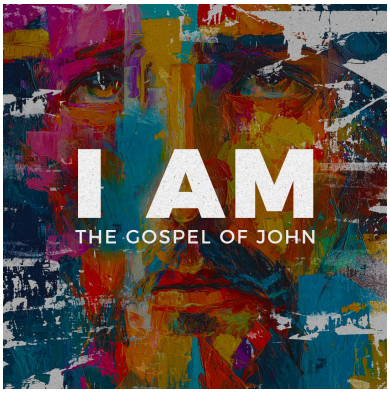
Title: Resurrection in the Present Tense
Series: I Am
Speaker: Kevin Sneed
Date: November 1, 2026



Key Texts: John 11:1-27, James 1:2-4, Romans 5:3-5

Introduction:

When Jesus hears that his friend Lazarus is sick, he waits two more days before going to him. By the time he arrives, Lazarus has been in the tomb four days. Martha meets him with grief and a theological answer: "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus takes that hope out of the abstract and into the present: "I am the resurrection and the life… Do you believe this?" This week we were reminded that God does not cause our suffering, but he meets us in it. Pain can reveal, refine, and deepen our faith, and the life of the age to come is available to us here and now. As Tish Harrison Warren writes, "Grace finds us, only ever, in the present tense."

Icebreaker:

What is something you do over and over that never gets old for you (i.e. a walk, a meal, a song, a family tradition)? What keeps it life-giving for you?

Discussion Questions

1. Take some time to read **John 11:1-27** aloud as a group. As you do, make some initial observations about the text and write them in the space below. What words, images, or details capture your attention? Is there anything you find surprising, confusing, or challenging?

2. What does this passage reveal about God and about His character? What does it reveal about humanity?

3. The sisters send word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." Yet when Jesus hears this, he stays where he is two more days, and later tells his disciples, "For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe" (John 11:15). We often read this as God causing the pain for his purposes. But this week Kevin reminded us that God does not cause our suffering, but he does work all things for good (Romans 8:28). How do you react to Jesus' delay in this passage? When have you felt like God's timing didn't match your own, and how do you think it might change things to see Jesus not as the cause of the pain, but as the one who knows how the story ends?

4. Read **James 1:2-4** and **Romans 5:3-5**. Our faith is meant to be a trust that matures, not a certainty that must be maintained. Kevin named three things suffering can do in us. It **reveals** what is under the surface, uncovering what we have really been trusting in. It **refines**, shaking our security in lesser things and loosening our attachments. It **deepens**, as the turning points of our lives are often the moments when the bottom falls out. Which of these three (reveals, refines, deepens) resonates most with your experience right now, and why? Is there a season of pain or disappointment you can look back on and see how God met you there and rebuilt something in you?

5. When Martha meets Jesus, she holds on to a hope for someday: "I know he will rise again… at the last day." Much like saying "It's okay, God is in control," this is true, but it isn't always what is most helpful in our grief. Jesus brings that hope into the present: "I am the resurrection and the life… Do you believe this?" Tish Harrison Warren reminds us that we meet God "not in how our life could be or should be but in what it actually is, today, in this moment." Where are you waiting for life to look different before you expect to meet God in it? What do you think it might look like to experience Jesus' life with you today, right in the middle of what you're carrying?

Key Takeaways

- **God does not cause our suffering, but he meets us in it.** Jesus knows where the story is going, and he works all things for good for those who love him.
- **Suffering reveals, refines, and deepens.** It exposes what we have been trusting in, shakes our security in lesser things, and can enlarge and deepen the soul. Faith is a trust that matures, not a certainty that must be maintained.
- **Suffering affords the possibilities of encountering God's presence in ways comfort alone could never teach us.** Tish Harrison Warren writes that "God, in his kindness, is not committed to my ease or to my desires. But God is committed to me - to my salvation, my healing, my wholeness, my joy, my strengthening, my deepening. Resilience is not just a means to an end - the way of getting through a difficult experience.
- **Grace finds us, only ever, in the present tense.** We meet God not in the life we wish we had, but in the life we actually have today. We have a God who wept with Mary and Martha and walks with us through every season. Resurrection is not only a distant hope on the last day. In Jesus, the future breaks into the present, and eternal life is available here and now.

Practice:

G.K. Chesterton imagines God saying "do it again" to the sun every morning – a God strong enough to exult in monotony, who has woven resurrection into the ordinary rhythms of creation. This week, choose one ordinary moment in your day (a sunrise, a meal, a commute, a bedtime routine) and let it become a reminder that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Each time, pause and notice where new life is quietly showing up and where things have started to feel weary. Then ask God which of Sunday's two invitations might be for you: **integrating your pain** (honestly bringing him your life as it actually is today, rather than waiting for things to change) or **practicing resurrection** (noticing and naming signs of new life right where you are). As you go, sit with Jesus' question to Martha: "Do you believe this?"