

Monday Morning Rewind – May 12, 2008

Good morning! Hope your Mothers' Day was a happy one. On Sabbath we turned to John chapter 11 for the greatest demonstration yet of Christ's claim to give life and life more abundantly. And though the chapter ends triumphantly in life, it begins in sickness and death for one of Jesus' closest and dearest friends—Lazarus.

Death is an enemy. We all know it is. We've all been touched in some way by death's sting. And yet, for believers in Jesus, death loses its sting. The gospel includes good news even about death! What is this good news? First, the good news about death is that it is a "sleep." Jesus called Lazarus' death a sleep (John 11:11) as he did Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:39). The Old Testament also refers to death this way (see Job 14:10-12).

Though most Christians today support the ideas that 1) The soul is nonphysical; 2) The soul coexists with the body until death; 3) At death the soul departs to its destination or reward or punishment; 4) The soul is indestructible and undying (immortal); 5) After the death of the body, the soul has conscious sense and intellect, these ideas have no support in Scripture. Rewind to Gen. 2:7; Psa. 104:29; Ezek. 18:20; Eccl. 9:5, 6; Psa. 115:17; and Job 7:9-10 to see the good news that, for believers in Jesus, death is simply the separation of breath (not soul) from the body. It is a dreamless sleep--a state of unconscious rest until God reboots the program on resurrection day.

The next bit of good news about death is that it is a state from which it is possible to awaken!

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." (1 Cor. 15:51, 52)

Those who live and believe in Jesus need not fear death any longer. Believers may sleep, but they will never truly die. Spiritual life from Jesus ensures that death is merely a pause, not a permanent end.

There's even more good news, but it will have to wait for the second part of this message. Until then, know that God's love for you is real and unchanged despite sickness and loss. The story of Lazarus affirms this. We are all "sick" with sin; terminal with wickedness. But Jesus has come to give us *life—His life*. And "we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him" (Rom. 6:9). It is that same indestructible life that He has given to each of us—hallelujah! But I'm getting ahead of myself. Believe me, the best is yet to come. Have a great week. – Pastor Randy