

Jesus the Resurrection – way-truth-life John 11:21-27, 14:1-6

A man in a hot air balloon realized he was lost. He reduced altitude and spotted a woman below. He descended a bit more and shouted, "Excuse me, can you help me? I promised a friend I would meet him an hour ago, but I don't know where I am."

The woman below replied, "You're in a hot air balloon hovering approximately 30 feet above the ground. You're between 40 and 41 degrees north latitude and between 59 and 60 degrees west longitude." "You must be an engineer," said the balloonist.

"I am," replied the woman, "How did you know?"

"Well," answered the balloonist, "everything you told me is, technically correct, but I've no idea what to make of your information, and the fact is I'm still lost. Frankly, you've not been much help at all. If anything, you've delayed my trip."

The woman below responded, and "You must be in Management."

"I am," replied the balloonist, "but how did you know?"

"Well," said the woman, "you don't know where you are or where you're going. You have risen to where you are due to a large quantity of hot air. You made a promise, which you've no idea how to keep, and you expect someone else to help you keep it."

Do you remember what it feels like to "feel" really lost? Do you remember your first day on a new job? Trying to find your way around a new city at night? Remember how the panic built up in your throat as you desperately wished for a clear answer, clear directions?

This Summer, we have been exploring Jesus' use of metaphorical names to describe Himself, such as *I am the water of life, the bread from heaven, the vine*, trying to help His followers grasp some of the mystery of His identity as God-in-the-flesh. But there were two times near the end of Jesus' ministry when His disciples were in such grief, such a panic, that He spoke very directly about who He was and what He had the power to do, even if at the time, they were incapable of understanding His answer. The first time was when He met with Martha and Mary as they grieved over the death of their brother Lazarus. The second time was when He told His shocked disciples that He was leaving them. Let's first look at Jesus conversation with Martha concerning the recent death her brother.

Having received the news along with a plea from His dear friends Mary and Martha, that their brother was very ill and knowing what He was going to do, Jesus purposely delayed coming until after Lazarus had died and was buried. As He was arriving, before He had even gotten to their home, while Mary stayed in the house, Martha came out

onto the road to confront Jesus for His tardiness. We must assume that Mary was either so grieved or mad, that she didn't even want to see Jesus. Martha and Jesus then hold the following strained conversation.

(Martha) *"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him."*

Martha begins by accusing Jesus of being too late, but with a glimmer of hope, she adds that perhaps He could now ask God for a miracle in Lazarus' behalf.

Jesus simply replied, *"Your brother will rise again."*

Martha, assuming that Jesus is just speaking about that distant future time when God will cause a general resurrection of all the faithful, gives back the standard religious answer: "yes, I know, someday."

Jesus then directly answers her back, stating that He has the power to restore her brother's life right now, but by her response, we can sense that Martha still doesn't understand what He was trying to tell her. Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. **Do you believe this?**"* She said to Him, *"Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."* In other words, Martha's reply was, "yes Jesus, whatever you say... but my brother is still dead."

I am the resurrection and the life... do you believe this? Here, speaking to Martha, Jesus described not only what He could do, but the very nature of His being. Jesus is literally the creator and maintainer of **LIFE** for us all. John's gospel opens by declaring

All things came into being through Jesus,
and without him not one thing came into being.
What has come into being in him was life,
and the life was the light of all people

John 1:3-4

As the 2nd member of the Trinity, at the beginning of time, when God the Father spoke, Jesus the Son, made it happen... and He continues to do so. After His own resurrection from the dead, the apostles then clearly understood Jesus' creative and life sustaining power. And, by the power of the Holy Spirit within them, both Peter and Paul would even successfully perform the same miracle: raising from the dead a Deacon named Dorcas and the sleepy young man Eutychus. (Acts 9:36, 20:7-12).

Describing Jesus' life giving and sustaining abilities, Paul would write to the Colossian Church.

for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created ...
all things have been created through him and for him...
and in him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:16-17

Jesus is the very source of all life on Earth. We were first born and now continue to live because in some mysterious way, Jesus, Who created us, continues to maintain our life.

Have you ever considered the ramifications of Jesus' life creating and sustaining power for your own life?

There is an old Jewish aphorism which explains yours and my reality very clearly: *When God breathes in we breathe out. When God breathes out, we breathe in. And when God holds His breath, we cease to breathe.*

When Jesus told Martha that He was "*the resurrection and the life,*" He was explicitly describing His own life-giving abilities. Since Jesus both gives and sustains everything and everyone's current life, He can take that life force back at any time – remember the cursed fig tree – and at any time He can also restore that life force (*He doesn't have to wait for God's permission or a special day at the end of time*).

Jesus had already twice proved His ability to restore life, with a widow's son and Jairus' daughter (Luke 7:11-17, Matthew 9:18-26). Why hadn't Martha remembered these previous resurrections? Grief can often blind us to such comforting truths and hopes that we should know and cling to. (c.f. 1 Thess. 4:13-18)

Confused but hopeful, big sister Martha then goes to coax Mary out of the house. Coming to Jesus – still standing out on the road where Martha found Him – Mary, followed by a weeping crowd, repeats the same angry accusation, *Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*

This time seeing Mary's uncontrollable tears along with the weeping of all those standing around, Jesus Himself is moved to tears by the depth of their grief. So, rather than repeat the earlier conversation, He goes directly to Lazarus' tomb to prove to all who would at least believe their eyes, that He truly is both the resurrection and the life.

An interesting side note is that of course, Lazarus would eventually die again, someday. But can you imagine the fearless life he lived thereafter; after his four day visit to Heaven? In 1925, Eugene O'Neil wrote a play imagining that life. As various opponents tried to test and even kill him again, Lazarus would just laugh. And he constantly told anyone who would listen, "***there is no death – only God's eternal***

laughter." So, with that hopeful thought, let's move on to the night before Jesus' death as He tries to console His dismayed disciples.

Remember that Jesus had gathered with His disciples for what we've come to know as "The Last Supper."

- During the meal Jesus demonstrated His love to the disciples by washing their feet and then commanding them to do the same for each other.
- As the evening progressed, Jesus then informed the disciples that one of them would betray Him and that He is about to leave them to go where they could not follow.
- Peter asserts his willingness to go anywhere with Master, even to the point of death, only to have Jesus reply, "*Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!*"

One of their own is going to betray Jesus, who is about to leave them for who knows where and Peter will disown Him three times that very night. This is too much for the disciples to process. Seeing the looks of shock and dismay on their faces, Jesus tries to comfort them by saying...

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3) (Here is the critical next line), ***And you know the way to the place where I am going.***'

The place where He was going would be Heaven, His Father's house. And after three-years of His teachings, Jesus expects the disciples to at least know that the "way" to His Father's house was through faith in Himself. Remember another one of Jesus' metaphorical names? "***I am the gate.*** *Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture*" (John 10:9). But once again, grief, despair, and panic were clouding their thinking.

So what Thomas next asked, all the others were probably also thinking...

'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?'

As with Martha, Jesus' reply to His grieving disciples was not with some symbolic name, but an actual description of His very person and His abilities.

I am the way, and the truth,
and the life. No one comes to
the Father except through me.

John 14:6

Jesus declared Himself to be "**the way**," not because He had a map, or because He is a good guide through the wilderness of life. Jesus is "the way" because His very person is our only portal back to God. It was His

death offered in payment for our sins, which provided our only access to the throne room of Heaven. And it was His resurrection back to life which still assures us that the way is open for us to follow.

Though we should strive to follow the example of Jesus' life, it is not a path that we walk in order to be saved. **His sacrificial death is the gate, the only gate, through which we can enter into God's presence.**

Thereafter, when His disciples finally grasped what He was trying to tell them, this became the name for their new found faith; before they were nicknamed "Christians," they were called followers of "**The Way.**"

How long has it been since you thought this way about Jesus, **He is your gate to forgiveness; only through His life offered up in your behalf, can you now call yourself a child of God.** As the gospel song says, *nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Your cross I'll cling.*

This next self description is hard for us to wrap our minds around. Jesus also said, ***I am the truth.*** He didn't say He was "*one truth among many,*" but the only truth. Jesus, having created and continuing to sustain the world we live in, at that time walking around in human flesh was the very definition, demonstration, example of what was good and true.

Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.' (John 8:31-32)

Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.

John 18:38

To know Jesus is to know truth embodied in human form. His is the only truth that can set anyone free from their enslavement to sin and death. A fact He also tried to communicate to Pontius Pilate.

Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.

Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.' (John 18:37-38)

Notice, Jesus didn't say "*everyone who knows the truth,*" but instead, "***Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.***" It is not a matter of knowing God, but actually being known by God in which all our future hopes rest. Once again in that mysterious dance between God's choosing and our choices, it is not so much what we know, but who we know... or more accurately Who knows us (c.f. Ephesians 1:4-7).

As Jesus told the crowds, *I am the good shepherd. **I know my own and my own know me, ... My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.***

John 10:13-28

Pilate's cynical reply as he went out to sacrifice the Truth to an angry mob, now seems to be a very contemporary response: *'What is truth?'*

That night Jesus assured His disciples,

*'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. **If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.**'*

But their refusal to believe His assurance that in seeing Himself they were looking at God, only demonstrates the disciples continued confusion. Still seeking some comfort for his panic, Philip asks to see God the Father.

Now, Jesus seems a bit hurt by their continued lack of understanding.

'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. *How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and **the Father is in me?***

(John 14:8-10)

That is a good question which we should also be asking ourselves. Have we been with Jesus all this time and still do not know who He is? It is the very person of Jesus who provides our only way home to God; He is the only gate that gives us access to Heaven. As Peter would later preach to the crowds

There is salvation in no one else,
for there is no other name under heaven
given among mortals by which we must be saved.'

Acts 4:12

As He told His disciples, Jesus is our only Way, our only Truth, and our only Life. As He told Martha, He is our "Resurrection and the Life"; the only means by which we hope live an abundant life now and the eternal life to come.

To quote Francis Schaeffer, knowing this, "**how then should we live?**"

Let's pray about this.