



Pentecost 6

July 16, 2017 – 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

Theme: Jesus Is “The Resurrection and the Life”!

Sermon Text: John 11:1-44 (NIV)

¹¹ Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) ³ So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

⁴ When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, ⁷ and then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

⁸ “But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?”

⁹ Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light. ¹⁰ It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.”

¹¹ After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”

¹² His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” ¹³ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

¹⁴ So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

¹⁶ Then Thomas (also known as Didymus^[a]) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than two miles^[a] from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

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²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” ²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

³² 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.”

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”



As God’s children, it’s sometimes hard for us to understand why He lets us go through so much pain. I mean, we get it that He works in all things for good, but what about when the pain is over the top and no pain medication can help? “Why me, Lord?” we cry out. Yet there’s worse pain than physical pain. If we’re battling temptation and succumb to it, there’s the pain of guilt and even the fear that God might be done with us—especially if it’s a habitual sin that we abhor. Loneliness is another kind of severe pain capped-off by a false belief that we’re not good enough for anyone to truly love us. Parents would do anything to keep their child from suffering. So, what’s Jesus doing when He allows us—His blood-bought children—to experience such incredible pain at times? He answers that in today’s text.

Jesus Says, “I am the Resurrection and the Life”

Our text begins, **“Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) So, the sisters sent word to Jesus, ‘Lord, the one you love is sick.’ When he heard this, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will not end in death.’”**

Apparently, Lazarus had been sick for a while. And you know how it is: we always hope we’ll feel better by tomorrow. But Lazarus took a turn for the worse. Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus who was a day’s travel away. Shortly after the messenger left, Lazarus died. The messenger couldn’t have known that when Jesus told him, **“This sickness will not end in death.”** But Jesus knew that Lazarus had died. When the messenger got back to Mary and Martha the next day, he relayed Jesus’ reply. This had to be a real blow for them. Not only were they mourning the loss of their brother, but it appeared Jesus’ word had failed. Has a word of God ever seemed to have failed you? When we’re in the middle of a painful ordeal that lasts a very, very long time, it can sure feel that way can’t it?

We read on, **“Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, and then he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go back to Judea.’ ‘But Rabbi,’ they said, ‘a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?’”** Jesus loved this family. That’s *why* He waited two more days. Just file that thought away. The disciples were afraid to go back to Judea since they knew the Jews there wanted to kill Jesus. Jesus reassures them. **“Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.”** Then Jesus told them plainly, **“Lazarus is dead.”** Jesus’ point is that He’s the light of the world. If He’s with them there’s nothing to

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fear. Thomas didn't comprehend that. He said, **"Let us also go, that we may die with him."** Thomas' understanding of the Old Testament was that Jesus was going to make this world heaven on earth. If Jesus was murdered in Jerusalem, in his mind God's Word would've failed, and then what'd be the point of living?

Our text continues: **"On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.'"** Mary and Martha did have a strong faith, as evidenced by the way they buried Lazarus. In ancient times, the custom was to wrap the body with strips of linen. The legs would be bound together and the arms would be bound across the chest. But did they sisters wrap Lazarus' legs and arms separately so it'd be easier for him to move once Jesus raised him? The people Jesus had raised previously had only been dead a few hours, but Lazarus had been dead 4 days. In that climate, his body would've begun to decay. Martha had lost hope. Yet, **"Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha answered, 'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'"**

Martha believed in the resurrection of all the dead, because it's clearly taught throughout the Old Testament. Remember Job's words in today's 1st Lesson? Job's beliefs were passed down from generation to generation all the way back to Adam. God adamantly warned Adam: **"In the day you eat of [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil], you will die."** But after Adam and his wife Eve sinned, God sought them out and assured them that a Savior would appear on the scene—a divine superhero who'd defeat the devil and deliver mankind from our bondage to sin and death. Adam and his descendants would live even *after* they'd died!

Jesus affirmed that to be true. He told Martha, **"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me, will never die."** In the first part of this verse, Jesus guarantees that believers mortal remains will be raised to life. The second part of the verse is about believers who are still alive. Both here and hereafter, they'll *never* be apart from Jesus. Even if we doubt like Thomas and Martha did, Jesus won't reject us. We might shake our fist at God, because our pain is so great, but God will remain our loving heavenly Father; and Jesus, our kind, caring brother.

But why, then, does God sometimes wait for days, or even decades, to help us? The answer's in what Jesus told Mary and Martha's messenger. **"This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."** Jesus' delay in raising Lazarus would achieve a couple of goals. His miracles were getting progressively more glorious. First, He changed water into wine. Impressive, but not to those who refused to believe. Later, He raised a 12-year-old girl who'd just died. Glorious, but one might argue ala Monty Python, that she really wasn't dead yet. Maybe Jesus just snapped her out of a deep coma.

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But Lazarus' corpse was bloating and stinking! This time, Jesus would prove that He is **“the resurrection and the life”**! Yet His glory wasn't the only thing that was progressing. So was the hatred of His enemies. This miracle would turn their hatred into murderous frenzy, which God would use to put Jesus on to the cross.

“Where have you laid him?’ he asked. ‘Come and see, Lord,’ they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’” It might seem odd that Jesus wept knowing that in a few minutes He' d be raising Lazarus.

Yet Mary and Martha's pain pained Him as well! When we suffer, our pain pains Jesus, too. Yet if Jesus feels *with* us and *for* us, why does He let our suffering drag on and on at times? It must be that way, so He can accomplish in us the blessings He wants to achieve. Neither His Word nor His love has failed us. His own death and resurrection prove that. You see, **“the wages of sin is death”** (Rom. 6:23a). So, Jesus had to die. But His resurrection proves that He fully atoned for all our sins! Since He rose, we, too, will rise! No matter what you're going through, know for certain that God loves you and is working in *all* things so that we—and those who witness our steadfast faith in Christ despite our circumstances—may also come to believe.

We read further that **“Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ‘Take away the stone,’ he said. ‘But, Lord,’ said Martha, the sister of the dead man, ‘by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.’ Then Jesus said, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?’ So, they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.’ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, ‘Take off the grave clothes and let him go.’”**

Even strong faith waivers. Martha's faith had just been fortified by Jesus' pledge, **“I am the resurrection and the life.”** Now she panics! Jesus doesn't withhold His blessing because of her doubts. He strengthens her faith again by reminding her of what He'd said and by praying aloud so Martha could listen in. And then He does it. He raises a long-dead Lazarus to life once more! God deals with us in the same way. Our faith grows slowly, at times by fits and starts. But that's why God puts us in situations where we must walk by faith, not by sight. That's also why we need to keep prayerfully reading God's Word. If we don't give up on it, we'll be blessed. The time to grow in the Word isn't just when our back is up against it. If we grow thru the Word when life's good, that'll equip us to persevere when things go ashcan again. So, whether you have mostly ups or mostly downs, keep your focus on Jesus. On the Last Day, He'll do for us what He did for Lazarus. He'll do it for all our loved ones who died in faith, and we'll be reunited with them forever!

Since this is what we're looking forward to—since this is our certain hope—we continue to bear whatever crosses God may allow in our life. And whenever they feel too heavy to bear to the point that God's Word seems to be failing us—and especially, in the face of death—keep these words of Jesus ever before you: **“I am the resurrection and the life.”** Amen.

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