

# “I am the resurrection and the life”

Sermon for Sunday, January 14, 2007  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** John 11:1-43 (esp. verses 25-26)

Hello. My name is Martha. I'm here to tell you about, well, a lot of things, but particularly the die that my dead brother came back to life.

A lot of people have asked me, “Why did Jesus bring your brother back to life, but not someone else’s daughter or father? Why Lazarus?” I can’t answer that. You’ll have to ask Jesus himself about that.

To tell you the story of what happened that day, I have to go back to the beginning. It was two or three years ago that I first saw Jesus, heard him talk. From that first moment, I was struck. There was something about him that was unlike anyone or anything that I have ever experienced.

I have known people who talk big, who talk loud. But Jesus doesn’t need to talk big. He just is who he is. Some people laugh at him, scoff at him. I suppose I can see their point of view. Some of the things he said were pretty wild.

I think for me it was ... it’s hard to nail down just exactly what it was. The way he treated the children, for example. So often children are told to be quiet and stay out of the way. Jesus welcomed children, loved to be with them.

The way he treated lepers: he was a friend to them; he wasn’t afraid of them. The way he treated prostitutes: without ogling them, but neither turning away in disgust. He treated them the same way he treated any other person, like a normal person. The way he treated nobles, official, the Roman soldiers: he treated them with respect and dignity, but he treated everyone that way. He didn’t treat them with extra honour; he didn’t kneel down and lick their boots. Some of these people were used to special honours, and that may be why some didn’t like him.

There was the way he spoke. “This is how God wants you to live.” He spoke as if he knew what he was talking about, as if just that morning he had had a meeting with God, and now he was passing on God’s message. He didn’t just talk about God; he *knew* God, in a way that none of our rabbis did.

Then there were the things he did. He healed people that were sick, even people with leprosy that no one else would dare to come close to.

All three of us – my sister Mary and my brother Lazarus – we became followers of Jesus. I don’t mean that we followed him wherever he went around the country; we still had things to look after here. I mean that we believed in him as the Son of God, and we followed his teaching. But whenever he was in this area, we made sure to go and see him. We invited him to come to our home, and he often did that, eating and staying with us.

Out of the thousands of people who were followers of Jesus, he chose twelve to be his apostles: his appointed workers he would send out. He devoted his life to those twelve. Most rabbis will come to the synagogue several days a week for a few hours, give their students some instruction, talk with them and answer questions. Jesus invited his apostles to come and *live* with him! They were learning not just what he taught, but how he lived. They could see what he did when the crowds weren’t watching. When the time came to send them out, they didn’t need any books of instruction. They had absorbed it.

Like I said, we were not among his apostles. We had a different kind of relationship with Jesus. We were his friends. And that brings me closer to what happened on that day...

Lazarus, my brother, got sick. He had been sick before; but this time he was really bad. We were worried he wasn’t going to make it through this one. Jesus was across the Jordan River, only about a day’s journey away, so we sent a message with someone going that way, telling him simply, “The one you love is sick.” We knew he would understand what it meant.

And we waited. In the morning, before the rooster crowed, I was out of bed, out in front of our house, looking down the road to see if Jesus was coming. At night, the last thing Mary did before she came in was to stand at the door, looking down the road for Jesus to appear. We knew he would come; we just hoped it would be in time. We did this for two days. We waited and waited... and he did *not* come. Jesus did not come, and my brother Lazarus... died.

We placed him in our family tomb according to the custom of our people, the very same day. We were so confused and discouraged. Jesus had let us down. I know he’s important and busy; but I thought he cared enough that he would have come. Two days later – *two days!* – guess who comes walking up the road. Not running, not hurrying, just walking along, taking his time. Jesus and his apostles.

I saw them, and I ran out to see him. At first I didn’t know whether to go inside and lock the door.. but I didn’t. When I got there, I said to him, “If you had been

here, Lord, my brother would not have died.” That’s all I had wanted to say. But then something else came out – something I hadn’t planned, I don’t know where it came from – “But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask him for.” It was my heart talking, not my head. It was saying, “Jesus, I still trust you. Anything is possible.” Could Jesus really bring Lazarus back from the dead? That’s impossible! But Jesus was doing things that were impossible.

Jesus said to me, “Your brother will rise to life.”

I said, “I know, Lord. I know that he will rise to life in the resurrection on the last day, the time when God judges the world and makes everything right. That’s nice to think about, but that’s a long time off.”

Then Jesus said the strangest thing. He said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die; and those who live and believe in me will never die.”

I mentioned earlier on that Jesus said some pretty wild things, things that are hard to swallow. This one is not just hard to accept; it’s hard to even understand. I’m not sure what he meant by that. I don’t know if I’m right, but I’ll tell you what went through my mind, as he stood in front of me, held my hand, looked me in the eye and said those amazing words. “Martha, the resurrection is all about life. The resurrection is not something that is going to happen way off in the future. The resurrection is here. The resurrection is right now. I *am* the resurrection. I *am* life. I give eternal life to all who believe in me. Eternal life is not something that happens way off in the future, or when you die. Eternal life is now. The body may die, but the soul lives on forever, lives with me.”

Then it was like Jesus wanted to show that he wasn’t just talking. So after he had also had a chance to talk with Mary, he went to the tomb where Lazarus was laid. He said, “Take away the stone from the entrance to the tomb.”

Mary tried to stop him, reminding him that Lazarus had been dead for four days, and the smell would be horrible. Jesus said, “Just do it.” So our friends pushed the stone away.

Then Jesus called out loud to Lazarus – he was talking to a dead man! – “Lazarus, come out!” And that’s when it happened. We heard this shuffling noise. We turned, and there he was, standing there, my brother!

Jesus said simply, “Unwrap the grave cloths, and let him go.” You can bet we did!

Like I said at the start, I don’t know why Jesus did this for our brother, and why he did not do it for your loved one. But I do know this: Jesus is bigger than death. He has power even over death. He gives life.

I never was asked to be one of his apostles. But I have followed him all of my life, and I always will: Jesus, my Lord, my Saviour, my friend.