

**LIFT UP YOUR GLAD VOICES**  
**John 11:25-26, 1 Thessalonians 4:14**

Listen to these resurrection promises – first from Jesus speaking to Martha whose brother had died and had lain in the grave for four days.

The second is from Paul who was assuring those who's loved ones had died before Jesus had returned.

***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?" John 11:25-26***

***For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 1 Thessalonians 4:14***

**Pray**

**Intro:** My dad died on December 10, 1998 – 12 years to the day before Luke Keefer died. Did I grieve? You bet I did! It was the end of an era. The patriarch of the Tyson Super Race was no longer going to preside at family dinners or offer hilarious commentary on whatever sport he had on the TV (and he watched ALLLLL Philadelphia sports), or gather his adoring grandkids into his arms. I would certainly grieve that loss! I grieved because I saw my mother's incredibly deep sorrow at the loss of her one and only of over 57 years. I grieved because my go to source of wisdom and encouragement was no longer accessible.

But I didn't despair. You see, I had then and I still have the hope Paul was referring to when he assured questioning hearts so they would not *grieve as others do who have no hope*. 1 Thessalonians 4:13b. I had so much hope that when we met with the funeral director and with Daddy's pastor the next day and planned the celebration of Daddy's life, I insisted we sing an Easter song at Daddy's funeral. I insisted we sing:

*Lift your glad voices in triumph on high,  
 For Jesus hath risen, and man shall not die.  
 Vain were the terrors that gathered around Him,  
 And short the dominion of death and the grave;  
 He burst from the fetters of darkness that bound Him,  
 Resplendent in glory to live and to save!  
 Loud was the chorus of angels on high,  
 "The Savior hath risen, and man shall not die."*

So, on the day of the funeral, just two weeks before Christmas, we sang a glorious Easter song about the resurrection promise we have in our resurrected Lord. In our grief we had that hope.

Look at the first scripture I read just a short while ago. Jesus says, *"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?"* and my question to you is: WELL, DO YOU? DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?

This is essential. And this is what Easter is all about. It's not our motivation but it is surely our promise as Christ Followers. With that in mind let's unpack this resurrection promise.

**Jesus is the resurrection and the life**

- Our text from John 11 is about ¾ of the way through the lengthy and memorable account about Jesus's raising of Lazarus. The unequivocal truth is that Jesus can raise the dead and he gives life that death cannot touch. This double gift is available to those who believe. So, even if a Christ Follower dies, Jesus will raise them on the last day. Physical death will not harm the one whose faith is in Jesus because the life he gives to those who believe in him is a gift that physical death cannot take away or damage.
- This is what Jesus had been teaching and this particular incident was probably the capstone of that teaching because Jesus would very soon go into Jerusalem and set the resurrection promise into play. Martha knows this, and she shows a certainty about the resurrection from the dead. But in her grief, she also thinks that Jesus might simply be consoling her. And he was, but he was also declaring truth in that he is the resurrection and the life. This means that . . .

**Those who believe on Jesus will live even though they die**

- Physical death is not the important thing. For those who have never heard of Jesus or have rejected him, death is the end. For them it is a finality and an unknown that is numbing at best and terrifying at worst. But for Christ Followers physical death is not the end. True, the death rate for human beings thus far is

practically 100%. Enoch, who *walked with God, and he was not, for God took him*. Genesis 5:25 and Elijah who was taken into heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11) have messed up the percentage. That will continue unless Jesus returns. Every Christ Follower for over 2,000 years has hoped Christ's return would be in their lifetime. But until then, all of us will die. Here is the promise though: WE WILL NOT DIE IN THE FULLER SENSE. Death for those of us who have put our trust in Jesus is merely the gateway to eternal life and fellowship with God.

- To live even though we die then means that the moment we put our trust in Jesus we begin to experience and eternal life that cannot be touched by death.
- Leon Morris says this about Jesus's words to Martha: "*Everyone who lives and believes on Jesus will never die. Jesus does not, of course mean that the believer will not die physically. Lazarus was dead even then, and millions of Jesus followers have died since. He means rather that believers will not die in the sense in which death has eternal significance. They will not die in the age to come. They have eternal life, the life of the age to come. Jesus rounds off with a challenge: "Do you believe this?" His words about faith and eternal life are not a philosophical dictum to be critically argued, they are a saving truth to be received in faith and acted on.*"
- So let me ask you again, DO YOU BELIEVE THIS? It's what Easter is all about.
- One more thing . . .

### **Death through Jesus is the prelude to Resurrection with Jesus**

- For the Christ Follower, physical death is the vestibule of eternal life. Paul made a differentiation that described that vestibule as sleep. Listen again to what I read earlier, *For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep*. 1 Thessalonians 4:14. Once again I can't state this any better than Morris:  
*"Paul speaks of Christ not as sleeping, but as dying. In the New Testament there are two distinct strands of teaching about death. On the one hand it is the most natural of all things and is an inevitable part of the conditions of our earthly existence. On the other hand it is completely unnatural, a horror, the result of sin. Christ in his death bore the wages of sin. He endured the worst that death can possibly be. Thereby he transformed the whole position of those who are in him. It is because there is no mitigation of the horror of death for him that there is no horror in death for his people. For them it is but sleep."*
- It was logical for Paul and it must be for us too, because Jesus rose there's no doubt that God was in Christ. And if God was in Christ, then, just as he raised his Son, so in due time he will raise those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.
- On the Cross Jesus bore all the horrors of death so that we can avoid those same horrors. Here's why, Jesus not only died, but he also rose again. If Jesus had stayed dead we would have experienced the horrors of death, but because of his resurrection physical death is merely sleep. And our life until then is full of promise. The resurrection is the guarantee of the Christian hope.

**Conclusion:** In Luke the angels in the tomb greeted the women who had come to anoint and properly prepare the dead body of their dear Rabbi with "*Why do you seek the living among the dead?*" Luke 24:5. And on this day many Easters later we can ask the same thing. He is the resurrection and the life. DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?! As Jesus has risen, we are sure that one day we, too, will rise. Let's Lift up our glad voices in triumph on high.

*"The Savior hath risen, and man shall not die."* Amen.