

Sermon Outline

INTRODUCTION

1. Image: Our outreach coordinator took the team to a graveyard.
2. Need: We are surrounded by dead people.
 - a. People are dead to spiritual truth
 - b. People will experience physical death.
 - c. Unbelievers will experience a spiritual death – eternal separation from God.
3. Subject: How does Jesus help people to overcome death?
4. Text: John 11:17-44
5. Preview: This morning we'll answer three questions. What does death reveal? How can death be defeated? What is our response?

BODY

- I. Death reveals the brokenness of the world.
 - A. Lazarus has died (11:17)
 - B. Death causes Jesus to weep (11:33, 35, 38)
 - C. Sin causes the brokenness of the world.
- II. Only Jesus can defeat death through resurrection
 - A. The Old Testaments foreshadows resurrection
 - B. Jesus proclaims himself to be the resurrection (11:25-26a)
 - C. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (11:40-44)
- III. Believe in Jesus so that you may experience resurrection
 - A. John wrote his gospel so that his readers might believe in Jesus
 - B. Jesus calls people to believe in him so that they experience resurrection (11:26, 40)
 1. Jesus resurrects people so that they might experience eternal life.
 2. Eternal life refers to an unhindered relationship with God which results in everlasting life.
 3. You can experience eternal life now.
 4. You will experience eternal life later.
 - C. People respond to Jesus in two ways
 1. People disbelieve Jesus (11:36)
 2. People believe that Jesus alone enables you to experience resurrection.

CONCLUSION

1. Summary: Death reveals the brokenness of the world. Only Jesus can defeat death through resurrection. Believe in Jesus so that you may experience resurrection.
2. Closing Image: C.S. Lewis depicts resurrection from a scene in his book: The Great Divorce.

MANUSCRIPT

I remember my outreach coordinator in college taking the team on a field trip.

But for some reason, I was unable to go. It might have been an exam or another appointment. After their field trip, I asked someone on the outreach team. “Where did you go?” This person answered: “The graveyard”. Perplexed. I repeated: “The graveyard? As in a cemetery?” They answered: “Yup!” This prompted me to ask: “Why did he take you to graveyard? In the middle of the night?” They replied: “Object lesson. He wanted to remind us that whenever we share the gospel with someone, we are sharing with dead people. He wanted to drive that point home” Although I didn’t go on this field trip, I always remembered it because my outreach coordinator was onto something. We speak to dead people. It reminds me of the tagline of an old horror film. The Sixth Sense. The child protagonist whispers: “I see dead people”. Do you see dead people?

We are surrounded by dead people. Nurses that we pass by at the nursing station. Patients we see in our examination rooms. The person in the cubicle next to us. The person on the other end of a Microsoft Teams video call. The person in front of us in the grocery line. The person checking their phone as they wait to pick up their Starbucks order. **We are surrounded by dead people.**

They’re not dead per say. If they were dead, then how could they speak to us. Eat. Laugh. Work. Play. Let me give three reasons why we are surrounded by dead people.

First, **people are dead to spiritual truth.** They lack the ability to understand spiritual truths. When you ask them: “Can I ask you a spiritual question?” They begin

walking in the opposite direction. When you attempt to explain to them salvation, their eyes glaze over. When you ask: “What is your spiritual background?” They look up to the corner of the room and want to change the topic. They cannot comprehend what Jesus did on the cross when you explain it. They are dead to spiritual truth.

Let me share with you a second way people are dead. **People will experience physical death.** Everyone in this room will die. Exception. Jesus returns and takes us home. If Jesus does not return in our lifetime, then everyone will die. All our nonbelieving friends will also die. It reminds me of an elderly sister in college. The church discovered that she was terminally ill. But she goes up to share in our Thanksgiving service. “Don’t pity me because I’m terminally ill. We are all terminally ill.” Everyone chuckled. She’s right. We will all die. The cause of death is varied. Cancer. Car accident. Sudden heart attack. Pneumonia. Drowning. Fall from climbing accident. No matter who you are, you will experience death.

Third reason why we are surrounded by dead people. **Unbelievers will experience spiritual death.** By spiritual death, I mean eternal separation from God. Conscious eternal torment. Think about it. If God is the source of all goodness, beauty, and life, then to be apart from Him will be all that is evil, ugly, and dead. This separation goes on for all eternity. Unbelievers will experience spiritual death.

We are surrounded by dead people. People are dead to spiritual truth. People will eventually die. Unbelievers will experience spiritual death. Eternal separation from God. Do you see dead people?

If we see dead people, then we must be able to do something to help. If we see someone passed out in the floor, then we can apply chest compressions. If we know that someone suffers from cancer, then we direct them to an oncologist. If we see a person injured from a car accident, then we can call 911.

But the help that dead people need is beyond our ability. As Christians, we believe that only Jesus can help them. Only Jesus can do something to give them life. How? **How does Jesus help people to overcome death?** How does Jesus render aid to dead people? How does Jesus break the curse of death?

Resurrection. He raises the dead to life. We see this idea in this morning's text in **John, chapter 11**. Thank you, Laney, for reading this morning's passage. **John, chapter 11**. As many of you know, we are currently in a preaching series on the "I AM" statements of Jesus. I AM the bread of life. I AM the living water. I AM the sheepgate. I AM the shepherd. This morning we'll be thinking together about Jesus's statement: "I AM the resurrection and the life."

To think about Jesus's self-disclosure, we'll answer three questions. First. **What does death reveal?** What does death show us? What does death reveal to us about the world? Second. **How can death be defeated?** How is death overcome? How is death beaten? Third. **What is our response?** What should we do? What kind of action should we take? Three questions. What does death reveal? How can death be defeated? What is our response?

First question. What does death reveal? **Death reveals the brokenness of the world.** Whenever someone dies, it reminds us that something about the world is wrong. There's something off. There's a bug in the system. Something is malfunctioning. Things are not as they should be. **Death reveals the brokenness of the world.**

The narrative of John, chapter 11 focuses on the death of a person. Lazarus. **Lazarus has died.** Look at verse 17. *Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.*

The text notes that Lazarus has been dead four days before Jesus visits his home in Bethany. In fact, John notes this again when Jesus goes to tomb. Martha reminds Him that Lazarus has been dead four days.

Jews believed that after death, a person's spirit would hover above the corpse attempting to re-enter it. It would try for three days. After the third day, the spirit would depart to Sheol. No one would expect the dead person to come back to life.

This explains why Jesus wanted four days to visit Lazarus. Everyone believed Lazarus to be dead.

His death causes everyone to grieve. The text describes Mary and the crowd with her as weeping. Look at verse 31. *When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.* Look at verse 33. *When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.*

The **death of Lazarus also causes Jesus to weep**. Look at the shortest verse of the Bible. Verse 35. *Jesus wept*. But what you may not know is that the word for weep in verse 35 differs from verse 31 and 33. The word for weep in verse 35 describes a person weeping as they lament. It describes the tears of someone who has experienced an injustice or calamity. A mother weeps when her son's murderer goes free. A person weeps when they return to the ruins of their home after a storm passes. Something not right causes a person to weep.

The crowd thinks that Jesus weeps because Lazarus died. Look at verse 36. *So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"* But that is not true. Jesus already knows that he will raise Lazarus from the dead. That's why Jesus tell his disciples: "I am going to awaken Lazarus" (11:11).

What about Lazarus's death causes Jesus to weep differently than Mary and the crowd? There's another phrase repeated in this text: "*deeply moved*". This phrase occurs twice. Verse 33. *When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled*. It occurs again in verse 38. *Then, Jesus deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it*. The phrase: "deeply moved" is one word in the Greek. If you look at verse 33, then you'll see a footnote. An alternate word for the phrase: "deeply moved" is indignant. In extra-biblical literature, it would describe the snorting of an angry horse. Studying this word reminds me of a friend whose nostrils would flare when she felt angry.

Jesus feels indignant and angry when he sees the crowd weeping. I think that there are two things happening here. First, Jesus feels angry at how sin, death, and sickness cause so much sorrow in this broken world.

Second, Jesus feels anger at the unbelief of those present. They do not believe that Jesus can do something to change the situation. Look at the responses of the two sisters. Martha thinks that if Jesus came earlier, then Lazarus would still be alive. Look at verse 21. *Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.* Mary says the same exact thing. Look at verse 32. *Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.* The crowd expresses a similar sentiment. If Jesus had come earlier, then he could have prevented his death. Look at verse 37. *But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"* All of them didn't believe that Jesus could do anything. He can change water into wine. He can heal a cripple. He can heal an official's son. He can feed the crowd. He can heal a man blind born blind. But death. Jesus can't do anything about it. Death is the way of this world. Their unbelief gets Jesus worked up.

Death is just a sign of the world's brokenness. Since the world is broken, there is death. Flowers wilt. Metal rusts. Dust gathers. Cars break down. Computers malfunction. Bodies decay.

Why is the world broken? Sin. Sin entered the world when humanity decided to live according to its own design rather than God's. Humanity's rebellion resulted in brokenness

within creation. Tornados level cities. Tsunamis wipe out beach side resorts. Earthquakes causes buildings to crumble. Forest Fires leave nothing but ash. Sin results in broken relationships. A wife feels anger when her husband returns home to veg out in front of a computer screen rather than connect. A husband feels upset when his wife spends more time with the kids then her. Misunderstandings occur at work. Classmates compete for a professor's attention. We sense brokenness within ourselves. Sin causes us to ask: "What will so and so think if I wear this?" Sin causes us to say to ourselves: "If we share about this struggle, then people will never want to be around you anymore. Keep it hidden." **Sin causes brokenness.** And death also shouts to us: This world is broken. The misery. The grief. It reminds us of the devastating effect of sin. It causes people to age. To fall ill. To die.

How do we overcome death? How can death be defeated? What helps us to gain victory over death?

Jesus. **Only Jesus can defeat death through resurrection.** Jesus alone has the power to help us overcome death. It is through his ability to raise the dead can we find victory over our physical demise. He can raise us from the grave. He can bring life to dead bones. **Only Jesus can defeat death through resurrection.**

We see this in the first conversation between Martha and Jesus. **Jesus proclaims himself to be the resurrection.** Look at verse 25. *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

As you know the phrase: “I am” in the Greek is “ego eimi”. This Greek construction alludes to the word translated LORD in the Old Testament. Jesus by using this construction to identify himself as the covenant God of Israel. Jesus uses this construction seven times within the gospel of John. Each time Jesus uses the phrase: “I am”, he discloses qualities about himself.

In this specific case, Jesus reveals himself to be the resurrection. This means that resurrection can only be obtained through him. It communicates exclusivity. Only Jesus can raise the dead by the power of God the Father.

Now we see Jesus exercise resurrection power when he raises Lazarus from the dead. He reveals to the crowd that he alone can resurrect. Look at verse 39. *Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.* Some people like the King James Version. *Lord by this time, he stinketh. Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”* Note whenever Jesus says glory of God in the gospel of John. Each time says this, Jesus is about to reveal something about himself. God will manifest himself in the work of Jesus. God shows his power to raise the dead through Jesus.

Let’s continue. Verse 41. *So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”* This prayer highlights Jesus’s intimacy with God the Father. It also shows how even

Jesus depends on God the Father. Jesus asks. God listens. The prayer also shows how Jesus had already asked for Lazarus to rise. This prayer had been answered.

After the prayer, Jesus commands Lazarus to rise. Look at verse 43. *When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."*

Note the differences between the resurrection of Lazarus versus Jesus. When Jesus rises from the dead, he didn't need anyone to roll away the stone. Jesus didn't need anyone to remove his grave clothes. He left them folded within the tomb. Jesus rose from the grave in a new body that will never perish. But Lazarus would die again. When Jesus calls forth the dead to rise, believers will arise with a body like his.

Resurrection defeats death. It allows people to escape from its jaws. It gives them victory. But only Jesus can raise people from the dead.

What is then our response? What must we do? What action shall we take?

We must believe. **Believe in Jesus so that you might experience resurrection.**

Place your trust in Jesus Christ. Have faith in him. When you do, you will experience resurrection. He will raise you to new life. He will bring life to your dead bones. **Believe in Jesus so that you might experience resurrection.**

Jesus calls people to believe in him so that they might experience resurrection.

Look again at verse 25. *I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though*

he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. This is the reason for the seven “I Am” statements. Belief. John wants you to believe in who Jesus is the Son of God and what he has done to redeem you. If you looked up every time the word: believe occurs in the New Testament, then you would discover that it occurs the most in the gospel of John. Ninety-Eight times. John wants you to believe.

Before I continue, let me explain what belief is. To believe is not mere sentiments. Belief has three components. Knowledge. Assent. Commitment. You need to know what you believe. Imagine me saying to my son Hudson. Honey is sweet. He repeats: “Honey is sweet”. But he’s never tasted honey. He has not given assent. After he repeats: “Honey is sweet”, I give him a teaspoon of honey. His eyes are brightened. “Honey is sweet.” He agrees that honey is sweet. The final step is commitment. His belief spurs action. He swallows his honey. He then looks to me and says: “More!” Commitment.

When we believe in the redeeming work of Jesus, it’s not enough to say: “I know that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and rose again”. You need to agree that this is true. An old word used to describe the same concept is reckoning. It must be true. Once you give your assent, you commit yourself to following Jesus. Commitment.

Jesus resurrects people so that they may experience eternal life. When Jesus speaks of life in these verses, he’s talking about eternal life. Now some think that eternal life means living forever in heaven. While that is true, it doesn’t capture a key idea.

Eternal life refers to an unhindered relationship with God which results in everlasting life. We experience eternal life in some sense now. Think about this. When you

place your faith in Christ. You receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells you which is indicative your union with Christ. To be unified with Christ is to be unified with God the Father. We begin to experience eternal life at conversion.

You can experience eternal life now. Let me introduce you to this concept of the J-curve found within Paul Miller's book [The Praying Life](#). He observes that Jesus's death and resurrection follows a J-curve. Our lives as believers follow a similar curvature. We die. We rise. This accords to what Paul wrote in his epistles. We must kill the old self so that the new life might rise. We put off the old self so that we can put on the new self.

I know this is abstract. Let me put this in more concrete terms. I never wanted to be a pastor. When I entered college, I wanted to be a successful engineer. I dreamt of being part of a team that would design next generation fighter aircraft. I wanted to point at a model plane and show people what part I designed. But during my third year of college, I couldn't get an internship at any defense firm. Raytheon. Northrup Grumman. Boeing. Lockheed Martin. They all rejected me. To be honest, I blamed God for killing my dream. Only when did I reach that low point did my pastor ask: "Have you ever thought God might be calling you to be a pastor?" That question set me on a path to become a pastor. New Life.

God doesn't just kill our vocational dreams and raises us up to new ones. He does it with our sin as well. For instance, some of us take pride in our busyness. We look forward to showing people our google calendars and its multi-colored events. We want people to say: "Wow! You are busy" You take pride in it. But then the busyness metaphorically kills

you. You neglect attending service on Sundays. You flake on friends. You miss your small group. You feel spent. You share with people: “You’re dying.” God reveals to you at this low point, your busyness is not sustainable. You are not superman. He created twenty-four hours in a day. You cannot work 24 hours a day without rest. Death. From this death, he then gives life. You ask God for help to cut back on events. You ask God to remind you of your limitations. You ask God to help you set better rhythms of work and rest. God kills things in your life, so that he can bring you closer to him. He brings you life.

You can experience eternal life now. You will experience eternal life later. Now we will die if the Lord tarries. But even after our physical body dies our souls go to be with the Lord until Jesus give us resurrected bodies.

People can respond to this truth in two ways. First, **people can disbelieve Jesus.** The crowd didn’t believe. They only saw him as a miracle worker. Look again verse 37. *But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”* This question indicates that the Jews didn’t believe in who Jesus is. They only believed in his power. They resemble the crowd that followed Jesus to provide bread.

People can disbelieve Jesus. But people can also respond in belief. **People believe that Jesus alone enables you to experience resurrection.** Look at Martha’s response in verse 27. *She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world”* The word believe here occurs in a Greek tense called the Perfect which describes a past action with ongoing results. Think of a slinky. Once you push a slinky down a set of stairs, it keeps going. Martha’s past belief continues onto the present.

She believes that Jesus is the Messiah, one with an intimate relationship with God, who has come into the world to save it.

What will you do? For those of you who have yet to believe in Jesus Christ as your savior and Lord, will you persist in disbelief? If you do, then you will continue in a state of death. Or will you choose to believe? If you do, then you can experience resurrection in Christ both now and later. You can experience eternal life – an unhindered relationship with God.

For those of you who consider yourselves Christians, does the knowledge of being surrounded by dead people stir you up? Does it make you indignant at the effect of sin in the world and in the lives of people? Does it prompt you to share Jesus who has the power to resurrect the dead with them?

To summarize, we answered three questions. What does death reveal? Death reveals the brokenness of the world. How can death be defeated? Only Jesus can defeat death through resurrection. What is our response? Believe in Jesus so that you may experience resurrection.

Let me close with an imaginative depiction of resurrection. C.S. depicts resurrection from a scene in his book: [The Great Divorce](#). In this book, the protagonist joins some ghosts on a journey from hell to heaven. Many of the ghosts opt to return to hell except for one. This one ghost struggles with lust that takes the form of a lizard. The ghost gives permission for the angel to kill the lizard. Hear what happens to the ghost.

For a moment I could make out nothing distinctly. Then I saw, between me and the nearest bush, unmistakably solid but growing every moment solider, the upper arm and the shoulder of a man. Then, brighter still and stronger, the legs and hands. The neck and golden head materialised while I watched, and if my attention had not wavered I should have seen the actual completing of a man—an immense man, naked, not much smaller than the Angel. What distracted me was the fact that at the same moment something seemed to be happening to the Lizard. At first I thought the operation had failed. So far from dying, the creature was still struggling and even growing bigger as it struggled. And as it grew it changed. Its hinder parts grew rounder. The tail, still flickering, became a tail of hair that flickered between huge and glossy buttocks. Suddenly I started back, rubbing my eyes. What stood before me was the greatest stallion I have ever seen, silvery white but with mane and tail of gold. It was smooth and shining, rippled with swells of flesh and muscle, whinneying and stamping with its hoofs. At each stamp the land shook and the trees dindled. The new-made man turned and clapped the new horse's neck. It nosed his bright body. Horse and master breathed each into the other's nostrils. The man turned from it, flung himself at the feet of the Burning One, and embraced them. When he rose I thought his face shone with tears, but it may have been only the liquid love and brightness (one cannot distinguish them in that country) which flowed from him. I had not long to think about it. In joyous haste the young man leaped upon the horse's back. Turning in his seat he waved a farewell, then nudged the stallion with his heels. They were off before I knew well what was happening. Resurrection. May the Lord increase our belief in Jesus who brings about this resurrection. Let's pray.