

Walking the Resurrection Life

Sermon 4-1-18

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John 11:1-44

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴But when Jesus heard it, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” ⁵Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” ⁸The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” ⁹Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.” ¹¹After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” ¹²The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” ¹³Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” ¹⁶Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

¹⁷When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” ²³Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” ²⁵Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.” ²⁸When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and

told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³²When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶So 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?” ³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Message:

(Play video at <https://www.sermonspice.com/product/77240/our-king-forever-easter-intro>) Christ has Risen! (He has risen indeed!) Amen! The passage for this morning is an unusual one for Easter. If you will, it’s a prelude to Jesus’ death and resurrection. This passage is theologically deep and layered. It would be impossible for me to expound upon all the points in this passage. Unless you want to hear me preach for an hour or two. So I’m going to just focus on a few that I believe are relevant and that the Lord spoke to me. Starting in verse 4, “⁴But when Jesus heard [the news of Lazarus’ illness], he said, ‘This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.’” This is the lead-in sentence to what is about to come. At this point, the disciples probably hear this as another healing opportunity for Jesus. But Jesus knows that Lazarus is going to die. But it is not without purpose and meaning. He knows that what He is about to do won’t only amaze the disciples, Mary, Martha and all who are present, but will prepare them further for what is going to happen to Jesus. Lazarus’ death will glorify God, as will Jesus’ death. Now, that might

sound strange. How can someone's death glorify God? And why would God want such a thing? Well...first of all, I don't think God wants anyone to die, per se. But in God's creation of all things living, everything has an expiration date. Everything has a life cycle. The one thing we know for sure in this life, without a doubt, is that we will eventually die one day. And for most of us, that terrifies us. As it should. Because if we don't understand that we will eventually die, then we can't really appreciate the life we have. If we don't understand that we will eventually die then we can't really appreciate the life we have. Meaning, we won't live the life God granted us to the fullest. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead not because he deserves it or that he is a favorite of Jesus, but because Jesus has purpose in such actions. To first and foremost, glorify God.

And then Jesus knows that because this has purpose and meaning, that he must go to Judea. But, strangely, the disciples object in verse 8, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" If you don't understand this objection, it's because in the previous passage a group of Jews press Jesus to affirm that He is the Messiah. And as subtly as possible, He affirms that He is the Messiah. Now, you'd think that the people would welcome such affirmation. But this group of Jews believe Jesus is falsely testifying. So, in abiding with the law, they picked up stones ready to stone Jesus and arrest Him, but He escaped. So returning to heal Lazarus, He is putting His life at risk. And this is a defining moment for Jesus and the disciples. Because it would be sensible for Jesus not to travel to Lazarus and to heal someone, or even resurrect someone, in an area where He would be safe. It would be sensible for Jesus not to go into areas that would threaten His life. And yet, He doesn't make the sensible choice. Starting in verse 9, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." Zero-in on these two verses with me. Why would Jesus respond to the disciples' concern in this way? It may seem to be a strange response to us. One of the things Jesus seems to know, but the disciples do not, is that His time is limited on this earth. Just as we have limited time on this earth. It's inevitable that He is going to die. I mean, Jesus warns the disciples of His death on multiple occasions. And the disciples every time deny that this will eventually happen. If Jesus has limited time on this earth, what shall He do with that time? Well...he's certainly not going to run away from danger. If He's going to make the most of his limited time on this earth, He is going to live in the light. When someone calls for aid, He is going to glorify God by responding to those in need. To choose safety, to avoid danger and ignore Lazarus' need, is an action of darkness, selfishness and cowardice. If Jesus would choose to walk during the night or in darkness, He would stumble and not glorify God. So His decision to go to Lazarus despite the dangers, is an act of obedience

to His call and in obedience to God. With our limited time on earth, will we choose to walk in the light or walk in darkness?

Jesus knows that Lazarus is dead even before he arrives on the scene. He reveals this in verse 14, “Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” Believe what? Exactly. Jesus is trying to prepare them for what is going to eventually happen to Him. So that they don’t just blow off His coming back to life as if He was never dead. But that the disciples can bear witness and testify to His resurrection and ascension. Jesus further reiterates this action to “believe” in His interchange with Martha. Skipping ahead to verse 21, “²¹Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ ²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.’ ²³Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ ²⁴Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’ ²⁵Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’ ²⁷She said to him, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.’” It’s interesting Martha’s response to Jesus’ words, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha seems to be saying, “Yeah, Yeah, I know Jesus. My brother will rise again on the last day as the scriptures say. Thanks for your kind words, but that doesn’t help right now.” And Jesus’ response is, “No, Mary. You don’t get it. I’m not talking about the end of time right now. ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.’” So Jesus is telling Martha that if she believes in Him right now, she will experience resurrection and life. What? Are you serious? Yes. Jesus is dead serious. We can choose today to walk in the darkness. In the night. OR, we can choose today to walk in the light. To walk in the resurrection and life that we know in Jesus. In other words, if you’re someone today who has experienced loss, hurt and pain. Fear not. Jesus is the resurrection and life. He comes to heal your wounds and bring you back unto Him. If you have a lot of guilt and sins from your past. Fear not. Jesus comes to forgive those sins, release you from your guilt and bring you into the resurrection and life. And as Jesus says, do you believe this? He asks the disciples and Martha if they believe because this is what it takes. If you want to experience the power of the resurrection and life, you must believe in Jesus. You must believe that He can bring things back from death to life. That he can bring you back from the death of your soul to be reborn in the resurrection and life.

And look at what happens when we believe. This is quite incredible what happens next. Skipping ahead to verse 37, “³⁷But some of them [the Jews who want to stone Jesus] said, ‘Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man

have kept this man from dying?’ ³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. [Sound familiar?]³⁹ Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, ‘Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.’” You may not understand this last comment from Martha. According to Biblical scholar Gail O’Day, in “...popular Jewish belief at the time of Jesus, the soul hovered around the body in the grave for three days after death, hoping to reenter the body. But after the third day, when the soul ‘sees that the color of its face has changed,’ the soul leaves the body for good.” So when Martha says that it’s been four days, this is a significant detail. It means that according to Jewish belief, the soul has left the body. If Jesus believed this, He could have just given up. But He doesn’t. He defies their belief. He defies the mockery of the skeptical Jews. “⁴⁰Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, [there it is again, this importance of belief] you would see the glory of God [again it’s about the glory of God]?’ ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, ‘Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me [reaffirming that He is the Messiah to the skeptical Jews watching].’ ⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’”

Jumping ahead in chapter 20 of the Gospel of John after the death and burial of Jesus, “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.’ ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed [again, this importance of belief]; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.” One of the significant aspects of comparison between Lazarus’ death and resurrection and that of Jesus, is the issue of the binding clothes. Lazarus comes out of the tomb bound. It’s a secondary miracle that Lazarus can even walk out of the tomb with the clothes bound around His feet. According to Gail O’Day, “Lazarus arose still dressed in the clothes of death, dependent on the voice of Jesus to achieve his freedom from

death, but Jesus arises completely free of death.” In other words, Jesus is not bound by death. And He is the only one who can call us out of death. So this phrase in John 20, “...linen wrappings lying there...” carries great symbolic significance. That although humanity might be bound by death, God is not. The most inevitable and powerful force, death, will not hold Jesus back. Humanity can do their worst to God and Jesus, but that will not hold Jesus back. He is the resurrection and life.

Circling back to verses 9 and 10, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.” Many of us know the power of resurrection. Or do we? We are a forgetful people. How often did the Israelites need to be reminded of God’s faithfulness? The basic question I want to ask you today is, “Are you walking the resurrection life?” If you say that you believe in Jesus, are you testifying to His resurrection? If you say that you believe in Jesus, are you proclaiming God’s deeds of power? If you say you believe the resurrection and life, have you released your sins and guilt to Jesus? If you say you believe in Jesus, have you given up your selfishness for a selfless obedience to God and giving glory to Him? For Martha said she believed that Jesus was the resurrection and life, but when it came time for resurrection she doubted Jesus’ might and power. Do you believe? If you are saying today that you believe, then walk in the light and not in the darkness. You only have so much time on this earth. Do you want to continue to be known for your choices of safety and comfort? Do you want to continue to walk in sin and darkness? Do you want to continue to hide in the dark? Or do you want to live beyond the power of darkness and death and live in the light? To walk in the daylight? To proclaim that our Jesus is alive. He’s alive. He’s alive. He’s alive. The grave clothes did not hold Him back. The worst that humanity did to Jesus did not hold Him back. He wants you to experience to fullness of the resurrection and life. Because He is an awesome and loving Jesus. He is a forgiving and compassionate God. I invite you today, if you are not living the resurrection life, to reaffirm your belief in the resurrection of Jesus. If you have not known the power of resurrection and life, I invite you to get on your knees and confess your sins and guilt. I can guarantee you, you will experience the resurrection and life of Jesus if you choose to believe. And I’m not just talking about a tentative belief. Not a “dip your toe in the water” belief. Not a half-belief. If you want to experience the resurrection and life, it is going to take an all-in mentality. You have to be all-in on Jesus. Jesus wants freedom for you just as he gave to Lazarus. That death does not hold God’s people back. That when we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, we will be with Him for all eternity. We will experience His presence now and we will experience Him in the afterlife. Providence Church, death does not hold our Jesus back. Even if

Providence Church dies today, it does not hold Jesus back. Jesus will rise from the ashes and proclaim His power. Our God is a mighty God. He is in the work of doing mighty and powerful things. Let us believe today and walk in the resurrection and life of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.