of His best friends (John 11:3) ... & now he had passed.

In fact, the words "Jesus wept" are followed with the people commenting ... "See how much he loved him!"

And that's the great irony ... because Jesus wasn't crying over the loss of Lazarus. He knew from the moment that He got word about Lazarus' sickness that He was going to raise him from the dead.

He even "teased" His disciples about this.

He said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep,  
but I will go & wake him up." (John 11:11)  
(That was a thinly veiled reference about His intention  
to raise Lazarus from the dead.)

So, knowing that His friend would be alive & well  
within a few moments, we can assume that Jesus wasn't  
crying over Lazarus' passing. So, why was He weeping? ...

Let's look at the passage. "Jesus saw Mary weeping,  
& he saw how the people with her were weeping also;  
his heart was touched, & he was deeply moved."

Now John is going to use that same expression again  
a few sentences later ...

"Deeply moved once more, Jesus went to the tomb,  
which was a cave with a stone placed at the entrance."

Actually, "deeply moved," (ἐνεβριμήσατο), is a very  
interesting phrase. It really means "intensely angry"! It  
means "outrage"! In Greek literature it's the expression  
used of a snorting horse that's pawing the ground.

So, what was Jesus so angry about as He approached  
the grave of Lazarus? ...

John tells us at the beginning of his Gospel that  
Jesus is the author of life. He writes ...

"Through him God made all things; not one thing in all  
creation was made without him. Jesus was the source  
of life, & this life brought light to people." (John 1:3-4)

Jesus is the life-giver. Jesus hates death. Jesus knows that death is not the way it's supposed to be. (Genesis 3:20)

The Apostle Paul wrote, (X) "Sin came into the world through one man, & his sin brought death with it. As a result, death has spread to the whole human race because everyone has sinned." (Romans 5:12)

So, as Jesus stood at the graveside of Lazarus,  
He wasn't **grieving** over the loss of His friend,  
He was **trembling** with **rage** because He realized ...  
"this isn't the way I intended it to be. This life I  
created wasn't supposed to be **destroyed** this way."

And at that point,  
Jesus raises His friend Lazarus from the dead.

This is the final recorded miracle of Jesus' earthly ministry ... & it's the biggest. More than any other, it demonstrates Jesus' omnipotence ... His **unlimited power**.  
And this morning we'll see 5 aspects of that power.

The 1<sup>st</sup> one ... it's **invited** power.

"Deeply moved once more, Jesus went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone placed at the entrance.

'Take the stone away!' Jesus ordered."

Why did Jesus order the stone to be removed? ...

Certainly, the Son of God,  
who was about to raise a man from the dead,  
could have supernaturally eliminated that stone as well.

He could have called for a thunderbolt from Heaven & demolished it into 5,280 pieces ... which would have been a great prelude to the raising of Lazarus.

"Now that I've got your attention ... here's the miracle!"

Instead, Jesus requests **human participation** before He demonstrates His awesome power.

Isn't that interesting? ...

Do you remember the one time in the Gospels where Jesus was unable to do many miracles? ... It was in His hometown, Nazareth. "Because they did not have faith, Jesus did not perform many miracles there." (Matthew 13:58)

Jesus typically reserves the greatest displays of His power for those who demonstrate an **expectation** that big things are about to happen.

Now Martha & Mary, Lazarus' sisters, had already expressed a little of this kind of faith. When Lazarus became deathly ill the 1<sup>st</sup> thing the sisters did was send for Jesus (John 11:3) ... "Jesus please come." They recognized that they needed some supernatural help ... & they knew where to get it.

It was a step of faith on their part ... call for the Savior.

And then when Jesus arrives, Martha (verse 21) & Mary (verse 32) both say the same thing. "If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died!"

These brokenhearted women are still expressing **faith**.



They'd seen Jesus heal people. And they're saying,  
 "Lord, we know that if you had been here,  
 you could have/would have healed Lazarus."

The 1<sup>st</sup> miracle that Jesus performed was turning water  
 into wine at the wedding feast in Cana. (John 2:1-11)

What did He do just prior to that miracle? ... He told  
 the servants to fill 6 stone jars with water, (each held  
 20-30 gallons). Do you think Jesus was capable of filling  
 those empty jars with wine without any water in them? ...

Of course ... so why fill the jars? ...

The same thing was going on in the 1<sup>st</sup> miracle as is  
 going on in His final miracle.

Jesus is looking for some evidence of faith.

"Fill these jars with water." ... "Take the stone away!"

It's not that Jesus **needs** our help ... Jesus just  
 wants to know that we really **want** His help. Jesus waits  
 to see if we're willing to move the stone in anticipation of  
 what we expect Him to do.

2<sup>nd</sup>, this is **invincible** power. (Luke 1:37)

"Martha, the dead man's sister, answered, 'There will be  
 a bad smell, Lord. He has been buried 4 days!'

"Jesus said to her, 'Didn't I tell you that  
 you would see God's glory if you believed?'"

Now hearing Martha's words, it doesn't really sound like  
 she's truly expecting a miracle, does it? ...

Jesus says, "Take the stone away!" And it appears that Martha responds, "You've got to be kidding."

But to Martha's defense, the story isn't over yet. All we're seeing at this point is Martha's immediate reaction. But it isn't long before they're removing the stone. So, let me suggest that faith sometimes needs a long runway before it takes off.

A 2<sup>nd</sup> thing, in Martha's defense ... she had the faith that if Jesus had arrived in time He would have healed her brother. It's just that power to heal is one thing ... power to resurrect is another.

No one expected that. "Some of the people said, 'He gave sight to the blind man, didn't he? Could he not have kept Lazarus from dying?'"

Everyone was willing to concede ... Jesus restored sight to the blind, He performed all sorts of miracles, & "could have" kept Lazarus from dying ... if He had arrived on time.

But a resurrection made nobodies list of possibilities.

Now some of you, who are faithful readers of Scripture, are thinking ... "Hey, didn't Jesus already raise a couple of other people from the dead?" ...

Yes, but they weren't as "dead" as Lazarus!

In the 1<sup>st</sup> instance, the Synagogue ruler Jairus comes to Jesus, "My little daughter is very sick.

"Please come & place your hands on her, so that she will get well & live!" So, Jesus goes with him. But on the way some messengers come & tell Jairus, "Your daughter has died. Why bother the Teacher any longer?"

Jesus looks at him & says, "Don't be afraid, only believe."

(Mark 5:22-24, 35-43)

Jesus arrives at Jairus' home ... takes his daughter's hand, which is probably still warm, & says ...

"Little girl, I tell you to get up!" And she got up at once.

Jesus raises her from the dead ... barely dead.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> instance, Jesus is out & about & a funeral is going by. They're carrying a young man to the graveyard. (Now in that culture people were buried the day they died. There was no way to preserve a body, & in that climate, it would begin to decompose right away.)

So, Jesus goes over to the coffin, & says, "Young man! Get up, I tell you!" He raises this only son of a bereaved widow ... also just barely dead. (Luke 7:11-15)

The situation with Lazarus was entirely different.

Lazarus was dead dead.

Martha tells us that in a couple of ways.

1<sup>st</sup> of all she says that "he has been buried 4 days."

There was a superstition in Jesus' day that the spirit of a person would hang around the dead body for 3 days in the hope that the person might be resuscitated.

But after 3 days it left. Lazarus has been buried 4 days.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing that underscores his deadness is “a bad smell.” The body, in other words, has begun to decompose. (The King James Version graphically puts it, “Lord, he stinketh.”) Lazarus was dead dead.

And while there were many in this crowd who were willing to grant the fact that Jesus could pull off the occasional miracle, & might even be able to possibly raise a recently dead body to life ...

dead dead people were an entirely different matter.

That would require invincible power. That would require power so awesome that it could only be described as Jesus does ... “God’s glory.” Jesus says to Martha, “Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s glory.”

Sometimes I wonder if we don’t carry around in our minds a list of what think Jesus can & cannot do?

We believe in Jesus’ power ... up to a certain point, but anything beyond that ... it just isn’t going to happen.

Don’t even bother to pray about it.

I’m not suggesting that the Lord is going to say “yes” to every one of our prayer requests, but I know this ... He’s not going to say “yes” to prayers that are **never prayed** because of **unbelief**.

Do you believe that Jesus’ power is invincible? ...  
Or are there some things that you pray for, but not other things because they’re beyond what God can do?

3<sup>rd</sup>, this is **identifiable** power.

"They took the stone away. Jesus looked up & said, 'I thank you, Father, that you listen to me. I know that you always listen to me, but I say this for the sake of the people here, so that they will believe that you sent me.'"

What I want you to get from that passage, is the inseparable link between **Jesus & His Father**.

1<sup>st</sup>, "Jesus looked up." Jesus could have prayed with His head bowed & His eyes closed. I believe that looking up was a dramatic gesture on Jesus' part to intentionally let those people know that He & God were working together on this.

Then He says, "I thank you, Father, that you listen to me." ... "You listen to me." ... Jesus knows for a fact that God listens to Him. So, what is it that God has heard? ... What God has been listening to is the continuous communication that Jesus has been having with Him all along. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Now up to this point the volume has been kept low, but now Jesus turns the sound up so that everyone else can hear who He's talking to. But this has been a nonstop dialogue that's already in progress.

"I know that you always listen to me,  
but I say this for the sake of the people here,  
so that they will believe that you sent me."

Jesus is telling His listeners ... "I'm on a mission. I've come from a place other than planet earth. I've been sent. The Father sent me. I'm working on His agenda.

The Father & I are doing this together." (John 10:30)

This is a God thing. Jesus is setting up the crowd for the miracle. He just wants them to understand that when He calls Lazarus from the dead ...

that God is the one who has done this. (John 6:38)

When I was a boy I used to love to watch Zorro. The thing I especially liked was the moment Zorro rescued somebody ... he would always do what? ... He'd leave his signature behind. He'd take out his sword & go (X) .... And there'd be this huge "Z" for everyone to see, so no one would be in the dark as to who had done this.

Jesus has taken out His "sword" as it were & swiped a large "G" in everybody's mind. God! What you're about to see is a God thing! The Father & I are working together in concert with each other. (John 14:9-10)

4<sup>th</sup>, this is **internalized** power. "After he had said this, he called out in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' He came out, his hands & feet wrapped in grave cloths."

Just a couple of amusing side notes. 1<sup>st</sup> of all, Jesus "called out in a loud voice." Back in those days there were a lot of traveling magicians & wizards who would mumble their "hocus-pocus" when casting a spell.

Jesus wants to distinguish Himself from those charlatans.

There's no secret chant going on here. No magical words are being said. This is straight forward God power. He speaks loud enough for everyone to hear.

The other thing that I find kind of amusing is that Jesus uses Lazarus' name. "Lazarus, come out!"

Some Bible scholars have suggested that if He hadn't used Lazarus' name, the whole graveyard would have come alive. If He had just said, "Come out!" ... how many dead bodies would have responded? ... Let your imagination go with that thought. ...

Now what made this miracle so amazing, (besides a dead man coming back to life), was Jesus' Jewish audience didn't have much of an understanding about the concept of resurrection.

Believe it or not, there's very little in the O.T., (which would have been their Scripture), about it.

The Psalmist alludes to it a few times saying that the Lord's blessing would be extended beyond this life. Job states, "I know there is someone in heaven ...

& someday I will see him with my own eyes." (Job 19:25,27)

Daniel writes ... "Many of those who have already died will live again: some will enjoy eternal life, & some will suffer eternal disgrace." (Daniel 12:2)

From Isaiah ... "Those of our people who have died  
will live again!" (Isaiah 26:19)

But once we get beyond those few Scriptures  
there's not much else that describes resurrection. In  
fact, there were 2 major religious parties in Jesus' day ...  
Pharisees & Sadducees, & the Sadducees (religious  
leaders mind you) didn't even believe in a resurrection!

(The Acts 23:8)

Now because this miracle was done "less than 2 miles  
from Jerusalem" & due to the fact that Martha, Mary,  
& Lazarus were a prominent family,

& many Judeans had come to comfort them ...  
there were a great # of people standing around.

I suspect there must have even been some  
Sadducees there. Wouldn't you have loved to see the  
look on their faces when Lazarus came out of the tomb?  
Kind of wrecks their whole theology doesn't it? ...

Resurrection!

This is a doctrine that's **personified** by Jesus Himself.

"Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, Lord,  
my brother would not have died! But I know that  
even now God will give you whatever you ask him for.'

"Your brother will rise to life,' Jesus told her.

"I know,' she replied,  
'that he will rise to life on the last day.'"



(Martha has pieced together those O.T. passages & believes that there will be a resurrection.)

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection & the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die; & those who live & believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?'

"'Yes, Lord!' she answered.

'I do believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.'"

What Jesus is questioning isn't, "Do you believe this theological doctrine?" He's asking, "Do you believe in this person standing in front of you?" Martha responds, "Yes, Lord! I believe that you are who you claim to be, the Messiah, the Son of God."

Please note ... Jesus is not just a person who **does resurrection** ... Jesus **is the resurrection**. Jesus is not just a person who makes people **alive** ... Jesus **is the life**.

This is not a S.S. lesson about the doctrine of resurrection; this is about a personal relationship with the One who is resurrection, & who is life. Do you believe in Him? Martha announces boldly ... "Yes I do!"

(X) "In the past you were spiritually dead because of your disobedience & sins." (Ephesians 2:1) Spiritually speaking, we are dead, lifeless. We can't do anything to merit our own salvation. We're hopeless. We're helpless.

It takes Jesus to resurrect us to new life spiritually. And the day is coming when we believe that this is going to happen physically. We're going to be resurrected in an eternal sense. I am so looking forward to that day.

Maybe my favorite Christian song, that's been written in the past 20 years, wonders about what our 1<sup>st</sup> moments in Heaven will be like. I can only imagine ...

**(I CAN ONLY IMAGINE** Video - Andie's Isle [andiesisle.com/imagine.html](http://andiesisle.com/imagine.html) by Ronnie Kimball )

Jesus told them, "Untie him, & let him go."

This is **inaugurating** power.

We all know about inaugurations; we have them every 4 years. It's the beginning of something new, something fresh, something that creates expectation.

Lazarus has just been raised from the dead ...  
but somebody has got to set him loose  
from his grave clothes.

Getting raised from the dead is only the 1<sup>st</sup> step. Try to picture this. Here's this guy just raised from the dead, & He's struggling to get out of the tomb. And everybody is just standing there with their mouths open ... nobody's doing anything about it.

It takes Jesus to do that.

The power that Jesus gives is not just the power to **start** us out in the Christian life; it's the power to **transform** our life.

One final thought ... Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead not only as a testimony to those who lived in that day, but also as a reminder of His promise to us. (John 14:19)

Think about this ... in just a few days after raising Lazarus from the dead Jesus Himself is going to be killed, & He'll be buried, & then He'll rise from the dead.

And since that's the case ... why bother with Lazarus?  
Why raise him from the dead? ...

Well, if only Jesus rose from the dead ... what difference does that make to us? ... I mean, "yeah, Jesus is God. Of course, He can rise from the dead! But we're mortals ... & death is part of the deal for us. (Hebrews 9:27) And every mortal we've ever known throughout our lives has or will die. It's our fate.

But in raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus was allowing us to have a preview what He'll do for us.

(X) "If the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from death, lives in you, then he who raised Christ from death will also give life to your mortal bodies by the presence of his Spirit in you." (Romans 8:11)

Isn't that an awesome thought? ... The Spirit of God who resides in us is powerful enough to bring us right up out of the grave! Just as Jesus rose from the grave ... we will too! When that trumpet sounds on the last day, (1 Corinthians 15:51-52) we'll be resurrected to be with Jesus eternally. No grave will be able to hold us. (Romans 6:9)

In a cemetery in Hanover, Germany, there's a grave on which were placed huge slabs of granite & marble cemented together & fastened with heavy steel clasps. It belonged to Henriette Juliane Caroline von Rüling, a woman who didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead. In fact, she directed in her will that her grave be made so secure that if there were a resurrection, it couldn't reach her. On the marker were inscribed these words:  
 "May this tomb bought for eternity never be opened."

In time, a seed began to grow into a tree. It slowly pushed its' way through the soil. As the trunk enlarged, the great slabs were gradually shifted so that the steel clasps were wrenched from their sockets. (X)

This birch tree pushed away the stones, opening that grave. The tomb has since become a tourist attraction, & even the subject of horror stories.

Now, everyone has an idea about what happened there ... but we know what really happened.

God laughed & said ... "Seriously? ...

You really think I can't open this grave. Just watch."

Jesus announced (X) ... "I am the resurrection & the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die; & those who live & believe in me will never die." Then He looked at Martha, & this morning He looks at each one of us, & asks ... "Do you believe this?" ...

**MARANA THA**