

Death is a subject that a lot of people don't even want to talk about or even think about. But death is a human reality. All of us have to face it sooner or later and is inevitable. What matters really is how we lead our lives now and how we face death. Do we have any hope about life after death? Or do we believe that life is a cycle of events with reincarnations one after the other in different forms according to our works? What does the Bible have to tell us about life and death? This is the question we will address through our theme for this morning's meditation, "Christ is the Resurrection and the Life."

In John's gospel we are told about Lazarus the brother of Mary and Martha who was sick. John reminds us that this was the Mary who had poured the expensive perfume of nard and had wiped his feet with her hair. When Jesus heard the message about Lazarus's sickness he said that this sickness will not end in death, but that God's glory will be revealed through it, so that Jesus too will be glorified through it. John records for us that Jesus loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Jesus however, stayed on in the same place for two more days before heading back to Judea.

When Jesus decides to go to Judea the disciples are surprised because that is where they had tried to stone him. Jesus tells his disciples that Lazarus has fallen asleep and that he was going to wake him up. The disciples tell Jesus that he would get better if he sleeps not understanding that Jesus was saying that Lazarus was dead.

It was four days since Lazarus had died (one day for the message to reach, two days delay by Jesus and one day to get to Bethany). The Jews believed that if a person was dead for more than three days then that person was dead indeed and there was no way in which the person could come back to life.

When Christ enters Bethany Martha expresses her confidence in Christ saying that if only he had been there her brother would not have died and even now she was confident that God would do whatever he asks for. Jesus tells her that her brother will rise up again. Martha begins to think that he will rise again on the day of judgement. Jesus responds to this by saying, "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. Do you believe this?" The claim that Jesus makes here is a radical claim. Apart from him there is no resurrection and there is no life. Wherever Jesus is, there is life also. He is the one who can give us eternal life. The point is that we are dead in sin and when we believe in Jesus we will be brought to life. He is the life giver. For those who put their personal trust in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and ask him to come into their lives and take control of it, even though they suffer a physical death, will live forever in presence of God. Jesus is the only one who can allow them into God's presence and therefore, personal faith in Jesus is the only way to receive eternal life.

Jesus then moves on when Mary comes weeping to him and states, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus sees the brokenness of the sisters he too weeps with them. Jesus understood the pain of death. Jesus moves towards the tomb and asks them to remove the tombstone. Martha hesitates and tells Jesus that there will be a bad odour since he had been dead for four days. Jesus looked up and prayed to the Father and then with a loud voice said, "Lazarus, come out!" The 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."

The raising of Lazarus from the dead substantiates his claim that he is indeed the resurrection and the life. The resurrection of Lazarus shows that death will be defeated. The wages of sin is death but Christ has died for our sins and taken it upon himself so that he can offer life to us. May we receive this abundant life in this world here and eternal life in the world to come in God's presence. This life is offered to us through faith in Christ.