

# Do you believe this?

*A poem/sermon on John 11:1-45 by Nathan Nettleton, 2 April 2017*

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## Message

Jesus calls us to believe that he is the resurrection and the life, not just in theory, but in relation to everything that is dead or dying within us.

## Sermon

His question was simple enough:

“I am the resurrection and the life,

the one who raises the dead and gives life.

Those who put their trust in me will have life, even if they die.

Those who live trusting in me, will never succumb to death.

Do you believe this?”

Your answer was simple enough too:

“Yes, Lord.

I believe that you are the Messiah,

the Son of God;

the one whose arrival the world has been waiting for.”

But answering questions is the easy part.

Even when the answer is extraordinary

almost unimaginable even

even when the answer means

that the ordinary looking person in front of you

is nothing less than the God of the universe

the life-giver

the one who creates something out of nothing

life out of death

“Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord, I believe.”

Just a few simple words really.

Nothing to it.

“Roll back the stone.

Open the tomb.”

What?!

Open the tomb.

Don't be ridiculous.

What's in there is long dead.

Open the tomb.

Come on  
it is hard enough to view the dead before burial  
let alone digging up what is half decomposed  
Don't make me do this

I am the resurrection and the life  
Do you believe this?  
Yes, Lord. I believe.  
Open the tomb.

It's going to stink to high heaven in there  
We'll all be sick  
That stone is in place for a good reason  
It is not healthy to expose yourself to what's in there  
Just leave it be

I am the resurrection and the life  
Do you believe this?  
Yes, Lord. I believe.  
Open the tomb.

Can we talk about this?  
Okay, I'll admit it  
It's not just the stench I'm afraid of  
There's more to it than that  
It's what it would mean for me  
Sometimes when things are laid to rest  
you've just got to let go and move on  
It's not healthy to keep raking over the ashes  
Sometimes you have to shut yourself off  
sever the emotional ties  
and stop dwelling on the past  
to protect yourself against the pain  
You've got to let go of the "if only"s  
and accept that those hopes and dreams are gone  
that the chapter is closed  
that you have to get on with life as it now is  
poorer perhaps, but with both feet firmly on the ground.  
I've done my best to move on  
I'm coping okay  
Don't ask me to go back  
to undo all the emotional hard yards  
I'm afraid I couldn't cope

I am the resurrection and the life  
Do you believe this?  
Yes, Lord. I believe.  
Open the tomb.

Can't we just leave it  
Can't we just walk away  
Can't we let the dead rest in peace  
Maybe some of what's dead in there  
died because I gave up too easily  
Maybe it didn't need to die  
Maybe if I'd looked harder  
or fought longer  
it wouldn't have died  
Maybe if you'd been here with me  
it wouldn't have died  
You could have done something  
You could have given me the courage  
and kept me from giving up  
If only you'd been here it wouldn't have died

But it doesn't matter now  
It makes no difference now why it died  
It's dead  
Gone  
Extinguished  
No more for this world  
Whether its death was unavoidable or not  
it died  
Why look on the horror of it all now?  
Why dredge up the misery  
the shattered dreams  
the agony of lost hopes  
Why?

I am the resurrection and the life  
Do you believe this?  
Yes, Lord. I know all that.  
Open the tomb.

I can't  
You don't understand  
You don't realise what it would cost me to go back there  
Do you know what it is like when something within you dies?  
When you abandon hope?  
When you give up trying to make something work  
and just let it go?  
Some dream  
Some relationship  
Some openness of heart and mind  
Some passion  
Some ability that others don't understand  
Some flame of faith  
Something that is unique to you

Something that makes you who you are  
or could have made you who you could have been  
Do you know what it is like to give up?  
To turn off the life support?  
To watch it slip away?  
To steel yourself against the pain?  
To bite your lip and fight the tears?  
To not let it show?  
To pretend you're better off without it  
because that's what everyone else thought anyway?

Do you know what it costs to close that tomb  
and to return to life  
as though nothing had happened?  
But some things have to die  
They don't fit in the real world  
They don't belong  
They cause more pain than they are worth  
They make life difficult, prickly  
They have to be given up so you can fit in  
and go with the flow  
and get on with those around you

I am the resurrection and the life  
Do you believe this?  
Yes, Lord. I believe it. I've got it all down pat.  
Open the tomb.

Do you have any idea what you are asking me?  
To open it up again?  
To make myself vulnerable again  
What if it just opens up all the old wounds  
and everything is just as complicated as before?  
Just as unbearable?  
What if it undoes all the good progress I've made?  
What if I believe again  
trust again  
open myself up again  
and just get destroyed again?  
What if I just get my heart torn out  
and trampled over again?  
I couldn't face that  
Just let it rest in peace  
It can't do any harm behind that stone  
It's safe  
I'm safe  
Don't go stirring it up again  
Just let it rest in peace  
I can't take the risk

If you put flesh back on those bones  
and breathe life into that body  
there will be nowhere for me to hide  
All that unfinished business will be back on the table  
Everything will be raw  
and vulnerable  
and terrifyingly alive with possibilities  
and questions  
and challenges  
and passion

I am the resurrection and the life  
Do you believe this?  
Yes, Lord.  
Open the tomb  
and Yes,  
I will call the dead to life  
Open the tomb  
and let your faith be more than words  
more than theoretical answers to a question  
State what you believe  
and then open the tomb  
engage again with the vision of what might be  
and not just what is  
Live again the passion of the plea:  
“Your kingdom come on earth as in heaven”  
Open the tomb and come to the table  
where the dead who now live  
can join hands with you  
the living who seek refuge in death  
and lead you into life  
with all its terrifying uncertainties  
a life where I’ll give you myself  
in all my brokenness  
and you give me yourself  
with all your brokenness  
and together we will risk life  
terrifying, wonderful, passionate life.

I am the resurrection and the life  
Do you believe this?  
Open the tomb.