

## The Resurrection and the Life      March 02, 2025

### John 11:17-27

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

The ongoing conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders is progressively getting worse. Jesus was rejected by the religious leaders at the festival of the Dedication (Hannukah) for claiming he is one with God. Instead of recognizing who Jesus actually is they already made up their minds about who they think he is not. The problem is one of embedded doctrine that is out of sync with the will of God. They refused to believe Jesus and tried to stone him for blasphemy. So, Jesus retreated to a safe area outside of the political reach of the Jewish authorities. He stayed there until his time comes so that the love of God may be given to the hatred of humanity. Jesus delayed coming to the rescue when his friend Lazarus was sick and specifically states that it is for God's glory. We don't really understand love until we understand the love of God.

Jesus teaches a lesson on resurrection. The religious leaders were looking for a sign. They wanted proof of his authority. Well, the resurrection of Lazarus is the proof that they were looking for. However, instead of believing what they saw and accepting the evidence, this enraged them because they saw their power over the crowd slipping away. The religious leaders wanted Jesus to prove himself and when he did they rejected him because their power and greed got in the way of accepting God's gift of love. At this point in the Bible they will soon be given the best proof of all as Jesus will rise from grave. Not only that, but he told them in advance that it will happen. The greatest thing of all is God and the love of God. The true meaning of Jesus is the love of God. What they needed was to get out selfishness. The miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus is that it helps people see so that they too can believe. People get stuck in preconceived doctrine instead of understanding what love is all about and being one with the Lord in truth and in love.

Martha, being true to human nature, expresses dissatisfaction with the delay of Jesus. She has faith but it is limited by her own issues. She does not fully understand Jesus. She does not know fully his love and power. So he challenges her faith and asks if she believes. We can only hypothesize about the strength of her faith. Jesus needs people to understand the significance of resurrection. Believing in the resurrection and the life is a very important matter of faith. Her sister Mary has the same issues demanding to know where he was when she needed him. We cannot fully grasp the love of the Lord until we realize just how selfish we are in our relationships. Jesus is moved by the sorrow and

grief of his friends and has to deal with human weakness and prays out loud for the sake of the people.

Lazarus has been dead for four days. After four days, it is beyond a doubt that he is dead. The resurrection is a keystone of Christian faith. Jesus is the scapegoat for sins. A scapegoat was a live animal that the priests laid their hands on in order to transfer the sins of the people onto the goat which was released and when he ran away he carried away the sins of the people. So, the sins of the people were paid for. The problem with this system is the person is free to sin again and repeat the cycle of sin and payment. It limited the extent of the remorse and guilt. It was OK to pay the fine for transgressions and then sin again. This system changes with Jesus being the scapegoat for sins. There is no more paying for sins as Jesus paid the price once and for all. It is in the name of love that Jesus saves all of humanity over all periods of time. There is no more need to sin when you are guided by the love of the Lord. Your guiding principle of life is to honor and respect the love of the Lord. You simply do not sin when you are appreciative what the Lord has done for us and are grateful for that saving act of grace. We sin when we are stuck on the self. A lot of people are unwilling and unable to grasp the extent of God's love.

Human nature is quite different from God's nature. We struggle to maintain cohesiveness when love is for the wrong reasons. The attraction diminishes with time. However, when you love someone for who they are, the attraction holds steady. No matter what they say or do, you love them for they are and then you realize how insignificant appearances are. That is God's love for us. God loves you as you are. That is the love we are to have for one another. The religious leaders did not have that. They did not have the love of God. Since they are unfamiliar with the love of God they were unable to see it. They got stuck in their own imbedded doctrine and failed to see what was clearly in front of them. They did not care to find out who he really is or what he was really all about. So, they responded to the love of God with anger toward the Son of God. Their problem was a matter of who they are not who Jesus is. They blamed him and tried to kill him because of who they are.

The religious environment was selfish. It was about what it could do for the benefit of the person. It was about what people wanted instead of being about what God wants for us. The Christian is to be like Jesus to the world around us. All he asks us to do is to confess our sins and he will do the rest. In pure love, nothing is hidden, nothing is covered up, there are no masks, and no public faces. When you can be completely open and honest with the Lord, then you can be completely open and honest with yourself and each other. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Yes Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.