

## Things Are Not Always As They Appear

Take for example the account of a man named Lazarus in the Bible in John chapter 11. He was a good friend of Jesus'. His sisters sent word to Jesus that their brother was sick. In verse 4 it states that Jesus received the message and He said that this sickness would not end in death (not stop there) but that it would in fact honor God and promote His glory so that Jesus would be glorified through it.

A bit of time passes and when Jesus gets to where the family of Lazarus was, Lazarus had been dead for four days. For all intents and purposes, it appeared as though Lazarus was "good and dead". Most of us are aware and know that Jesus died on the cross of Calvary for you and me and for all intents and purposes, it appeared as though that was it, BUT what Jesus did did not end in death. It did not stop there. In John 11:25 He plainly tells the friends and family of Lazarus who He is. "I Am the Resurrection and the Life, whoever believes in Me, although he may die yet shall he live." His death and then His resurrection then had purpose... to honor God and promote His glory so that Jesus would continue to be glorified through it; to bring life that follows death. So though He was dead, He came forth bringing newness of life. Things are not always as they appear.

In Gethsemane, the garden of olive trees where Jesus went to pray before He died, there are still to this day the massive olive trees that are over 2000 years old. These trees characteristically appear to die. There are no green shoots, no leaves, and no olives and for all intents and purposes look dead. But it has been discovered and noted that these trees may stay dormant for 60-80 years even though cut back or cut off to a stump. Suddenly one year a new shoot springs forth and by the next year the tree is productive again. Branches, leaves and olives are produced by the next year and the tree is alive and well for the next 80-100 years. Hence, the olive tree is now named the resurrection tree in the land of Israel. So though it appears dead it springs forth into newness of life. Things are not always as they appear.

Even as the olive tree appears to die and have no life the people who are believers may appear to be dead and have no life. The church body for all intents and purposes may at times and seasons have the appearance of being dead but just as spring is around the corner, so is newness of life about to spring and is springing forth in the people of God.

With that springs forth new hope for those who may not yet know the life as it is to be with Jesus. Some have no hope or sense of life worthwhile because they have never met Jesus or some have no hope or newness of life because the weight of their life has choked the life of Jesus out of them. There is hope for each and every one of us... hope of a new and refreshed life. If you feel like Lazarus or you think the church appears to be like Lazarus (good and dead) let's hear what Jesus did for Lazarus and what He's done and continues to do for us.

John 11:40-45 tells us that Jesus talked to Lazarus' family and reminded them that if they would believe in Him, they would see the glory of God. He also thanked the Father in heaven for hearing, listening and answering His prayers so that the people would recognize and believe that Jesus is

and has the power. When Jesus had given thanks He spoke and said "Lazarus, come out! .... And out walked the man who had been dead..." New life, new hope sprung forth from what appeared as a hopeless and helpless situation.

Are you ready to receive new hope and new life? We can be so bold and speak the words of Jesus. (Insert your name or the name of a loved one or the Church) and say "Church, come out! In Jesus Name" Philippians 3:10 says, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection". So we invite you to "know" Him and then you will know the power of resurrection life for yourself and your loved ones and the Church. Life as you know it does not need to remain as it appears!

Submitted by Ray and Leslie Johnson, pastors Resurrection Life Church