

Lent 5

“Life after death? You better believe it! Through Jesus!” (John 11:25-26)
March 29, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

Our text for this day comes from the Word of God from the Gospel of John chapter 11, the story of the raising of Lazarus. And Jesus says, **I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live!**

Though once again we are not meeting together in Immanuel’s sanctuary, and may not for awhile yet, God’s word comes to you right where you are right now! God’s word comes to His people wherever the church is gathered, be it in your homes or maybe you’re listening to this message as you take a walk outside on this beautiful day.

What an amazing parallel we have in today’s Gospel. Jesus came to the home of Mary and Martha. He who is the Resurrection and the Life, set foot on the property of where sadness and death was in the air... where mourners gathered for 7 days, this being the fourth day.

Martha couldn’t wait to receive the comfort of her Lord. She rushed out to Him as Jesus came upon her property.

“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”

Such was the confidence and faith of Martha, knowing that had Jesus just been there 4 days earlier, death didn’t stand a chance. But it isn’t ours to question when God decides to call us from this world, but to gladly submit to His will and acknowledge that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.

It is the prayer of a believer in life or death, that God’s will is good and there is absolute trust in His gracious will.

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

...rise again.

and Martha was quick to reply,

“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Have you heard anyone on the news talking about the dead rising again? Have you heard anyone mention that there is life after death? Any present day Martha's talking about the resurrection?

And yet, this is THE news that needs to be heard by everyone in this Coronavirus stricken world.

Everyone is absolutely engrossed in preserving this life from death. And yes, we are thankful to God for the leadership and efforts of many to try to keep us from the suffering and possible death of this virus.

And yet we hear that Jesus did not go immediately to Lazarus home when the word reached Him that he was sick. But stayed two more days. Jesus allowed his sickness to end in sleep, that is death.

Why? So that the Son of God would be glorified through it....and so that His disciples and others would believe.

**Jesus said, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.”
12 Then His disciples said, “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.” 13 However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.
14 Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. 15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe.**

That is the Jesus' desire for you also... that you may believe!

God's word endures. **Though the grass withers and the flower fades, the Word of the Lord endures forever. Isaiah 40:8**

It endures so that you can hear Jesus' words today and believe in life after death through Him.

At a time, when when we are constantly reminded by the news of the ever rising death count both in the world and in the United States due to the Coronavirus, and the all out efforts of everyone, the President, his leaders, the military, private businesses, doctors, nurses, and each of us trying to due our part to slow the infection rate down, slow death down...

At a time, when people are exhausted, medical workers are increasingly becoming sick, the number of infected is rising in our own neighborhoods, and the apex is possibly still 2 weeks away ...

At this time, it brings us much joy to hear Jesus say that Lazarus will rise again.

And then we hear the grounds for such a declaration.

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”

Jesus is THE resurrection! Jesus is THE life! All men die, powerless to rise again, except ...except, the Son of Man, Son of God, Jesus! He did what no other man could do. For that reason, therefore, His name is synonymous with the resurrection. For He is the author of new life, having overcome this world.

“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

Martha, Do believe this?

And she said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

To believe that Jesus is the Christ, is to believe that He is also the resurrection and the life. That is what the Christ came into this sickened, sin filled world to do what no other man could do...Defeat death and rise again to prove His victory.

Dear listener, of this message, do believe this? Do you believe that there is life after death?

Oh, death is easy to believe. We hear of it. We see it. It is overwhelming the morgues in New York as we speak. There is no doubt that there is death. Jesus, Himself, groaned within Himself as He saw what wasn't supposed to be... dead body inside a tomb. Yes, death is real and sad, and families in N.Y. aren't even able open the casket of their loved ones to say good bye one last time because of the fear of infection.

But, do you believe in life after death? Jesus makes a promise to you that it's real...it's true and it is a life without any sin or evil or death or sadness. Jesus extends this invitation to you. For He says. “He who believes”

The “he who believes” and “whoever believes” or the “she who believes” is Jesus' open invitation to you, to anyone, to also believe this life giving truth that

He shares with us! He who believes in Jesus, though he may die, yet he shall live.

There was a lot of skepticism about 3 weeks ago when things began to shut down. Overreaction. People are making too big a deal out of this Coronavirus thing. It's our nature to be skeptical... of man's word...yes.

But, there is no room for skepticism of God's word. Is there life after death? You better believe it! And if you don't believe it, then you will spend an eternity suffering things worse than any virus could give you.

Yes, you better believe it. You better believe in Jesus so that He can call you out from the grave as He did to Lazarus.

Jesus called out to His friend Lazarus, and whoever believes in Jesus is His friend. Jesus doesn't care if the body has been asleep for 4 days or 400 years or 4000 years. When Jesus commands death to release its hold, and Jesus creates new life by the power of His Word, then death relinquishes its grip. Life reigns again! The brother rises again! You who believe in Jesus will rise again!

And Lazarus come out! And, Lazarus walks out alive!! All weeping ceases. The background noise of death ceases.

Do you who are listening, right now, believe this incredible promise from Jesus that He is the Resurrection and the Life?

There are no doubts that Jesus rose from the dead. Over 500 saw Him alive after His death on the cross.

“After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have [a]fallen asleep.” 1 Corinthians 15:6

Do you know how Jesus joins you to His resurrection? How you can be sure of your resurrection? Through your baptism!

“Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” 1 Peter 3:21

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, Romans 6:4-5

And listen to the verses from our epistle reading to chapters later in Romans 8.

. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The Spirit who dwells in you through your baptism will give life to your mortal bodies!!

Do you believe this? answer with Martha “ Yes, I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God!”Yes, He is the Resurrection and the life. He is my resurrection and my life. Thanks be to Jesus who has come to your house today with His words of life! Amen!

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.