

LENT 5  
EZEKIEL 37:1-14  
ROMANS 8:6-11  
JOHN 11:1-45  
APRIL 1, 2, 2017

YEAR A

Many of us have heard these painful words before. "There is nothing more we can do." These words are often spoken to people with terminal illness like cancer, lung disease or other ailments that require doctors to say those words. There are other words that are often spoken along with these words. They are words like, "You waited too long." When we hear those words we lose hope. We might lose hope and stop believing in the power of God. It is a natural part of who we are. Yet our God does not know defeat. Jesus says in these verses that he is the resurrection and the life. The power of God does not give in to death but provides life. The love of God walks with those that are hurting and feeling defeated.

This walk through Lent has been about the despised and outcast being accepted back because she came to faith. We heard about the blind receiving his sight, giving witness and offering an invitation. It has been about the blind man coming to faith. By faith we know that the struggles of Lent turn into the victory of the resurrection. We walk with the Lord and we believe that nothing shall be impossible for the Lord.

**John 11:17-21** When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

These words of faith are spoken first by Martha and then by Mary. "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." The words spoken are words of lament but also words of promise. When

Martha speaks the words it is a statement of faith like our Apostles' Creed. In the creeds we proclaim what we believe as brothers and sisters in Christ. We state that we believe the message of salvation and in the healing power of God. Martha learned that Jesus is the Messiah and that her brother will rise at the resurrection of the last day. She also knew and believed in the healing power of Jesus. If you had been here four days ago things might be different. Lazarus would still be alive. Martha also knew that God would listen to Jesus giving him everything he asked for. Did Martha believe that Jesus could restore life to her brother? The Jews believed that the spirit of a person that died would linger around the body for three days. This was the fourth day since Lazarus died.

**“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”** Mary spoke those same words but she spoke those words while at the feet of Jesus. She fell down before him in an act of worship. Through her tears Mary spoke the words. The words are also spoken in faith but Mary's words are filled with emotion. She does not talk about Jesus being Messiah although she certainly believed he was. For Mary it is more important that Jesus is there than that he is Messiah. She needed a friend and someone to share this time with her. Jesus was there and that is what Mary needed.

As a pastor there are times when there are no words to say that will provide comfort and peace. I have learned that I do not need to have all of the answers to be a good pastor. What is needed is that I am there when people are hurting. I do not have the ability to provide healing but I do have the ability to pray in faith believing that God hears and understands. I cannot dry the tears of those that are hurting but I can be there with them as they shed those tears. I can share God's love and compassion. I am not Jesus and no one will likely say to me what Martha and Mary said to Jesus. Jesus did not deny the fact that Lazarus was

dead. He did not justify waiting two days before starting out for Bethany. Jesus simply shared the time of mourning with them. He cared for them as a friend and then as the Savior of the world.

**John 11:25, 26 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup>and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”**

You and I are living. We are breathing and we are here in this place hearing the same word of God. We heard Jesus tell Martha that he is the resurrection and the life. Anyone that believes in him will never die. He asks Martha to believe these words. You and I hear Jesus but we know many believers that have died. You and I also know that we will one day die from this earth. You can be sure that Lazarus believed something similar to what Martha and Mary believed yet he was in the grave. Even though Lazarus was given life by our Lord he died again one day. What is Jesus talking about?

Many in the Old Testament believed that death is separation from God but you and I believe that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. You and I are living. We are living now and believing the promises of God. We have a relationship with God and that relationship will never end. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 8 **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.** If Lazarus was a believer then the grave did not separate him from the love of God. Even in death Lazarus had life in the Lord.

Our faith says that Jesus will raise up the dead and that physical death will never separate believers from God. Or Lord Jesus may not keep you from the traumatic events or the suffering but he walks with you in this life caring and ministering to you. Through faith we know that the Lord responds to our faith. We trust that God knows what we need when we need it. Then when our earthly life is over he gives us new life in the kingdom of God.

**John 11:43b-44** When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, **“Lazarus, come out!”** The 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.”**

If you believe in the healing power of God you will see the glory of God. If you allow your faith to be the guide you will experience the miracle of life. Martha had faith but she could not even think that Jesus would raise a man who had been dead four days. There is no limit to what God can do. You and I are to walk in faith. We walk in a complete faith that looks forward to seeing the glory of God. We are commanded to break the bonds that keep us in past hurts and struggles just as Jesus commanded the people to untie Lazarus and let him go.

In our faith we see the glory of God. In the healing of those that are sick we see the glory of God. In the raising of the dead we have eternal life.  
AMEN