

“I AM the Resurrection and the Life!”

SERMON TEXT: John 11:25-26

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In the name of Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of Man, by whom the fallen sons of Adam—made mortal in his immortality— are now raised immortal unto Eternal Life as the sons of God. Amen.

Dear brethren in Christ, Adam’s fall affected all. In Adam, *all* are fallen. Yet, Jesus says of Himself, “I AM the Resurrection and the Life.” In the day that Adam disobeyed God’s Word, Adam surely did die— not nine-hundred and thirty years later, but in that very day. Still, Jesus proclaims, “I AM the Resurrection and the Life.” In Adam, all die; in Adam, all are born dead in sin. Nevertheless, Jesus answers, “I AM the Resurrection and the Life!” From the womb to the tomb, going astray every day, in Adam we are accursed. So, outside the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus wept.

Dearly beloved of God, death surrounds us. We worry. We weep. We wail. In Adam, all die. In Adam, we die. Yet, Jesus says, “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? Jesus says of Himself, “I AM the Resurrection and the Life.” Do you believe this? Who is this man to say such things? Martha wept. Mary wept. He wept. We weep. Who is this man to say such things? What is He saying when He says, “Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die”? What do His words mean? What do they mean to us and what does all of this mean for us? Who *is* this man?

“I AM the Resurrection and the Life.” St. John, who recorded both Jesus’ words and the context in which they were spoken, tells us that “these are written so that [we] may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing [we] may have Life in His name.” St. John also tells us that Jesus “did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in [St. John’s] book.” St. John, therefore, selected this sign to serve us by showing us the One in whose name we can know Life, Eternal Life. So, what is meant by “Life”, let alone “Eternal Life”? After all, Jesus Himself claims to be “the Life.” So, again, *who* is this man and *what* does He mean? Beloved in the Lord, we have no need to guess when it comes to our Lord’s words or when it comes to the author’s intent in presenting us with such a word from our Lord. We who walk in the valley of the shadow of death, are given the very definition of “Eternal Life”. In the very words of our Lord Jesus Christ, as recorded by St. John, we are told, “Now this is Eternal Life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.” So, who is this man? To know Him is to know Life. Yet, here we are, in a world engulfed by death, under the shadow of sorrow. So it is, or so it seems. So, what are we missing? How do we make sense of what Jesus said when He said, “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”?

Dearest brethren in Christ, St. John presents us with the purpose of his Gospel and the reason for designing it around eight great signs and eight sayings in which our Lord uses the words “I AM” as part of a phrase in which He reveals His true identity to His hearers. St. John’s Gospel begins with those words which take us back to the beginning:

“In the beginning...” The opening words of St. John’s Gospel take us back to the Book of Genesis. In the beginning, God revealed Himself to His people— that is, who He is— by way of His name. For example, throughout the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, He is: *El Emet* (The God of Truth); *El Tsaddik* (The Righteous God); *El Shaddai* (The Almighty God); *El Elyon* (The Most High God); *El Olam* (The Everlasting God); *El Hakadosh* (The Holy God); *El Rachum* (The Compassionate God); *El Channun* (The Gracious God); *El Yeshuatenu* (The God of Our Salvation); *El Chaiyai* (The God of My Life); *El Roi* (The God Who Sees Me); and *El Yeshuati* (The God Who Saves Me). God reveals Himself as the Living God— the One who is, was, and ever shall be! To Moses, He declared, “I AM THAT I AM!” Indeed, we find this most personal, holy, and ineffable name— which, in reverence we substitute with the word “LORD”— appended to a number of phrases that once again tell us about *who* God is and *what* He will do. The eight “I AM” sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ are presented as a continuation of such a pattern of divine disclosure, especially when they are set in the context of a miraculous sign. So, in saying, “I AM the Resurrection and the Life,” Jesus is making a divine claim. He is telling us *who* He is and *what* He is here to do. So, what is meant by the phrase appended to the words, “I AM”? What does our Lord mean when He says that He is the “Resurrection”? What does He mean by “the Life”?

The Greek word for “resurrection,” ἀνάστασις, literally means, “to stand up again.” Jesus says that He is “*The Resurrection*” (ἡ ἀνάστασις). Here He is saying that He Himself is the agent— indeed, the very means— for raising up that which has fallen. Yet, to grasp what is meant we must link the first part to the second, namely, “the Life”. Now,

what we have here is the English languages' failure to communicate, to rightly convey the content of the Christ's claim. In the Greek, the word βίος (from which we get the prefix "bio" as in the word "biology") refers to life only in the physical sense. The Greek word ζωή, on the other hand, refers to the very essence and purpose of life. It goes beyond mere existence— it's much more than lungs drawing another breath and a heart beating one more beat! It bespeaks a life that is worth living! It's about really being alive! In the Fall, Adam's race fell. Death came as part of the curse. Yet, the death that Adam experienced on that day, at the moment that he disobeyed, was not the death of the body, the separation of the soul from its vessel of flesh— after all, that wouldn't happen for almost a millennia's worth of days— but, what Adam experienced, was the death of his right standing before the God in whose image he was formed and by whose very Living Breath, the Holy Spirit, he was made to be a living soul. The death of the body in this vale is not to be confused with the second death that awaits all of those who remain separated from God when this world's veil is pulled back and the verdict of God's judgment against a sinful world is realized. It is ultimately this death from which Jesus came to save us. He came as the second Adam to save us from the second death— the lake of everlasting fire, where the wrath of God is poured out in perpetuity! In the resurrection on the Last Day, the day of judgement, all flesh will be raised. All will possess βίος, but not all will possess ζωή. When Jesus said, "I AM the Resurrection and the Life," He was claiming to be the very Living God, having come among us as one of us, to raise us up again, so as to stand in a right relationship with God, because it is only in the context of this relationship that life is much more than just βίος, it's ζωή. God, in

accord with His triune nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is *relational*. His love is an interpersonal and eternal love, existing as part of the essence of Life itself. From such love, God moved to make man so as to share in His love, in His Life (to know and be known). Of this Life, Jesus said that He came so that we would have such Life, αἰώνια ζωή, and have it abundantly. Hence, whoever trusts in Jesus, even though he will surely be separated from his body until he is reunited with it on the Last Day, he will nevertheless know what it truly means to be alive, and those who know such Life, will never know that death which takes away this Life because this will never be taken away from them.

Dearly beloved of God, the Living God has given Himself so as to restore us to one another in the bond of love that defines Eternal Life. God would have us have a share in such Life. God loves us. Satan hates us. Satan would have us, if he could have us, die the second death (thus sharing in his fate). “The thief [Satan] comes only to steal and kill and destroy,” said Jesus, “I came that they may have Life and have it abundantly.” In your baptism you were united to Jesus in His own death and resurrection, you were washed and made new in the water by God’s Word, you were claimed by God as His own, and you received the Holy Spirit as the seal of His promise to keep you unto the Last Day. St. Paul writes, “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” The tomb is merely another womb from which we will spring forth anew, no longer as mere dust of the earth. The mortal will be clothed

in immortality and the perishable will become imperishable. Raised in the second Adam, Jesus Christ, we now stand in righteousness, knowing God's love forevermore.

Dear brethren in Christ, our Lord is the Lord of Life who defeated death by His own death. He is the Resurrection and the Life. He has heard our cry and has shed His own tears on our account, lamenting over the tearing asunder of that relationship which ought to have never been torn apart. Yet, He has come into the world to do what He alone can do, to do what He does because He is who He is. "I AM the Resurrection and the Life," Jesus declares. In Adam, all die; in Christ, all live even though they die. In Adam, all were cursed; in Christ, who bore our curse and broke the curse, we are now blessed. In Adam, we were dead in our trespasses; in Christ, we have been forgiven and we have been set free. "I AM the Resurrection and the Life." He means what He says and he says what He means. As we recall, over the remainder of this Lenten season, that we are dust and to dust we shall return, we trust that we will not be left to the dust. Yes, He means what He says and He says what He means. It is He who said that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have Eternal Life." So, yes, He means what He says and He says what He means because He is the I AM that *is*, who said "Let there be..." and there *was*, and to know Him is know Life as it was always meant to be. In His name. Amen.

May the Word of the Lord take root in your hearts and minds so as to bear fruit in your lives. Amen.