Good morning, Family. Pray with me as we prepare our hearts further for what God has for us today:

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1 Peter 1:3-7

Here we are just a few weeks from Easter--Resurrection Sunday, the day death was defeated. And yet, perhaps now more than ever in the history, our world seems to be living in a state of hopelessness. Even many Christians feel hopeless. But, Church, I want to share with you some life-changing news. Jesus, the Savior of the world, is alive and well! And our hope is based upon the solid evidence of Christ’s resurrection, a living hope, a present hope. The Bread of Life is our resurrection and our life. And yest for many, maybe we have lost hope because of the past, or, maybe, we anticipate hope in an unforeseen future: “Things will be better when . . . .”—when I pay off my home, when I get that new job, when I get married, when the kids leave home and can care for themselves. I wonder how much we miss when we are just not *in the moment*.

Listen, Family, our God is a very present God. Look with me again at Psalm 16:8-11:

8 I keep my eyes always on the Lord.

With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will rest secure,

10 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,

nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

11 You make known to me the path of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence,

with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Notice the present tense of the declaration of the Psalmist. These lines speak of our abiding in Jesus, our living hope. Abiding in His presence is seeing everything through the beautiful lens of our resurrected Savior—trusting, submitted, having faith in the Word. Abiding in His presence is viewing the living Christ as the source of our new birth. “Living Hope” for the believer means that our hope is sure, certain, and real, as opposed to the deceptive, empty, false hope the world offers. Christ is a present God (\*Psalm 46:1-2, 10). Make Him your dwelling place.

In our Gospel reading in John, we discover some powerful truths about our Living Hope. His friend Lazarus has died after a short illness (\*\*John 11:1-6). It may seem odd that Jesus decided to stay where He was for two more days. He loved Lazarus and his family. He could heal Lazarus. But, Family, listen. Jesus is aware before He intervenes—He knows what sorrows the family endures. And that is truly comforting somehow. Now look again at verse 4, the catalyst for this story and for yours as a Christian: “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.’” Jesus knew what His Father wanted Him to do—how to glorify our God in this situation. Church! God is the central character of the story of Lazarus, and He is the central character of your story. Your matter to Him so much! And you are on every page of your life story, but God is the focus—His glory, His purpose, His power on display. In this story, we embrace the love He has for us.

In verse 21, Martha asks, “Where were you?” and then also says, “If you had been here . . .”(verse 24). Martha remembers the past, then looks to the future. But Jesus—in compassion, empathy, and love, draws her into the present in verse 25:

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\*Psalm 46: 1-2, 10

God is our refuge and strength,

an ever-present help in trouble.

2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way

and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea . . .

10 He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;

I will be exalted among the nations,

I will be exalted in the earth.”

\*\*John 11:1-6

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.

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.’” Yes, He says, “I AM.” He does not say, “I was,” or “I will be.” He says, “I AM”! In this He assures us: I am bringing hope of the future into the present. I am God, and I do love you. He is our living, current, right-now, today HOPE. He turns our “what ifs” to “even ifs.” You can live in the moment because He is a very present help. Jesus changes *everything*.

Jesus makes it clear to Martha and her sister Mary—and to all those gathered around the tomb—just who He is. In verse 24, Martha acknowledges the miracle-working power of Jesus in the promise of resurrection in the End Times, but she is about to experience the truth of who Jesus is, then and now: the only truth that can save, bring hope, and give true life (see John 11:22-27, provided after the sermon text). Martha knows but she is about to *know*. There is a difference between knowing and experiencing. Let me take a minute to explain. I know that roller coasters are fast and sometimes scary. Not until I rode one at Dolly World did I experience how true that is! Likewise, I know the resurrection and the life are found in our Living Hope. That’s the Good News of the Gospel (\*John 11:43-45). This Gospel brings freedom, a new life that is unbound, changed. Many people, once dead in spirit and sins, come alive in this new life, alive with hope and purpose. And Christ, as he was for Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, IS our very present help.

Family! You and I are to be evidence of Christ’s resurrection and life. Look at this passage from John:

9 Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, 11 for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

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\*John 11:43-45

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.”

The Plot to Kill Jesus

45 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

The Apostle John writes here that Lazarus is evidence of the resurrection power of Christ. That power is the beauty of salvation. God is the central character of the story of Lazarus and of ours. God is the hope of our eternity brought into our present. Christ’s power and gift bring glory to God. We are to reflect His power and His gift of salvation so that our lives point others to Him. Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:7, “In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.” We are assured that God knows us and sees us made alive in His Son. And now, for one last thought, let us look at John 11:33-35:

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.

This moment reflects Jesus’ tenderness, tenderness for broken hearts, tenderness for those who suffer doubt. But what if your response is, “Lord, come and see”? Come and see my brokenness, my pain, my addiction, my stress, my worry. Come and see my hurt. Step in, my Jesus, and see the real me. Then, call me out of my tomb. Unbind me and set me free. He will! Our Living Hope does this, for our good and for His glory!

Passages in support of this sermon:

Psalm 16:7-11

I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;

even at night my heart instructs me.

8 I keep my eyes always on the Lord.

With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will rest secure,

10 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,

nor will you let your faithful[a] one see decay.

11 You make known to me the path of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence,

with eternal pleasures at your right hand

John 11:17-21

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.