

I Am the Resurrection and the Life
John 11

The Big Reveal is a technique that makes an important point in a story:

EX: Empire Strikes Back; Gen- Joseph with his brothers...

Jesus: John 6; 8;10 (Bread, light, door/good shepherd) and now it continues in the life and ministry of Jesus in chapter 11

If you're here today and aren't sure where you are with all the Jesus stuff, then this is for you. Jesus doesn't say, "I will point you to the bread, the light, the door, the shepherd or the Resurrection and the life." He says, "I AM...those things".

We would rather that he points us in the right direction and we do it rather than having to trust Him to be them for us.

Trusting Jesus in this way is like putting all our eggs in one basket.

This highlights the difference between Christianity and all other religions.

Other religions tell you about a way, a path, a 5 step process, etc, and then we must do it.

Christianity is centered and built on Jesus, who is the one to whom all of scripture points. He is not just a savior, but he is Bread, Light, the Door, and the Good Shepherd. He is all of those because we need all of those - we are hungry, wandering lost sheep stumbling in the darkness.

Salvation isn't just deliverance from the wrath to come; it is about being feed with true Bread so that we are satisfied. It is about walking in Light, not darkness. It is about knowing and hearing the voice of a shepherd who cares for us. Christianity is about a relationship with the ONE who is LIFE itself.

This reality of relationship and personal care is UNIQUE to Christianity. The "gods" of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam are not caring Shepherds who call you to a relationship of intimacy. They are not Life and Light and Bread. They won't die for you, nor do they bring forgiveness and a guarantee of Eternal life.

These metaphors speak to personal relational truth, not just theological truth. My prayer for you and for me is that we would embrace and experience Jesus in the reality and totality of these metaphors- BREAD, LIGHT, THE SHEPHERD AND RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

READ JOHN 11:1-26

Not only do we have struggles in life, but we are all subject to one final enemy, one final challenge - DEATH.

Even if you don't see yourself as a hungry unsatisfied person or a lost sheep, in your most thoughtful moments, you know that you will die. And if we're honest, that thought is troubling to us in some way. Even those who seek to put a positive secular spin on death have a hard time doing so.

<https://albertmohler.com/2018/06/26/briefing-6-26-18/>

NYT JUNE 24, 2018

That Sunday edition of the paper ran a major headline story. Here's the headline, "The Positive Death Movement Comes to Life."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/22/nyregion/the-positive-death-movement-comes-to-life.html>

it is a long article in the NTY and a lengthy commentary by Dr. MOHLER...(I'd love to read the whole thing, but for time we need to see a couple of points- check the notes online)....

A closer look at the article indicates that what we're seeing here one of the recurring patterns of obsession with death and with mortality that marks the human condition, and it's particularly acute in a secular culture. Why? **Because death and mortality raise questions the secular worldview can't answer, it can't handle.**

The article tries to make death a positive thing, but it just can't pull it off.

The article tells us about Shatzi Weisberger, age 88. She's a former nurse in New York City who has turned her now full-time attention to death and to helping people to think about and prepare for death. The opening scene is in the common room in her apartment on the Upper West Side, and we are told that in the corner of the room was what's described as a biodegradable cardboard coffin, and on the coffin were written handwritten messages in colored marker. "Death is only the beginning," was one of those. Also, another addressed to her, "'Go Shatzi. Shatzi, many happy returns ... as trees, as bumble bees, as many happy memories."

The article also cites Joanna Ebenstein, identified as a graphic designer in Brooklyn. She said, "We just don't know what to do with death anymore. It's this big, scary thing. We don't have a set of rituals around it that contains it or gives it meaning. Ours is the first culture to pathologize an interest in death."

MOHLER....We are a society that has been for a considerable number of decades trying to deny death, trying to forestall death, trying to put death out in the future so far that we don't have to think about it, trying to cosmetically enhance death, trying to basically euphemize or modernize death, **but death refuses to bend to our consumer demands or our needs for emotional satisfaction.**

Our mortality not only establishes the fact that we are temporal beings who are on planet Earth for a temporary period, it also raises the basic questions about the meaning of our lives with the reality of birth and death both largely outside of our control.

One person cited in the article actually went so far as to say, "I also feel that decomposition is deeply spiritual. One of the things that draws people to this work is that we don't have a basis in religion. That's why a lot of people are becoming part of this death positive movement."

Mohler...Good luck with trying to define death as positive, and good luck even as you are denying any "basis in religion" and arguing that decomposition is deeply spiritual. I think it's safe to say that even a casual observer, the decomposition of any form of biological life gives profound evidence that whatever is happening, it isn't spiritual.

There's also something very revealing in this statement by Shatzi Weisberger. That's the 88-year-old former nurse with which the article began. She said, "I really want to experience my dying. I don't want to die in a car crash or be unconscious. I want to be home. I want to be in my bed. I want to share the experience with anybody who's interested." She said, "There's so much more to share, but I don't want to go on.No, I really do want to go on," she said.

Notice that message. "I don't want to go on," and then corrected quite quickly, "No, I really do want to go on." There is that yearning. It's a deep, undeniable yearning, and this is where Christians have to understand the power of the gospel as the only adequate answer to that yearning. That yearning can be satisfied only in Christ.

What Jesus shows in John 11 is that Resurrection and Life are SOMEONE WE MEET and He alone gives hope in the face of death.

Now let's look at the story line...

We expect things to stay dead

There was a woman with a German Shepherd that was shaking life out of a neighbor's pet rabbit. The woman took the rabbit, washed it, dried it, fluffed it up, put it back in the neighbor's cage outside the house, and then shortly she heard screaming from the neighbors; she went over there, they were crying "the rabbit, the rabbit." The woman asked what's wrong and they said, "well we found the rabbit in our cage and 2 weeks ago it died and we buried it."

We expect things to stay dead.

Yet, the story our hearts long for is that Resurrection is the way things are supposed to be and that hope would sustain our hearts. Well, we can build on that hope because of the resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus doesn't promise to give a power for Resurrection; He promises that HE IS the resurrection. Resurrection is a person before it is something we experience.

Note The power of death

The Lazarus story verses 1 through 16

The sisters and Lazarus had a very special relationship with Jesus and they were a prominent family.

verse 6 Jesus learns he is ill and he stays where he is two more days. We don't expect that to happen. It's not that Jesus doesn't care but that he has something better in mind.

Martha breaks protocol and leaves the house to go see Jesus.

The soul of the loved one would have hovered around the body for 3 days after death was an ancient Jewish tradition. For Jesus to show up on day four it meant it was not only merely dead, but he was most sincerely dead.

There are stages of human decomposition which begins 4 minutes after death.

It's a gory process involving bloating and odor and change of color.

From a spiritual and scientific perspective Lazarus was gone; he wasn't just in a coma.

Lazarus was in a helpless, hopeless shape and nothing could help them apart from a Divine Miracle.

We are in the same condition spiritually as Lazarus. We are The Walking Dead apart from Life in Christ.

Our sin causes spiritual death which is separation from God and we cannot heal ourselves.

The good news is that there is hope and Jesus can raise anyone from the dead, even a body that stinketh.

Is Martha scolding Jesus or expressing regret? We don't know because we don't know the tone.

We do know that it is really easy for us to live in regret and even to question God about why he allows things. Remember that in Narnia you're not allowed to ask what might have been; you're only allowed to ask what is.

With the comment of Martha and Mary we see a typical response to death or evil: "God, why don't you do something, why didn't you do something?"

Underlying this is anger at God. Is this attitude reasonable? It is certainly relatable and understandable.

The problem is you can't have it both ways i.e. a God who is big enough to be blamed, and a God who is small enough to be accountable to us, to always act as we think he should, in ways that we understand and approve. KELLER

If god is great enough to be able to do something, then he is great enough to be beyond us. He is great enough to have reasons for things that we might not be able to understand. He is great enough to be trusted and to not be held accountable to our wisdom. Otherwise, he isn't great enough to "do something", so why blame him or get angry at him?

Here is part of our problem. We want a god who is great enough to do something, but not so great that he must be obeyed and trusted simply because he is God. We want a god we can blame, one who is accountable to us, which is a non-god.

If god is accountable to us then who is the greater, us or god?

People want a god to blame, but not to trust.

The false god of their mind isn't trusted because he isn't worthy of it. Who can trust a god who is accountable to man?

The true god, by nature and definition is worthy of our trust even when we don't understand his ways. The failure to trust him in bad times may show that we want a helper, not a sovereign ruler. We want a god who is here to help us accomplish our goals, not a God who is to be trusted when He does what he pleases.

Remember that Jesus got word about Lazarus and stayed put for two days. He could have spoken the word at that moment for him to be healed, but He had a different plan in mind.

Jesus responds to her regret by proclaiming the Lazarus will rise again. and many people may have said that to Martha, but when Jesus said it the words certainly has more power to them.

Jesus wasn't pronouncing a spiritual cliché. When he says things, he means it and can make it happen.

Then he responds and verse 25 with "I am the resurrection and the life... Do you believe this?"

Jesus wasn't talking about a future Resurrection but the power of a brand-new life that is available right now right then for Martha.

Jesus wasn't really dealing with Lazarus as much as he was dealing with her.

In His response to the tears of the women and the people, Jesus reveals His Emmanuel reality- He is with them and he weeps with them, even when He knows what he is about to do.

Jesus affirms that their grief is legitimate and even healthy, even when He knows He is going to raise Lazarus to life.

I Have a Rendezvous with Death

Alan Seeger, 1888 – 1916 A young American, Harvard graduate, who volunteered in the French Foreign Legion in WW 1. He wrote this just a few weeks before he entered the battle that would take his life on July 4th, 1916. The poem was a favorite of JFK, AND cited by Macron in April 2018

I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade,
When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple-blossoms fill the air—
I have a rendezvous with Death
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

It may be he shall take my hand
And lead me into his dark land
And close my eyes and quench my breath—
It may be I shall pass him still.
I have a rendezvous with Death

On some scarred slope of battered hill,
When Spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

God knows 'twere better to be deep
Pillowed in silk and scented down,
Where love throbs out in blissful sleep,
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,
Where hushed awakenings are dear...
But I've a rendezvous with Death
At midnight in some flaming town,
When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

We all have a rendezvous with death, but if you know Christ, you have met Eternal life, and you have a rendezvous with a Resurrection.

His resurrection life is available now. Do you believe it?

What would it look like for us to be a community of people living in the power of His resurrected life now. We could be ministers of life to those in need.

One opportunity is coming up with VBS.

Let's pray and act in faith that VBS week will be a rendezvous with LIFE for some kids and maybe even their parents.

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