

Sermon - March 27, 2016 Easter Day

"I am Jesus - I am the Resurrection"

John 11:11b-27



Easter! The greatest day of the year because it celebrates the greatest day in history! There is so much to say about Easter, after all the entire Christian faith is based on our Lord's resurrection from the dead, the reason for our confession, life, and celebration.

And as we gather this day to celebrate, we welcome all of you, we are so honored to have you celebrating together this day. If you are new to Faith Lutheran Church today we would love to meet you! And we would like to minister to you in

any way the Lord enables us to.

The resurrection of Christ is indeed good news, for He is the Resurrection!

There was a man, Lazarus who experienced firsthand what the resurrection means. We read of Lazarus in the Gospel of John the 11th chapter. This chapter is the bases for our meditation this morning. Where we see how the power of the Resurrection affects our lives.

For our purposes I would like to read from verses 11 to 27: Jesus told his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him."¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep.¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died,¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."¹⁶ So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off,¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

We do face death, physical, spiritual death, and even in the things that prevent us from trusting God fully. But here in our midst comes the one who is the Resurrection and who is the Life, just as he came to Lazarus, his sisters and even Jesus disciples. Giving them and us a glimpse of what the resurrection and life means and brings. By bringing what is dead back to life.

The story starts in verse 1 of John chapter 11. "Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha." So Mary and Martha

send a message to Jesus that Lazarus was sick. Now this was bad news in the midst of a good life.

And you know how that feels, don't you. Has it happened to you that you? You know, everything seem to be great, but then, you get some bad news, and all of a sudden hope, the joy and even life begins to die inside you. Maybe it is happening right now. Maybe you were told "The one you love is sick." Maybe you have been told "the job you love is likely going away." Or your dream marriage turned into a nightmare....

Lazarus illness was bad news, but not so for Jesus because when he received the message he told his disciples: "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

There is no bad that doesn't bring any good about, and the good that is to come out of this will bring glory to God!

That's good News, however, if you know the rest of the story, you will remember that Jesus does not come immediately to see Lazarus, but it took him several days to go there. Finally he tells his disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." But his disciples try to convince him not to go because there might get killed, that was a possibility.

But, Jesus says: "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." Now, Lazarus wasn't sleeping, in fact he had already died. So what Jesus was saying is this "He's dead and we need to go raise him from the dead."

There is physical death, but sometimes we experience another kind of death, from inside. Take doubt for example.

Thomas one of Jesus disciples, was doubtful about Jesus plan to go to Judea. Actually this man was known as Doubting Thomas. So doubtful that he sarcastically told the other disciples: "Let us also go, that we may die with him." In other words he was thinking "This is never going to turn out good at all."

Doubt is another way we begin to die in the inside. Even now, on this Easter Day, how many of us, if we are honest, could say that we have had spiritual doubts, maybe even now, are doubting faith, and even Jesus resurrection.

Perhaps you believed in God and something really bad happened to somebody that you really loved, and you thought, "Well, if God is good, why did he let that happen?" "If he's all powerful, why didn't he stop it?" Next thing we know, we are like Thomas. There's something on the inside that's a little bit dead in your doubts.

If you are not like Thomas, maybe you're more like Mary who was dead in discouragement.

We can see Mary's discouragement in this verse: "So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house." (v. 20)

Now why would Mary stay in the house? Maybe she was thinking "Why bother? I don't even need to go out there; my brother is already dead. There's nothing you can do about this anyway."

Would that be you even today? Thinking, "I can't change anything. I'm always going to feel alone. I'm always going to be depressed. I'm always going to be stuck in this dead-end job. I'm never going to have the marriage that I thought I would have." Discouraged! Does that picture fit you, even on this Easter day?

Some are dead in their doubts, some are dead in the discouragement. Then we have Martha who we could say was dead in the delay and disappointment. Jesus had

taken too long to get there. Jesus should have come back earlier but he didn't. Why did he take so long? Verse 17 says: "Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days."

Wouldn't you be disappointed? Jesus comes only now, but Lazarus been in the tomb 4 days. The common belief back then was that a spirit would stick around the dead body for three days after someone died. Now, at four days, well the spirit is not there no more, for sure! So, in Martha's mind, Lazarus wasn't just mostly dead, he was all the way dead. That's why Martha complained to Jesus: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." (v. 21) You took too long, Jesus! Why didn't you do this when you could have done something about it?"

Does that happen to you? Maybe you have been praying for a loved one that they would come to know the forgiveness of Christ. But the more you pray the more it seems they get farther away. And you wonder, "Why God?"

We believe that we serve a God that says all things are possible, yet we pray and pray, but God is just not doing it. And you feel dead in the delay, even disappointed.

Now, dear friends, on this Easter Sunday, it does us good to remember that God's delays are not God's denials. Just because God hasn't done something yet doesn't mean that God is not still in charge, and has a plan that he may be glorified, now or in the future through the very thing going on today that you didn't want to go through ever. Just remember the power of the resurrection, the power of the one who is the Resurrection.

Sometimes we resemble those people in our story today, Lazarus dies, Thomas freaks out, Mary's depressed, Martha is mad. But when the one who is the Resurrection steps in things being to change, things begin to take life.

I like what Martha said, despite her being upset about Jesus delay, she said: "But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." (v.22)

She does have faith, "I know that even now!" Even though we're dead in our delay and dead in our discouragement and dead in our doubts that, "Even now, whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

Even now, the resurrected Christ will work through your doubts, even now, the resurrected Christ will work through your discouragements, even now the resurrected Christ will work through your waiting so that you don't despair, because all things are possible with God.

Some of you need an "even now" moment. Even now, when you are discouraged, the presence of God can come in and build your faith. Even now, when you feel all alone, like there's no one there, the presence of the Holy Spirit can give you a peace that surpasses all understanding.

Even now, our God can reach into your broken family and bring healing and harmony and forgiveness and restoration. Even now, when everything looks impossible, we serve a God who says, "All things are possible."

Even now, when your heart may be cold and callous towards the things of God, our God, in a moment, can soften your heart and draw you into his presence. Even now, when there is something that is dead, the resurrection power of Christ can bring it back to life, and that's what Jesus did for Lazarus, he brought him back to life.

Jesus could do it, after all he said "I am the resurrection and the life." He didn't say, "I'm able to resurrect," but "I am the resurrection and the life." And "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live."

It's not just what he does; it's who he is. The resurrection, dear friends is not just an event, it is a person, for even now, but there is more.

There is more because Jesus resurrection from the dead is certainly God's victory over our greatest enemies, sin, death, and the devil, and God's approval of what happened on Good Friday was accepted by God the Father. That is payment for our sins. Our sins, which really declare us dead before God, that's spiritual death. And we all are dead in our trespasses and sins, the scripture tells us. But Christ destroyed sins with his death on the cross of Calvary and now those who are in Christ are declared God's treasured possession.

But there is more, more than just a good life on this earth. Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will never die."

Easter, Christ's resurrection, the Resurrection, is now our life, life eternal with God.

In our epistle reading for today we hear: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ."

In other words, but the writer is telling us is that at the end of the world, we will rise as well, with glorified bodies, inheriting heaven with God forever.

"What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power" the writer says. (15:42–43).

Lazarus was resurrected at Bethany, but he died after all we belong to this body that is perishable. "Perishable" "dishonor," "weakness"—that's us, that's our experience of bodies and life.

But the Resurrection, Jesus, changes all of that. Because of His resurrection we are also given the sure promise of the resurrection of our bodies. That's the promise. That's the victory of Easter. That's the promise for "even now."

Dear Friends, the same voice that called Lazarus out of the grave calls you out the deadness of your sins today and says, come out! There's forgiveness. There's grace, there's healing. It doesn't matter what you've done. It doesn't matter how big your doubts are, how bad you've been, how alone you feel, how much you've messed up. Come out!

No the promise of the Resurrection is not just for a better life here but life eternal in Heaven with God forever. And He is here today, inviting you, welcoming you, he loves you and he forgives you, and he makes you brand new, and he fills you with the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead.

So thank God for Easter, thank God for Jesus who is the resurrection, and thank God for the resurrection—his, of course, but ours too!

Amen.