

***“Jesus loves you – for eternity – so He waits”***

There was a “certain man” – his name is Lazarus – he’s from Bethany (he had a hometown, neighbors) – he had a family (sisters Mary and Martha) – he was loved by Jesus (he was a believer) – and he had friends. Sound familiar? Sounds a lot like you.

Mary and Martha are worried about their brother Lazarus – after all, he’s ill – and who knows how bad it is. They are concerned enough that they send for Jesus. They too are believers – they look to Jesus for help. Sound familiar? Sounds a lot like you.

Like them, you are not alone. The Lord hears and answers your prayer. He has a word for faith to hold onto: “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

Great! Faith now has something to hold onto ..... but Lazarus dies. The promise seems broken. What is faith to do? What do Martha and Mary do? They wait for the Lord to come – and when He does – Martha, in faith, says: “Lord, if you had been there, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”

That is a pretty bold faith. It trusts that Jesus could have healed whatever ailed Lazarus – and it trusts that God the Father will do whatever Jesus’ asks of Him. At the same time, it is a faith that is being tested. The temptation to take control of things, to call the shots, is lurking – rather than waiting patiently for the Lord to act, and knowing that He works all things for our good.

“If you had been here” – then, no doubt, you would have healed our brother – because that’s what we wanted you to do. “Even now” – do things our way – do whatever we want you to do.

Jesus does things His way – actually – He does things the Father’s way. When Jesus gets the report that Lazarus is ill – He stays put for two days. He waits until Lazarus has died, and then He goes to him. That sounds so unloving – but God’s Word clearly says that Jesus loved Lazarus, and Mary and Martha. That doesn’t sound like something God would do – but Jesus truly is the Son of God.

“IF you had been here” – okay, let’s play that IF game for just a bit. What IF Jesus had come in time to heal Lazarus? What then? Maybe ask Jesus to heal Mary when she gets sick? Maybe bless the crops? Ward off the enemies? Heal again (Martha’s turn)? Make their flocks flourish? Heal again .....

Is Jesus only good for the things of this life?

NO. Jesus is good for the things of this life AND for all eternity – but so that Lazarus and Mary and Martha might believe – so that the twelve disciples might believe – so that YOU might believe ---- trusting Him with your life, your death, and your eternity ..... He waits.

What is God doing with this pandemic? Is this “for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it”? Can faith trust in a God who waits for His beloved friend to die? Can faith trust the Lord to work ALL things for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose?

It’s really tempting to call the shots – to tell God what He should be doing with this pandemic. “Even now,” Jesus – God will do whatever you ask – so ask Him to do what WE WANT Him to do.

What then? What comes after this pandemic? Another virus? Hurricane and tornado season? A miraculous repair of our financial portfolios? Make our businesses boom again? Is Jesus only good for the things of this life?

All that Jesus does here in our text – and all that He is doing now in this world and in your life – is for the sake of faith. “I am the resurrection and the life,” He says. “Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believe in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

Do you believe this? Yes .... but Lord, help me in my unbelief, in my struggle to believe in you and your promises. I believe in you ... but this world is turned upside down ... and I’m afraid my family will suffer ... I’m afraid of death ... I’m afraid my faith will not survive.

The Lord Jesus Christ who raised Lazarus from death to life – comes to you today. He is the resurrection and the life – not just on the Last Day – but He is the Last Day brought forward to today – for Lazarus, for Martha and Mary, for you.

“Take away the stone” that locks away my beloved one in fear, He says. “Lazarus, come out,” He said in days of old – and today His voice sounds like this – “I forgive you all your sin ..... Unbind him, let him go.” And indeed, you are set free.

Jesus Christ, who was crucified, died and was buried – has been raised to life again --- and now He gives you His risen, never-to-die-again Body and Blood – to strengthen your faith – so that you may live in faith and die in faith.

Dearly beloved, Jesus IS the resurrection and the life. Even though you die, yet shall you live. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.