**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from October 16, 2022
I Am the Resurrection and the Life**

One of my favorite movies is *It’s a Wonderful Life*. How many of you have seen that?

If you are not familiar with it, it is a story about the impact one life can have on others. In the story, George Bailey was going through a difficult time and he was considering taking his own life and then he has an opportunity to see what the world would have been like if he had never been born.

And as you watch the story, we see how so many people’s lives were different and were better because of the impact that George made on them. If George was never born, people would not have been blessed by the things that he did. How he helped this person and how he encouraged that person.

The bottom line is that George’s life had made a huge difference and he finally realized it after he had that opportunity to see what life in the town he lived would have been like if he had never been born.

And by the end of the story, George wants to live again. He realized that despite his current difficult circumstances he was going through, his life was worth the living.

I like this story, because it is a powerful reminder that each life can make a big difference in this world. Each life matters. Each life is called to make a big difference for the Lord.

In that story, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, you see how George had been a true friend to so many people. Friendship matters, doesn’t it? And it doesn’t mean that we need to talk with people every day or see them every day to be true friends with them.

We are blessed to have some friends of Shirley Jones worshipping here at Chestnut Grove with us today. Shirley and Tom had an impact in this family years ago and their friendship continues today, even though home is now in Columbus, Ohio. And we are glad you are here today with us.

One thing we may not think about with Jesus, is that He had friends as well. There were people that He enjoyed playing games with and goofing off and laughing with. Among those friends included a family from the town of Bethany. It was a brother and two sisters. Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. We are not told from Scripture how they became friends and how long they were friends. But He was clearly very close with this family.

And in the midst of Jesus’ ministry, Jesus learns that Lazarus became very sick. This family knew of Jesus’ power and the many miracles that Jesus had performed and they reach out to Jesus for help. They recognized that although Jesus was a friend, He was also a powerful healer.

But Jesus only wanted to do what His Heavenly Father’s will was. And the Father’s will was not for Jesus to make a be-line to Bethany to heal Lazarus. Instead, God the Father had something more significant in mind. Something that would help far more people grasp who Jesus’ is.

So instead of leaving right away, Jesus waits two long days before leaving for Bethany. And by the time that Jesus arrives, Lazarus had died. In fact, Lazarus had been dead for four days.

And if it wasn’t enough for Jesus to be mourning His friend and comforting His other friends, Martha and Mary, Jesus was also traveling in a rather hostile environment. Bethany was a town in Judea and it was in the region of Judea that the religious leaders more adamantly opposed Jesus and His ministry. In fact, the last time Jesus and His disciples were in Judea, there was talk that some Jewish leaders wanted to stone Jesus. And here is Jesus telling the 12 that they need to go back to Judea.

Thomas, one of the 12, was so concerned about what might await them in Judea that Thomas tells the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

And so, into this scene comes Jesus. Let us turn to the Scripture now to what John writes in John 11:17-27, and also 38-44.

**On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18Now Bethany was less than two miles[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26542b)**] from Jerusalem, 19and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.**

**21“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”**

**23Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”**

**24Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”**

**25Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”**

**27“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”**

And then in verses 38-44.

**Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39“Take away the stone,” he said.**

**“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”**

**40Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”**

**41So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”**

**43When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.**

**Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”**

I just love this story for so many reasons. First, you see Jesus’ genuine love for His friends. In fact, in one of the verses that we didn’t read, we see Jesus even weeping in the midst of this scene.

It is a reminder that He weeps when we weep. He cares for us in our pains and struggles. He understands us in our sorrows.

Second, we see the power of Jesus very clearly in this passage. There were many witnesses present to hear Jesus call Lazarus name and who saw Lazarus moving out of the tomb, still wrapped in his burial clothes. Can you image being there?

But we have the next best thing. We have the reliable testimony of those that were there, like John the Apostle, who includes this story as part of his gospel.

But what is the significance of this healing, this resurrection? Why did Jesus wait 2 extra days before traveling for Bethany?

You see, at that time, there was a belief among the Jewish people that after 3 days the human soul would leave the body. And at that point, resurrection was viewed as impossible, until the final resurrection at the last day, when God would stand as judge of the world.

I believe that Jesus was very intentional in what He was revealing about Himself through all of this. In waiting until the 4th day, Jesus was demonstrating that He has authority over life and death. Nothing is impossible with Jesus. By simply calling out the name of Lazarus and having Lazarus return to his body and life, Jesus was demonstrating that He is the resurrection and the life. Jesus holds life and death in His hands.

Friends, towards the close of John’s Gospel, John states that the whole purpose of his gospel and the signs that were recorded in it, like the raising of Lazarus, the whole purpose is that people may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing that they may have life in His Name.

Besides Jesus’ own resurrection, the raising of Lazarus was the final sign, of a series of signs, that proved Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God.

Specifically, this passage from chapter 11 reveals Jesus as “The resurrection and the life.” Lazarus, from this moment onward, became a walking testimony, a living example of Jesus holding absolute power over life and death.

Lazarus’ resurrection was different from Jesus’ resurrection in that Jesus was raised with a glorified body. Lazarus would still eventually physically die again. But what Jesus did in raising His friend back to life was a testimony to everyone that Jesus is the One that they needed to trust in.

In life, what do most people fear more than anything? Their physical death. But Jesus is saying to everyone, both through His words to Martha as well as through His action of raising Lazarus, that people need not fear death, because of Him.

Remember verse 25. Jesus tells Martha **“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.”**

There is so much in this passage. Jesus was telling everyone loudly and clearly, two very important things. First, even though people will continue to physically die, if they believe in Jesus, they will live.

And second, those that believe in His will never spiritually die. If you believe in Jesus, you’re never really going to die.

And why is this all true? Why is Jesus the resurrection? It is because He is the life. Jesus lived a perfect life and would become the perfect atoning sacrifice for the sins of humanity.

Again, we think of George Bailey. George Bailey touched many lives in and around Bedford Falls. Without George, things would have been a lot worse. Bedford Falls would have even become Pottersville, with the cruel Mr. Potter controlling so many in that fictional story. Not to be confused with Pottstown, PA.

But in any case, Jesus’ life is real. If Jesus did not choose to come to live here on earth and be our savior; if He had never been born and did not go through all that He did for us, humanity would all be lost and dead in their sins and without hope.

But Jesus is the life and people can live abundantly and eternally, because of Him.

Friends, as we consider this Scripture and all that we can glean from this “I Am” saying of Jesus, what is the big takeaway for us today?

**It is to put our trust in Jesus each day and to live as those who have passed from death to life, because of Him.** In this world, yes there is sickness and pain and wrong doing. Yes, people continue to physically die.

But in Jesus, we are to see differently than the world sees. Physical death is not something we need to fear, for Jesus holds life and death in His hands.

And because Jesus is “the life,” can we experience true life in Him every day.

You know, there are many people that are physically alive, but are not spiritually alive. We may remember when that was us or we may not. But it is through true faith and surrender to Him that we find true life. And friends, Jesus offers this true life to everyone that puts that trust in Him as their Savior and who follows Him as their Lord or Master. The invitation is to all.

And finally, we are called, in light of this passage, to live fully alive for Jesus.

Jesus is the answer. He is the One people need. And we are His witnesses. So, let’s shine. Through our words and our deeds, that the world might know the One who holds all life in His hands. May our life be a living testimony, like Lazarus was, of a life that has been changed by Jesus. And may we live to be a blessing like Geroge Bailey, and far more importantly, like Jesus Himself.

Let’s pray…