

“Life in Christ” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Lent 5 – March 22, 2026

- I. **John 11:26-27** – “²⁶ And everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”
- II. **Life is far from easy... but we still trust in the Lord.**
 - a. I know we get into the groove sometimes, where life is going along great... and then bam!
 - i. Out of the blue, some major trial... tribulation... or loss comes along that changes things for a season... or sometimes for the rest of our lives.
 - ii. Many of you have experienced these troubles and it seems that one day all is well with the world, and the next thing we know, nothing will ever be the same.
 - b. During these difficulties, we pray... we cry out to the Lord to deliver us... we seek the presence and healing of Jesus.
 - i. Sin and brokenness are the reality that exist in this world, and yet here’s what God promises.... to be with us – to care about us and love us through it all.
 - ii. Oftentimes, things happen that we just cannot understand.
 1. A deadly disease in a young adult who seemed perfectly healthy and active...
 2. A traffic accident where a life is cut short...
 3. Babies born into the suffering of birth defects or genetic disorders with a lifetime of pain and limitations...
 - c. I was reading about a young woman in her twenties who often watched the 700 Club, which was once very popular with Pat Robertson.
 - i. She suffered from MS and cancer and decided to write the show a letter.
 - ii. She said, “Sometimes I watch your program and I'm helped, and sometimes I want to take my shoe off and throw it through the screen. One of the things I hate about what you do is you always present people whose marriages get better in 10 minutes, people who get healed, people who have the nice, packaged answers. What about people like me who are dying and still love God? What about people who take very few steps, but every step leaves a big impression in the snow because it costs every ounce of strength they have left?”
 - iii. One of the people from the show said, “She changed my perspective. Christianity is not this nice ‘everything’s going to work out okay’ attitude. When you think of Christ at the tomb of Lazarus, He wept because it wasn’t supposed to be like this. He had spoken this beautiful world into existence and it was so broken, so messed up. I think one of the greatest gifts we can give is just a dose of reality that

life down here is disappointing, that God doesn't always give us answers, but He does always give us Himself."¹

- iv. Yes, we may be calling on God to answer our prayers of healing and whatever we think is best, and He gives us something different.

III. **Jesus was given word that His friend Lazarus was dying.**

- a. The sisters, Mary and Martha knew that Jesus could heal a sick person, and they went to the one Person who could truly help them.
 - i. They might not have known how, but they did know Who – and they sent word that the Lord would show up and help them.
- b. Maybe you've done this before... a person in your family is given a diagnosis... you have financial troubles that are overwhelming... you have a child who has fallen into addiction...
 - i. You turn to the one place that is commanded in Scripture – you turn to God in prayer and pour your heart out...
 - ii. You turn to Jesus to show up for your troubles.
- c. Why do we turn to Jesus?
 - i. Our faith is all we can answer – because our faith turns us to seek help from our Savior.
 - ii. Our faith leads us to believe that He will do something in our greatest time of need and trouble.
 - iii. Our faith prepares our hearts to ask for help because we cannot.
- d. Yet, Jesus didn't go to Mary and Martha right away.
 - i. He waits a couple of days before starting the journey, and by the time He arrives on the scene, Lazarus has been dead for four days.
 - 1. No hope of recovery... a miracle... a healing... just the stench of death.
 - ii. Both Mary and Martha approach Jesus with the same statement – “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” (vv 21; 32).
 - 1. I cannot explain the exact emotion behind those words, but it may have been frustration... and maybe confusion as to why Jesus was there so late – and now Lazarus is dead and gone.
 - 2. Imagine the death of your brother, then waiting 3 days more for Jesus to get there... it makes sense that they were ready to explode with pent up emotion.
- e. Sometimes our lives reflect this same struggle – as our loved one who fought the good fight passes away... even though we prayed, and asked earnestly, and sought the Lord's healing.
 - i. In 18 years of me being in ministry here at Ascension, we've said goodbye to more than 125 people.
 - ii. From those deaths come all kinds of emotions and responses like Mary and Martha – Why Lord? We prayed so hard... or a rebuke... If You had been here, he or she would not have died... or maybe a

sense of hopelessness... what's the use anyway, when people just die?

- iii. These are all real emotions that we can be honest about... and we can still have faith in the midst of these difficult feelings and questions.
- iv. But remember what Martha said... "But even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You" (v 22).
- f. Whatever is going on, it is in God's hands.
 - i. Martha is saying to God, "Whatever and however You work in this world and in my life, Your will be done. I trust You fully."

IV. **Jesus was drawn into the loss and suffering of the people.**

- a. It says that when Jesus saw Mary's suffering and all the people who were hurting over this loss, He wept.
 - i. He wasn't crying over Lazarus – because He knew that His friend would rise again – no, He was suffering along with those who suffered.
 - ii. It's such a beautiful picture of our God – coming to this place of trial and tribulation, while experiencing the sorrow and pain that we do.
 - iii. I read a social media post that said, "He cried... He knew Lazarus was dead before He got the news but still, He cried. He knew Lazarus would be alive again in moments, but still, He cried. He knew death here is not forever... He knew eternity and the kingdom better than anyone else could, yet He wept because this world is full of pain and regret and loss and depression and devastation... He wept because knowing the end of the story doesn't mean you can't cry at the sad parts."²
- b. And of course, the account takes a glorious turn... as Jesus calls Lazarus out of the tomb... only to be greeted by a man in grave cloths... alive and well... and that's because Jesus has authority even over death itself.
- c. I for one cannot comprehend the surprise, the joy, the excitement, and the relief of seeing my loved one come back from the dead after all that.
 - i. Yes, in this event, Jesus did provide a miracle of healing and life – and yet, I am totally confident that all who die in faith are provided the miracle of healing and life – and paradise forever.
- d. It's sad to say that this event was so joyful for Mary and Martha, but some saw it as a threat... and just another reason Jesus had to die.
 - i. In other words, His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead will happen in just a short time.
 - ii. As Jesus would die for the sins of us all, but also defeat sin, death, and the devil so they have no real power over any of us who believe.
- e. Jesus, our Savior, is the resurrection and life... and whoever believes in Him shall never die... Do you believe this?

- i. Then say it with me: “Yes, Lord, I believe You are the resurrection and the life.” Amen

¹ Source: Sheila Walsh, “Staying Alive,” *Leadership Journal* (Summer 2002)

² Swift, Stevie