

**LIKE LAZARUS**  
**RESCUED IN TIME AND IN ETERNITY**  
John 11:1-57

Faith & Our Savior Lutheran Churches  
Medford & Grants Pass, Oregon  
Edward L. Bryant, Pastor

<https://d.docs.live.net/81ac7f830c90c375/F-OS Church/Sermons/2019-20/Holy Week Midweek Devotion 2020.docx>  
2501 Words

Hello viewers, this is Pastor Bryant from Our Savior Lutheran Church in Grants Pass, Oregon and Faith Lutheran Church in Medford. This is our Midweek Lenten Devotion.

You know, it's interesting; even without much communication, still several people have remarked to me what a coincidence it is that the most severe week of this pandemic should come when the Christian church celebrates Holy Week. And in fact, there is an intersection between today's reading and our situation here in the midst of this Pandemic.

For our midweek devotion today, I have chosen a fairly lengthy reading – Chapter 11 of the Gospel of John.

**11** Now a man was sick, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair, and it was her brother Lazarus who was sick. <sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent a message to him: "Lord, the one you love is sick."

<sup>4</sup>When Jesus heard it, he said, "This sickness will not end in death but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup>Now Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup>So when he heard that he was sick, he stayed two more days in the place where he was. <sup>7</sup>Then after that, he said to the disciples, "Let's go to Judea again."

<sup>8</sup>"Rabbi," the disciples told him, "just now the Jews tried to stone you, and you're going there again?"

<sup>9</sup>"Aren't there twelve hours in a day?" Jesus answered. "If anyone walks during the day, he doesn't stumble, because he sees the light of this world. <sup>10</sup>But if anyone walks during the night, he does stumble, because the light is not in him."

<sup>11</sup>He said this, and then he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I'm on my way to wake him up."

<sup>12</sup>Then the disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will get well."

<sup>13</sup> Jesus, however, was speaking about his death, but they thought he was speaking about natural sleep. <sup>14</sup> So Jesus then told them plainly, "Lazarus has died. <sup>15</sup> I'm glad for you that I wasn't there so that you may believe. But let's go to him."

<sup>16</sup> Then Thomas (called "Twin") said to his fellow disciples, "Let's go too so that we may die with him."

<sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem (less than two miles away). <sup>19</sup> Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. <sup>20</sup> As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, but Mary remained seated in the house.

<sup>21</sup> Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. <sup>22</sup> Yet even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

<sup>23</sup> "Your brother will rise again," Jesus told her.

<sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. <sup>26</sup> Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

<sup>27</sup> "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world."

<sup>28</sup> Having said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you."

<sup>29</sup> As soon as Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still in the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw that Mary got up quickly and went out. They followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to cry there.

<sup>32</sup> As soon as Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and told him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died!"

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, he was deeply moved in his spirit and troubled. <sup>34</sup> "Where have you put him?" he asked.

"Lord," they told him, "come and see."

<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept.

<sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" <sup>37</sup> But some of them said, "Couldn't he who opened the blind man's eyes also have kept this man from dying?"

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup> "Remove the stone," Jesus said.

Martha, the dead man's sister, told him, "Lord, there is already a stench because he has been dead four days."

<sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"

<sup>41</sup> So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you heard me. <sup>42</sup> I know that you always hear me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so that they may believe you sent me." <sup>43</sup> After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go."

<sup>45</sup> Therefore, many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what he did believed in him.

<sup>46</sup> But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

<sup>47</sup> So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and were saying, “What are we going to do since this man is doing many signs? <sup>48</sup> If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”

<sup>49</sup> One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all! <sup>50</sup> You’re not considering that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish.” <sup>51</sup> He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but also to unite the scattered children of God. <sup>53</sup> So from that day on they plotted to kill him. <sup>54</sup> Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews but departed from there to the countryside near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and he stayed there with the disciples.

<sup>55</sup> Now the Jewish Passover was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country to purify themselves before the Passover. <sup>56</sup> They were looking for Jesus and asking one another as they stood in the temple: “What do you think? He won’t come to the festival, will he?” <sup>57</sup> The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should report it so that they could arrest him. (John 11:1-57 CSB)

**L**et me remind you of the dynamics, of what was going on here. Many who had been following Jesus had left them because He didn’t say what they wanted to hear, nor be the earthly king they wanted Him to be. Others, especially those who had followed John the Baptist and his preaching of repentance and faith remained faithful. Also added were those who had come to repentance and faith and believed the signs of Jesus’ divinity.

At the same time the Jewish leaders’ determination to kill Jesus had hardened; and raising Lazarus from the dead was the last straw. People streamed out of Jerusalem to Bethany to see Jesus and to see Lazarus. The Jewish leaders were plotting to kill Lazarus too, in order to blunt the impact of what Jesus had done. On the first day of the next week, these people who had come out to see Jesus and Lazarus followed Jesus to Bethphage, where Jesus mounted the donkey. They were met by crowds out of Jerusalem who had anticipated His arrival.

Hosanna! Lord Save. Hosanna to the Son of David. Hosanna in the Highest! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord! Jesus entered Jerusalem as the heir of David, the One bearing treasures of the Lord in heaven, the one who brings the light of the gospel, and-undeniably in the face of Lazarus’ resurrection -the true Lord of life.

How He was to defeat death, atone for sin, and rescue the world was soon to be accomplished and revealed.

So, you see, in one way of looking at this, everything was crashing: Jesus had come to Jerusalem where His enemies had power. They were more than every determined to kill Him. Lazarus was in danger. His own disciple, Judas, was going to give away His secret location. He had been identified as the enemy of the whole nation by the High Priest himself. An arrest order had gone out to the general public. Jesus was doomed. Mary had even anointed Him for burial.

But through the eyes of faith and the light of Scripture, we see a different picture altogether. Lazarus’ death was the occasion to reveal Christ as the Lord of life, the “Seventh Sign” of John’s argument for Jesus as the Divine Messiah. He was heralded as such by the whole nation on Palm Sunday, and on the day commemorating the spilling of the blood of the lambs so that the Lord would pass over Israel, the blood of the Lamb of God would shield humanity from the wrath of God.

Christ, the LORD, was in charge of it all. And because of that, I can assure you of an everlasting hope. "... **the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.**" (1 John 1:7, CSB) Forgiveness, life, and salvation are yours.

This is important for you every day of your life, of course, but it is especially important at this time in our lives. I don't know your state of mind right now, upbeat or depressed, fearful or confident, frustrated or eager, in good health or feverish and ill. But whatever it is, consider Lazarus as the image of God's watchful care for you. Look through the eyes of faith as God's makes sense of this affliction and gives us the reason for hope.

Over all, the comfort of Psalm 23 applies. It applied in Lazarus' life and it applies in ours: "**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**"

To begin with, we don't deserve it. We deserve what is happening to this world. In Luke 13 Jesus tells me that when I look at such trouble in the world, I am to repent. You are too. "God have mercy on me, a sinner." But God is gracious. He is gracious to all. "... **For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**" (Matthew 5:45, CSB)

But to those who believe in Him, He invites us to come to him in prayer, "**Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.**" (John 14:13-14, CSB) And hasn't he taught us to pray, in the face of problems like this pandemic, "**Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil?**"

And hasn't he delivered us in the past? Paul points to God's past mercies as reason to hope for the future. "**Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character [experience], and proven character [experience] produces hope. This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**" (Romans 5:1-5, CSB)

So, if you are afraid of getting ill, or getting worse, or having an economic calamity, or losing someone you love, (a half hour listening to the news will give you no end of calamity to worry about) then see how Jesus answers Martha's prayer. He even went so far as to raise Lazarus from the dead to restore Him to Martha and Mary, to the glory of God. Surely, goodness and mercy followed Lazarus and his sisters.

But notice this also. Lazarus would eventually die again. So, as Christians we have every expectation of the Lord working His gracious will during this time, and He will most certainly hear our prayers. But beyond and behind all that is greater mercy. For while He will bestow goodness and mercy upon you all the days of your life, the pinnacle of salvation is that He has destroyed death, so that you will "dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

AMEN.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, our comfort in life and in death, strengthen our faith through your Holy Word, and especially as we see how you moved all things, even the machinations of your enemies, to accomplish our redemption. As you have lived a perfect life for us, and atoned for the sins of the world, so give us your righteousness, reconcile us perfectly to you, as indeed you have promised and fulfilled your promises.

Hear our prayers this day for our loved ones and for your believers throughout the world. We acknowledge our sin before you and deserved your wrath in time and in eternity, but now, for your mercy's sake hear our prayer for ourselves and our loved ones. Deliver us from all evil. But also turn the hearts of the unbelieving to You. To that end, help us to speak of our perfect hope as we have opportunity.

In the name of Jesus. AMEN

Join us again on Good Friday for the Service of the Holy Cross.