

## 2009#19 GOSPEL OF JOHN –THE DEATH OF LAZARUS

### John 11:1-44

We have just seen Lazarus raised from the dead  
 As the seventh miracle of our Lord.  
 We saw that Jesus has the power over life and death.  
 Yet we live in a secular world that wants to sell Christianity short  
 On what it promises to offer for every believer.

Isn't that just the way of the world.  
 I was getting some take home Chinese food the other day and  
 I got into a conversation with a lady about these very things,  
 How people today are all talking how we get less for our dollar.  
 Our retirements, and 401 K are shrinking.  
 Even the retailers are into this.  
 Ever look at a box of Chocolate covered cherries –less cherries  
 Look at a box of cereal—less ounces.  
 Look at the size of a candy bar—less candy,  
 Less Potato chips in a bag-- half full.  
 People cutting back to make it.  
 Some schools are going to 4 days weeks.

Even the Aberdeen American News is 1/3 size smaller.  
 You used to be able to fold that paper proportionally,  
 but now its tough to make even an Chinese firecracker.  
 (You know what a Chinese firecracker is? Right.  
 Let me show you.---- You know how to make one of these.  
 I can guarantee you will be a great hit with grandchildren.  
 Not with their mothers. )

John's Gospel wants to assure us today  
 That there is no shrinkage in the Christian faith.  
 That God is the same God yesterday, today, forever.  
 That this miracle sets in stone the power of Jesus  
 Over death.

### I. WE HAVE A COMMON EXPERIENCE.

We all die.  
 Every 13 seconds someone dies in the US.  
 Lazarus was sick unto death.  
 Mary and Martha sent a messenger to tell Jesus,  
 Jesus gets the message and wait two days  
 And then goes to Bethany.  
 John 11:17 reports that  
**On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. John 11:17**  
 This means that Lazarus had died he very day the messenger contacted Jesus.

Jesus knew the first day that Lazarus was dead,  
 Yet he didn't tell the disciple because he wanted to teach them,

to build up their faith.  
 To do that he needed to erase all doubt,  
 Mary, Martha, and Lazarus had been close friends of Jesus and the disciples.

The disciples hear the bad news that Lazarus is sick.

**<sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." John 11:3**

Jesus simply adds to this only by saying.

Trust me as the Son of God,

**"This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." John 11:4**

Jesus was preparing them for the word that Lazarus has died.

I have seen that done in medical fields.

I remember in my first parish

a wonderful young high school senior who was the president of our youth group.

was coming home from school one afternoon.

She rolled her little Mustang on a gravel road.

She was thrown out and the car rolled over her.

We don't know how long she lay before she was found,

The ambulance finally got under way to take her

40 miles to the Pierre Hospital

All the way down the medics worked on her.

I rode down with the family.

They couldn't bear to face the tragic truth of death.

Their beloved daughter.

They grasped at every word of hope from the doctor.

He said to them.

"We're doing all we can."

"They are still working on her."

Then a little later they said:

"Well it doesn't look good, she is not responding."

What they were doing was slowly preparing them for the inevitable.

"We lost her."

She was actually dead at the scene of the accident.

What Jesus was trying to do was to show that no matter

How discouraging the circumstances might appear.

God is still in control.

Even in the face of sickness.

And death comes to all.

No one is immune.

The disciples had seen Jesus heal many times.

They were probably confused why Jesus would let his friend be sick.

And why Jesus delays another day before going to the sister aid.

**<sup>6</sup>Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.**

**John 11:3-6**

They must have wondered if he really loved him.

And for that matter could he not have healed Lazarus at a distance

As he did the nobleman's sons

John 4:43-45

Friends on this side of the grave  
 What happens to us at time seems to contradict God's love.  
 Why do we get cancers, heart disease, have accidents,

But Gods love is not a pampering love,  
 It is a perfecting love.  
 By the way a mother overheard her son's little six-year-old friend ask why babies are spanked when they are born, the youngster replied. To get them use to it.

All of life is lived to give God the time or the chance,  
 To bring glory to the father thru their trials and trouble in life.

How many people loose it right here.  
 They get angry at God.  
 Rail and blame God for the unloving hand they are dealt.  
 They allow a negative spirit to steal their joy and peace,  
 And some come even to reject Jesus.

In 1932 an out-of-work jazz musician, Thomas Dorsey,  
 almost gave up trying to eke out a living.  
 He was on the brink of disbelief, but God's still small voice called him back to life.  
 Dorsey decided he would sing instead of sorrowing,  
 he would love instead of hate, he would trust instead of doubt.  
 He wrote this hymn  
 Precious Lord take my hand Lead me on, let me stand  
 I am tired, I am weak, I am worn  
 Through the storm, through the night Lead me on to the light;  
 Take my hand precious Lord, Lead me home.

Charles M. Mills, From Dusk to Dawn, CSS Publishing

When you and I face discouraging times,  
 The only encouragement we have is the Word of God.  
 We must live by faith and not by sight.

**Psalms 50:15 says: And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.**

No matter what the circumstance how severe or final,  
 They never detract God from his work, or his glory.  
 So don't give up.

Charles Kingsley was a very gifted and renowned Anglican preacher. Some years ago both he and his wife lay terminally ill in different rooms of the same hospital. They communicated by writing notes. One day his wife sent message that read: "My darling, is it cowardly of me to tremble before the unseen reality of death." He wrote back "Do not be afraid! It will not be dark, because God is light. There will be no loneliness for Christ will be there." That is our resurrection hope.

We all have a common experience.

## **II. WE HAVE A COMMON CONCERN**

Why?

Jesus was concerned not only about the faith of the disciples,

But also the faith of the sisters.  
 Mary and Martha  
 When we face death, we have common concern,  
 We have common doubt  
 In the "Hymn of Promise", there is a line.  
 In our doubts there is believing,

The sisters were in great grief.  
 They were in the stage of blame and anger.  
 We sense this from their words.  
 Which they must have said to one another many times the past four day.  
<sup>21</sup>**"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. John 11:21**  
 Vs. Mary says exactly the same thing.  
<sup>32</sup>**When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." John 11:32**

We may say it a little differently.  
 IF God really cared about us, things would be different.  
 Why does God allow this suffering?  
 What made it harder for Mary and Martha, was that  
 Both knew that no one ever died in the presence of Jesus.  
 The Widows son was raised,  
 The centurion's son was brought back to life.  
 The little girl of poor family was called back to life.

Our faith may be strong when it concerns others,  
 But sometimes when we need the touch of healing  
 Our faith grows weak.  
 Who of us hasn't been sick in body,  
 Which left us sick in heart and soul?  
 That why in James it says:  
**Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. James 5:13-15**  
 Isolated grief and Isolated recovery takes so much longer.

Like Martha and Mary, we can be quick to confront Jesus with our "if only" clause.  
<sup>21</sup>**"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. John 11:21**  
 Martha's thinking wasn't clear.  
<sup>23</sup>**Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." John 11:23**  
 Martha confused said:  
<sup>24</sup>**Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."**  
 Martha believes in eternal life for Lazarus,  
 But not present life.  
 This brings on Jesus clear affirmation of the

### **III. WE HAVE A COMMON FINALITY**

Jesus said:

**<sup>25</sup> "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; <sup>26</sup>and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"  
John 11:25-26**

This is the most common verse spoken at funerals today.  
In this verse Jesus teaches us clearly that there are two choices.  
There is the opportunity for those who believe,  
To enter into eternal life.  
There is the opportunity of those who choose not to believe  
To enter into eternal damnation.

A preacher concerned about a farmer said to him:  
"Do you belong to the Christian family?"  
He said: "No, I think they live two farms down."  
The preacher said: "No, I mean are you lost?"  
The farmer said: "No, I've been here thirty years."  
The preacher said: "I mean, are you ready for Judgment Day?"  
The farmer said: "When is it?"  
The preacher said: "Could be today or tomorrow."  
"Well, said the farmer, "when you find out for sure, you let me know. My wife will probably want to go both days!"

In the OT there was confusion about what happened to the dead.  
The Sadducees did not believe in the doctrines of resurrection of the body, immortality of the soul, nor the existence of spirits and angels because Moses never mentioned those things.  
The Pharisees however did believe in the resurrection.  
Even the writer of Ecclesiastes and some passages of the Psalms Almost make death the end and that there is no hope beyond the grave.

Jesus clarifies once and for all that bodily resurrection  
Is going to happen.  
And uses Lazarus death of four days  
To demonstrate that there is more to life after death.  
When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead  
He demonstrated forever that death will not keep its prey.  
We will stand before a heavenly father  
To give an account of what we believe  
Concerning Jesus and the resurrection.  
**Hebrews 9:27 says: It is appointed unto man, once to die and then the judgment!**  
We can be freeze dried,  
We can have our body frozen,  
Do whatever you can, but we will die  
And we will be raised from the dead.  
And for the believer it is raised to an eternal life with Christ.

**I am the resurrection and the life.  
He who believes in me thou he die yet shall he live.**

When you are sick, you want a doctor not a medical book  
When you are being sued, you want a lawyer not a law book.  
When you face your last breath, you want a resurrected redeemer,  
Not a funeral director,

When we accept Christ, we rise  
 From the death of emptiness and corruption of sin in your life.  
 To a life of peace and joy and eternity now and forever.  
 When Jesus raised Lazarus he moved the resurrection out of the future  
 Into the present reality of new life in Christ.

**True faith relies on God's promise  
 And thereby releases God's power.**

They roll the stone away.

**Jesus prayed and called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus come out!" John 11:41-42**

And the dead man

**44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. John 11:44**

And Jesus said to them.

**"Take off the grave clothes and let him go." John 11:44**

The miracle is complete.

That same miracle can happen to you this morning.

You may be just a child here today,

Or maybe a teenager, or a young adult.

But if you hear God's voice calling, and believe

God will lift your soul out of darkness,

He will bring your life out of death and decay,

And will put within you a new spirit

**Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did put their faith in him. John 11:45**

Will you put your faith in Jesus? He said:

**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; <sup>26</sup>and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. John 11:25-26**

Will you believe this???