

I am the resurrection and the life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 August 2026

Preacher: Charlie Ross

[0:00] John chapter 11. This is the story of the man Lazarus. So John chapter 11, starting at verse 1.

So the sisters sent word to Jesus, Lord, the one you love is sick. When he heard this, Jesus said, this sickness will not end in death.

No, it is for God's glory, so that God's Son may be glorified through it. Now, Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

And then he said to his disciples, let us go back to Judea. But Rabbi, they said, a short while ago, the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back.

Jesus answered, are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.

[1:22] After he said this, he went on to tell him, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going to wake him up. His disciples replied, Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.

Jesus had been speaking of his death, but the disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe, but let us go to him.

Then Thomas, also known as Didymus, said to the rest of the disciples, Let us go, that we may die with him. On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been dead in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them for the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

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

[2:26] Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again. Martha answered, I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life.

The one who believes in me will live even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this? Yes, Lord, she told him. I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.

After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. The teacher is here, she said, and is asking for you. When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.

Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

[3:39] Where have you laid him? he asked. Come and see, Lord, they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, see how he loved him. But some of them said, could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man kept this man from dying?

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. Take away the stone, he said. But Lord, Martha said, the sister of the dead man, by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days.

Then Jesus said, did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God? So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, Father, I thank that you have heard me.

I knew you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they might believe that you sent me. When he said this, Jesus called out in a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped in strips of linen and cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, unwrap him and let him go.

[4:50] This is God's word. Now, I had to work on Monday, last Monday. That's a disaster for me. I don't like working on Mondays.

Usually Mondays are my day off for a bit of admin, a bit of sorting out. But I had to drive to Pitlochry last Monday to work. I had to do this because I tried to do it the previous Friday and there was an accident on the A9.

There had been diversion routes around and breakdowns on the diversion routes. And after two hours of sitting in traffic in Dunkeld, I gave up and I decided I wasn't getting to Pitlochry on Friday. And I decided to come home and I headed back on Monday instead. As someone who drives north on the A9 plenty, my parents and my in-laws live on the other end of the A9.

It's a road I absolutely hate. It's endless roadworks. It's slow traffic. And I'd love for the Scottish government to stop pushing back a deadline of dueling and just get it done.

[5:55] I'd love for that project to just be done. It doesn't seem that hard to just get moving, get working and get a road that flows nicely. But being cautiously sympathetic to Holyrood, dueling the A9 isn't a quick patch-up job.

It requires cutting through solid rock, building new bridges, viaducts, reconstructing entire landscapes. It takes time to build a road that will last.

What feels to me and to some of us like endless frustrating delays is the slow, costly work of proper engineering, proper construction to build a road that will last.

Christ shows love by showing glory and in his glory we have life. When crisis hits our lives, our human instincts can want immediate fixes, can wonder why the road isn't being cleared ahead, why God isn't acting quickly to fix the obvious issues.

But in John chapter 11, when news reaches Jesus that his friend Lazarus is dying, he doesn't rush at all. He doesn't come quickly to remedy.

[7:08] He doesn't even come to heal him from the sickness. Jesus allows this situation of his dying friend to collapse into total disaster, not because he's indifferent, not because he doesn't care, but because he loves Martha and Mary and Lazarus too much to give them the quick patch-up job.

Instead, he delays so that he can reveal his eternal glory. This morning, I want to look at this story of Lazarus through three points. First, the crisis, a man lying in a tomb, dead for four days, where all human hope is completely gone.

And then second, Jesus' claim, I am the resurrection and the life. And then finally, the proof, Jesus speaking into the darkness of the tomb and raising Lazarus back to life.

So the crisis, the claim and the proof. First of all, the crisis, Lazarus has been sick. The message has been sent to Jesus, the one whom you love is sick.

In verse five, we know Jesus loves Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So what does he do? Well, last week, Rach was quite unwell and she called me.

[8:31] She phoned me one day saying she needed me to come. So what did I do in love? I came. She needed me. She was unwell. I came. I cancelled work. That's what the human expectation of love is.

When someone you love needs you, you drop things, you go and you love them. But that's a divine contrast to how Christ shows love. That the soul, instead, Jesus knowing that Lazarus is sick, so he waited two more days.

He's in no hurry. I don't think anyone, any husbands would be in the good books if they heard their wife was unwell, so they just chilled out for two days before they did anything.

Christ is showing love. He is doing this by showing his glory. Do you see the contrast that the logic of divine love?

Human love rushes to relieve pain immediately. Divine love delays to reveal glory eternally. That is the thing that mankind needs most, is God's glory, Christ's glory.

[9:39] In love, the greatest thing Christ can give us, is better than any physical relief or pain. The sisters are in crisis. I'm sure Lazarus is probably, when the message is given to Christ, Lazarus is in

crisis on his deathbed.

Jesus tells them, though, there is no crisis. Christ lays out that the sickness is for his glory. As we get into the story, this is our anchor. This is why Lazarus was sick.

This is why Lazarus died. Why Jesus stayed. It was for God's glory. For you to enjoy God's glory. Jesus waited two days before he went to aid Lazarus at all for you to see in Winchbrot this morning God's glory.

Lazarus died 2,000 years ago and Christ had no rush to get to him so that you could see his glory this morning. He allows the story to unfold, the tragedy to progress and the crisis to reach its climax. It is intentional. He says, I am glad I was not there. He's glad because they are going to believe through this. His purpose, his absence is purposeful to deepen their faith.

[10:54] The sisters don't know this. All they know is God didn't come to save them. Their distress hasn't been answered. They've sent out this message and it's not like messages today where you can get a text back to say, I hear Lazarus is sick.

I'll get there in a few days. No, they've not heard any answer at all. They're sitting and all they know is their friend, the one they had trusted in, has not arrived to save them.

And when he does eventually arrive, Lazarus has not just been lying dead there four days. He's been buried in his tomb for four days. This matters.

The Jewish belief at the time was that the soul lingered over the body for three days. And then on the fourth day, the soul left the body. The body started to decompose.

All hope of natural recovery is gone. On the fourth day, you can be quite sure, absolutely sure that the body is dead. Many Jews come to console the sisters. The community gathers and rituals are underway.

[11:55] This is not a fresh loss. This is a death that has sat in. Lazarus' body is decomposing. It's finished. The sisters have buried him and they are planning life without their brother now.

I wonder, have you ever been on day four with God? When there's no answer to your prayer, your hope is decomposing. God, if you're going to arrive now, it's too late to even fix the problem.

I know I've felt that I've been there. I know I have been in suffering where you feel there's no way God is going to use this for any kind of glory.

There's no way God can fix this situation at all. It feels beyond God's glory. Maybe you're here today, metaphorically, on the fourth day.

Jesus arrives and he arrives, first of all, to accusations. Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. The implication hangs in there. Why didn't you prevent this, Jesus?

[12:55] Why did you not save the man you say you love? This may be our crisis. This has been our crisis. Why, God, did you not act?

And the crisis faced by Lazarus is far worse than just death. It's the same crisis we face in our sinful state. It's the crisis we face as non-believers.

Not just death, not just decay, not just mourning, not just loss, but absence from God in our death. We lose his favour in our death, death without Christ present.

Martha's accusation sows her face. She knows that if Christ had been there, Lazarus wouldn't have died. But this exposes the crisis we face. Death without God, there will be no saving if we die without him.

And what we have seen, and what have we seen in the crisis of this story? A horrible earthly reality, a panic, pain, suffering, and maybe a reality that seems a little bit similar for us today to the God we know, who he tells us, he deeply loves us, has told us he loves us, withholds himself, allows us to pass through pain before he comes to our needs.

[14:15] This is the drama of these early verses, the scandal of them. Love and delay are not opposites. They're intertwined.

God's purpose is not to make us happy in life, but to make us holy. He knows he could have spared pain if he didn't wait those two days, but glory would have been reduced.

He loves us, he loves Martha and Mary and his disciples too much to save the grief and suffering when glory and holiness can be revealed in its place because Christ shows love by showing glory.

The sisters wanted rescue from their distress. They cried out to the Lord in their trouble. They wanted saving from their distress, but instead they receive transformation. It wasn't a delay that was a cruel pretending of love.

It is the love of God which operates on a different logic to ours. Even in the shadow of his love, there's always mercy. In our sorrow, it's always shared with him.

[15 : 22] He comes to us in our pain. A delay is not abandonment. Jesus will come and he will weep with them. He will come alongside them. He will meet them. Martha has stated in her faith that the knowledge of who he is, that if he was there, Lazarus would not be dead.

She knows his power. Her accusation though opens the door for Jesus to respond. So, how does he respond? He quickly corrects Martha.

Martha knows her theology. Jesus says to her, your brother will rise again. And Martha knows that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. This isn't ignorance. This is scripture knowledge.

Martha knows her Bible. She knows the law and the prophets. She expresses her faith in the end times. She knows that resurrection is for the believers. She knows.

She's read this. Her faith is focused on the last day, on the future. And it's so focused. She isn't seeing the saviour right in front of her. Martha is faithful.

[16 : 26] She's intelligent. So often when we hear these interactions with people speaking to Jesus, there's so many conversations recorded with people in Jesus. I think about these people, why are you so thick to not be understanding what Jesus is saying?

But this isn't Martha. Martha is understanding Jesus. She sees her brother dead and thinks immediate resurrection is insurmountable.

Martha looks at faith and trusts God's calendar. She looks to the timeline. She wants a date for comfort. Instead, Jesus himself is her comfort, just not revealed yet.

Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. In the glory he's about to reveal is life. In his glory, we have life. Resurrection isn't just something that happened to people in Jesus' time.

Resurrection isn't a doctrine or a bit of theology that is something to look forward to in the distant future. Resurrection is this man, the son of man, standing in front of Martha.

[17 : 35] Resurrection is Christ. Life is Christ. While Martha is looking to the end of time, Jesus turns her attention to the one who is in her presence right now, the very one who brings resurrection and life to fruition.

What Martha waits for in the last days is standing right in front of her just now. It is Christ, Jesus himself, whom she is anticipating. Christ goes on to elaborate, the one who believes in me will live even though they die and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.

Do you believe this? This statement is operating on two levels at the same time. Jesus guarantees that faith in him secures resurrection of life one day, but his statement is in the present as well.

Not only will the dead rise one day in the future, but if you believe in him, you will never die spiritually. Eternal life isn't something we've got to look forward to in the future.

In Christ, eternal life is here and now. As a believer, you are already united in Christ in his resurrection. You already are in eternal life.

[18 : 48] The already and not yet tension in Jesus' statement isn't just promising what is going to be experienced in full at the end of age. It is telling us what eternity brings to our present state now.

Everlasting life starts now. Even though it hasn't reached its fullness. When we have a union with Christ through faith, the believer's spiritual life is already resurrected.

Jesus declares himself to be the fulfillment of the Jewish expectations. He is the one who has the power to raise the dead. He is the one who gives life.

They're not just truths for the distant future. They are realities now. Why though? Why do we see these truths about Christ?

We see them because he waited two days, because he arrives so late at the tomb. Lazarus had been in it already four days, all for the glory of God to be revealed so that Martha, Mary and the disciples and we today can see the resurrection and the life.

[19 : 55] Jesus is not saying that believers will not physically die, but physical death will not be the last word. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? This is divine design.

Jesus holds the power not over sickness but over death itself. He is the son of God. He is able to do this. He speaks to his father and declares himself the son of the most high.

So then the proof. We reach the climax of this story. Martha knows who her God is, but she hasn't witnessed the proof yet. Jesus moves to demonstrate glory.

He promised that he would show. He doesn't just make a claim that he is the resurrection and the life. He now proves it and in proving it he brings transformation.

He commands, take away the stone. And Martha protests to this. It's quite boring in the NIV. It says by this time there's a bad odor for he has been in there four days.

[20:56] The King James, the old version of the Bible is much more entertaining. It says, Lord, by this time he stinketh. He's rotten. Nobody wants to open that tomb. It's minging.

It's boughing. It's disgusting. Nobody wants to go and open a coffin. And Martha's thinking, I do not want to go and see my brother's decomposing body right now. She's not lacking in faith. She's just been realistic about the condition, the situation.

Jesus responds by asking her, did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?

She must trust before she sees. This is the pattern throughout John's gospel.

Faith comes first, then understanding follows. The stone is removed. Jesus prays aloud, not because he needs to for himself, but he wants to make it clear that the Father and Son are acting together in rising this man from the dead.

Lazarus, come out. He speaks with absolute authority, absolute power. Lazarus did nothing to raise himself from the dead. He was a corpse decomposing.

[22:01] It's only by Christ's calling that he comes to life. And it's only by Christ's calling we come to life. And there's one detail here that shows the sheer scale of Christ's power.

In that three-word sentence, if Christ had missed one word out, his power would have been displayed much more terrifyingly. If Jesus had just said, come out, every grave in Bethany would have risen.

This is the power of our God. If he doesn't name the person he wants to rise from the dead, everyone will rise. This is the voice of our God.

Lazarus comes out, still wrapped in his burial clothes. He's been dead four days, but now this man is free from death. resurrection and the life is present. He walks and it's undeniable to everyone standing there.

This is the greatest sign they have seen from the Son. The way the Son shows us love is by showing us his glory. This act shows the Father and the Son working in harmony.

[23:09] And Christ holds the ultimate power over life and death. He can overcome decay. We try to protect ourselves from the ugly aspects of death.

But Christ's power goes far beyond that. This is our hope as Christians. We have hope for the immortality of the soul, but that we will also experience the physical resurrection of the body.

This miracle is not just a display of power for power's sake. It transforms and gives life to all who witness it. Mary and Martha don't just see a miracle.

They encounter Christ as resurrection and the life. They are overcome with joy instead of grief.

Their doubt becomes faith. They are given life by witnessing the Son of God at work.

And it's obviously a direct foreshadowing of Jesus' own resurrection and the promise of ours. The sisters believe. They have seen what Christ can do.

[24:11] They have witnessed his power. Yet the consequence of Lazarus' resurrection goes far beyond the sisters and those standing at the tomb seeing it.

It's a pivotal event that the Jewish authorities see. They've seen this man who can draw crowds and tell the stories to the people, but now they see he commands death.

He possesses this unmatched authority. And in their eyes, he needs to be stopped. This is a turning point to the cross in the Gospel of John. From this moment on, the narrative moves towards the cross.

Christ, in his sovereignty, knew that rising Lazarus from the dead would result in his own execution. In calling Lazarus out of the tomb, he's effectively signed his own death warrant.

If he had come quickly and healed him from the sickness, Jesus would probably not have been persecuted by the authorities so adamant to eliminate him.

[25:09] In his delay, in his glory, in his love, he gave himself up for Lazarus. He traded places. And this is the supreme demonstration of glory and of love.

He becomes victorious over death. The crisis has been answered. This story is a real window for us all.

The delay, the sickness, the death of Lazarus is a window to see Christ's glory and find true love. Jesus sovereignly waited for Lazarus to be decisively dead.

He came with the full authority of the Father and raised him from the dead for his own glory. This is a window into our own souls, into our own eternity, the power of Jesus to raise us from spiritual death.

Like Martha, we can fix our theology on many places on the last day as our comfort to live. But Christ says, I am the resurrection and the life.

[26:13] This isn't just a promise for the end times. This is what it means for us right now. We have life in him. We are called to live as people who possess eternal life today.

Death has lost its sting for you, believer. Life is yours in Christ. Not just this earthly life followed by another later on, but everlasting life is with you right now.

Christ shows love by showing glory and in his glory, we have everlasting life. My grandfather was a minister his whole life and he spent his days sharing the good news of Jesus.

And on his gravestones are written the words, I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though they die and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?

This is infinitely important that you believe that this is who Christ is. I ache for you if you do not believe this today.

[27:16] Ultimately, the most important question that we can answer in all of life is the answer yes to Jesus' question, I am the resurrection and the life.

Do you believe this? Let's come before God in prayer. Lord God, we thank you that you are a sovereign God.

Lord, we thank you that your ways are not our ways. Lord, although that is an ache to us at times, that we can be on day four and have no hope and think you're not there.

We thank you that you operate beyond our thinking. We thank you that you are the resurrection and the life. We thank you that we can come into this as believers.

We thank you that we are living in eternal life now that death has lost its sting for us as believers, Lord. I pray for anyone here who does not believe this.

[28:17] that they would be able to answer Jesus' question yes, that they would see that this is the king who has the power over life and death. Lord God, we thank you that you rose Lazarus from the dead and ultimately you on the third day rose from the dead and became victorious over death and sin, Lord.

We thank you that this is the God that we come before. Amen.