

**John 11: 17-37; “I am the Resurrection”, Sermon # 62 in the series – “That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall, on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, in the Morning Worship Service.**

As we take up this wonderful story, which so affects us all, we should look to our Lord Jesus, as the Friend of saints and sinners alike. That is, He is the only hope that Mankind has, of eternal life. This will become apparent as I speak to you about His being the resurrection and the life. Without our being raised from the dead, by the glory and power of Christ, our redemption would not be complete. And so we need to think about what Jesus did here, this mighty miracle, and the words and actions of our Lord which led up to it. For they affect us personally. At this time, then, I would like to open up this truth of Jesus being the resurrection and the life by our looking together at two things. 1<sup>st</sup> – Jesus’ Personal Instruction to Martha in His words of Promise. 2<sup>nd</sup> – At Jesus’ Personal Instruction to Mary in His Weeping. These instructions to these dear followers of Christ, affect us personally here today.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Let’s think about Jesus’ Personal Instruction to Martha in His words of Promise.** (verses 17-27)

When Jesus came, it says, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. And since Bethany was only about two miles away from Jerusalem, many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Verse 20 tells us that as soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, that she went out to meet Him, but Mary still sat in the house. So, evidently, Martha did not go and tell Mary when she heard about Jesus’ coming. Instead, she immediately went to Him herself, because she wanted to talk to Him personally, herself. I think that by nature she could be a pretty direct person in her words. She said exactly what was on her heart – “Lord, If You had been here, my brother would not have died.” She was saying that somehow Jesus should have come to them, sooner, when they had sent for Him.

She had no doubt heard the word of the messenger who had come back to them from Jesus saying that this sickness of Lazarus’ was not unto death, but for the glory of God. But Martha was a practical woman. She wanted to know for herself how this sickness was to be for the glory of God. If this sickness was so that the glory of God could be displayed, then why didn’t He come immediately, and heal her brother, whom she knew He loved. But since He had lingered, and waited two days, her brother had died. And so, she did not understand this supposed discrepancy between His words and His actions.

She covers her statement of this obvious fact with her faith in Christ. She says – “But even now, I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you. She wasn’t doubting God the Father’s ability or Christ’s ability to heal. She was still looking expectantly to Jesus in faith. She knew that Jesus was always heard by His Father, and perhaps He would explain what had happened. Jesus says to her immediately – “Your brother will rise again.” You will notice that Jesus said this, in this way, in order to draw out the faith of Martha. He wanted to see what her expectation was, of Him, at that time.

I said to you last time that hope is the desire and expectation that God will do something good. I said to you that it is the purpose of God to build stronger faith and hope and love in every one of His dear people. How does He do this? By causing them to think about Him more carefully and to see who He really is, and what He has the power to do. She said to Jesus – “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” And Jesus said to her – “I am the resurrection and the life.” He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.” “And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” “Do you believe this?”

Well, yes Martha did believe this. And she said so in this wonderful confession of faith in Him in verse 27 – “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is come into

the world.” Now, it will be good for us to see at this point, if we can understand and receive these words of Jesus to Martha, so that our own faith, hope, and love, of the Lord Jesus will be built. The way that Martha worded her answer to Christ’s assertion that her brother would rise again, was not that she expected Him to raise him from the dead at that time, but rather in the future, in the general resurrection of the dead. She believed that Christ was the Son of God, and that He was loved of the Father and was sent by the Father, to be the promised Messiah.

But she did not seem to grasp the idea yet, that He was God the Son, God made manifest in the flesh, and that He had power in Himself to heal, and to raise the dead. She thought that He could pray and ask the Father for a miracle, and the Father would grant it, but that since her brother had been dead for 4 days, she thought that he could not be brought back now that so much time had elapsed. We must ask, had she forgotten that Jesus had already raised two people from the dead before this?

Surely she had heard of the raising of the widow of Nain’s son, which is related in Luke 7: 11-17. When Jesus came near the gate of that city, they were carrying out a young man, the only son of his mother, and when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, - “Do not weep.” And He came and touched the open coffin, and He said - “Young man, I say to you, arise.” And he sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. It says that the report of this went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding area. And then, you will also remember Jairus’ daughter in Luke 8: 40-56. He was the ruler of the synagogue.

There were many people mourning there, when Jesus finally got to his house. And Jesus said to them - “Do not weep; she is not dead, but she is sleeping.” This is the same kind of language that He used concerning Lazarus with His own disciples when He said that He was going to “wake His friend Lazarus”. In this case, the mourners ridiculed Him because they knew that she was dead. And so He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called saying - “Little girl arise.” It says - “Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately.” And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened. Well, perhaps Martha had not heard of this little girl being raised. But she must have heard of the young man. And so, we must conclude that in the case of her brother that she thought it was too late to ask for anything as radical as Lazarus’ being raised after his having been dead for four days.

Martha was right in her eschatology, but she was wrong in regard to her expectation of what Jesus could do at that time. She rightly saw that the dead will be raised on the last day; that is, the last day of this Church age, the last day of the world as we know it now; that last Day when Christ shall return, and rapture His Church, and in the twinkling of an eye, give them their resurrected glorified bodies. He shall gather them from the four winds in order to judge the world with Him. For, as I have told you many times, Jesus and the apostles taught that there would be only one 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ, one literal physical 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming, and one Appearing of our Lord.

On that last day, all of the dead will be raised; the righteous raised first, and they will be raised to judge the world with Him. (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6: 2) “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” The wicked will be raised on the same day, at the same hour, but just slightly later. And it will be a far different kind of resurrection for them; where they will receive their body back, suitable only for the eternal punishment, where their worm will not die, nor will the fire be quenched. John 5: 21 - “For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.” “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

Verse 28 - “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” So there it is; two separate and different resurrections in one hour, in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice. And at

that time there will be a separation of the wicked from the righteous which will immediately take place on that day. Let us hold fast this truth, even as Martha did. But we must also hope that we will have a greater expectation of Christ for the present than Martha had; that is, in looking forward to the future of our own life, and the life of our believing loved ones. Jesus is the resurrection and He is our life. He is the life of our spirit now, because He has raised us spiritually from our death in trespasses and sins. Our life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory, it says in Colossians 3, verses 3 and 4.

If you have been born again by the Spirit of God, you shall never die, because your spirit will never die. Yes, you will die physically someday, but your soul will go immediately to be with God and thus you will always be with the Lord. Though you die, yet shall you live. You should be looking for this blessed hope and glorious appearing of our Savior, even though it does not take place in your physical lifetime. Why do I say this? It is because, when you die physically, the next thing that you will behold with spiritual eyes will be the glorified Christ, sitting at the right hand of the Father. And the next thing that you shall behold with physical eyes will be when Christ returns and you will receive your glorified body.

This is something that you should be often thinking about, as these realities will come to pass in their respective times; your spirit going to God immediately when you die, and your body awaiting the resurrection of the dead on the last day. Will you not watch in this holy sense? Will you not keep your lamps burning? Will you not believingly looking forward to all that Christ will do for you and for your loved ones who know Him?

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Let’s look at Jesus’ Personal Instruction which He gave to Mary in His Weeping.** (verses 28-37)

Verse 28 says – “And when Martha had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, ‘The Teacher has come and is calling for you.’” “As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him.” “Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him.” “Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and were comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, ‘She is going to the tomb to weep there.’” “Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.’” (These were the very same first words that Martha had used with Jesus.)

“Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.” “And He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’” “They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’” “Jesus wept.” “Then the Jews said, ‘See how He loved him!’” “And some of them said, ‘Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?’” So, we have this very emotionally laden scene given to us here, of Mary coming to Jesus. She is not like Martha in her personality or in the way that she thinks or feels about Lazarus’ death. But she has drawn the same conclusion as Martha did, that if Jesus had come, that her brother would not have died.

I want you to see that Jesus handled both Mary and Martha’s cases of grief in different ways. In Martha’s we have seen that Jesus addressed the question that was in her mind by giving her strong assurance of the truth; of His promise, that He had all things in his hands, and that He was the resurrection and the life. In Mary’s case, although the statement of concern is the same, you see that Jesus does not answer her directly with words of assurance. He answers her tears, with His own tears. When Mary came to Him, she fell down at His feet, saying that if Jesus had been there, her brother would not have died. It was when Jesus saw her weeping, it was when He saw her grief, and the grief of the others with her, that He groaned in His spirit and was troubled.

What did this groan mean? Why was He groaning? Why was He troubled? After all, He knew that He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. Instead of giving words of truth, words of comfort, words of assurance, here, we see the act of Jesus weeping. Why was this? And what does it mean for us? Well, in Jesus' weeping, we see the sympathy of Jesus for others who are sorrowing. We see the sympathy of Jesus for our human condition, of our losing our loved ones. There was Divine Compassion exhibited in the eyes of Jesus, as He wept for Mary's loss; when He wept with those who weep.

Jesus did not rebuke her tears. He did not tell her that she should not deeply feel this loss. He did not even tell her to engage her faith in Him, as He had with Martha; that things were going to work out in a very great way in the future, both for Lazarus and herself. The Lord Jesus knew that the best way that He could minister to Mary was for Himself to weep with her. Jesus was truly troubled at the sight of her grief, and the grief of the Jews with her. He groaned within Himself, because He knew that He Himself had a mission to fulfill in this regard. He knew that He Himself had already become in His three previous years of His ministry, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He knew, as He looked at Mary, that He would have to bear her griefs and sorrows by going to the cross, if they were to be assuaged in the lasting sense.

Some persons with Mary and Martha, there at the tomb of Lazarus understood and approved of Christ's weeping. They said – "See how He loved him!" Those who sympathize with their grief-stricken friends truly love them, and they want to express that love. And then, we find here, at this very same time, that there were also some there who were being critical of Jesus at the very time that He wept. They said – "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" Well, most certainly He could have. But He chose not to do so, so that they could see the glory of God, so that they might believe in Him.

Some of the people there who being critical of Jesus, they would be the same people would hide their faces from Him while He was hanging on the cross. There were some who despised Jesus, and they would not esteem Him here at the tomb. They who would not esteem Him here, in His sympathizing with the grief of those grieving, would also not sympathize with Him there at the cross. But, praise be to God, Jesus knew that all the sorrows of those who truly sorrowed for the right reasons, over the loss of their loved one, their sorrows He would bear; and death itself would be overcome by Him, in the lasting sense, by His going to the cross.

And so, this is why He groaned now. It was in anticipation of His death on the cross. He groaned in His spirit here, because He the Son of God had taken upon Himself human nature. He, being God, had become a Man. And here He was fully identifying Himself with our suffering and sorrowing condition. He knew and felt the reality of Mary and Martha's loss. In this act of weeping, when we read it, we know that He feels the effect of our loss, too, when someone we love dies. He knew that sin and sorrow had entered the world through the first Adam. He knew that in Adam all die. He knew that only in Himself would we believers, all be made alive, sorrow and sighing could be forever put away.

He knew that all of the sorrows related to death and the loss of loved ones, would only eventually leave forever, through His dying, His being buried and lying in the tomb for 3 and a half days, and then His rising again. He will wipe away all of our tears in the eternal state. And so – "It was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Part of His sufferings was bearing sorrows. "For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

Hebrews 2: 8 – "Therefore in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. Hebrews 4: 15 – "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize

with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4: 13 – “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.” “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.”

All of this Jesus felt when He wept at Lazarus’s tomb. This weeping was a demonstration to Mary of His love for her brother, and His love for her and Martha. This weeping was showing her, and everyone there, His feelings of sympathetic love for them; for the human condition of helplessness to prevent death, lacking the power in ourselves to conquer all the afflictions which lead to it. “Because Jesus wept, we are assured of the Divine sympathy in our sorrows.” (W. Frank Scott, Homiletic Commentary on John) Jesus knew that there are no tears in heaven. The Father does not weep. But there are sympathy and love in the heart of the Divine Father. Jesus’ mind and His will were at one with the mind and the will of His Father.

Only by His becoming a Man could He taste of the cup of human sorrows. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. And so we see in Christ’s tears, the sympathy and the love which are there in the heart of the Father, for all those who are sorrowing. The sympathy of Jesus, and His tears here at Lazarus’ grave are the visible expression of the Father’s heart. And the Divine sympathy is the forerunner of the Divine help. Jesus was going to do this great thing; His greatest miracle, which even His closest disciples were not expecting. And in doing it, they would behold the glory of God. More on this next Sunday.