

Sermon Draft

Text: John 11:1–45

Sermon: Resurrection Preview

This Fifth Sunday in Lent is the last one of the season before Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion. Even though we are still in the season of Lent we are already looking forward to the joy and celebration of Easter and the resurrection of our Lord and Savior and the gift of redemption it brings.

The promise of resurrection is both spoken and vividly displayed in the *Old Testament Reading*, in Ezekiel's encounter with the Lord in the valley of dry bones. In the *Epistle*, Paul reminds the Romans of their own resurrection, made possible by ***"the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead."***

In our Gospel, today along with Lazarus and his loved ones, we face death. But we also celebrate rising from death, resurrection.

You know the basic story. Jesus gets word that his friend is sick. But Jesus stays put, he waits a couple of days and then, even though it puts his life in danger, he heads for Bethany. Everything happens at the appointed time and according to our heavenly Father's plan. Jesus was following his Father's timetable and he knew the cost.

By the time, he arrives, Lazarus has died. Martha and Mary, Lazarus's sisters, still haven't given up hope. As Jesus arrives Martha goes out to meet him; ***"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."***

Everything was happening as God intended, in his time and according to his will, but the thought of how this is all a precursor to what lay ahead for Jesus seems to be missed by many including the disciples. They don't seem to get it, but they will.

Even in our lives today everything happens at its appointed time and according to God's plan. This is or should be very comforting as we face the trials and challenges of our everyday lives. Martha in her time of sorrow at the loss of her brother exhibits her faith and trust in God.

Jesus responds to Martha's greeting with words of comfort, ***"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."*** Jesus has come to save the day, and not even death can stop him. He is God in the flesh, after all.

Martha now leaves Jesus to go and get her sister, Mary. Mary and Martha along with the crowd that had been with them went back to where Martha had met Jesus. Jesus ask where was Lazarus laid and they head to the tomb.

What a scene everyone weeping as they went. When they get to Lazarus' tomb Jesus tells them to take away the stone. They were all worried about the smell after four days but Jesus isn't concerned. He shouts, "**Lazarus, come out.**" And he does!

Awesome!

What an amazing story. The calm, cool, and collected Jesus doesn't panic when he gets the news Lazarus is sick. He even delays a few days until after Lazarus has died, knowing full well he'll bring him back to life when he gets to Bethany.

The disciples are the complete opposite, all panicky and worried. Not because of Lazarus but because they knew what Caiaphas, his brother Pharisees and the Sanhedrin wanted to do. But so did Jesus and he knew that he had to continue his journey which would lead to the cross and grave.

What a scene Mary and Martha distraught and weeping because their brother is dead, the disciples beside themselves because Jesus is going back into the lion's den so to speak. Such sadness and heartache. But all of that sadness is about to be replaced with joy! Jesus, who is the resurrection, has been planning all along to give life to the one now dead.

But here in the middle of all this we have the two simple words, "**Jesus wept.**" As Jesus looks at Mary and then over at the crowd. It's like he sees them and yet sees past them. It's almost as though . . . is he seeing another Mary, his mother, weeping, in the company of mourners?

Does he hear another accusation: "**He saved others; he cannot save himself**" (Matthew 27:42)?

Does he feel the pain of a rescue that doesn't come? **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"** (Matthew 27:46). Is Jesus thinking about another tomb, but this time it's *his* body that's laid inside? Perhaps.

The tears, though very real, are momentary. They pass, and Jesus calls forth Lazarus in a resurrection that not only foreshadows his, but ours also. Jesus raises Lazarus, knowing full well that it will finally mobilize his enemies to get him killed.

That, however, has been his plan all along—a plan that, ironically, is left to Jesus' chief human adversary, Caiaphas, to explain (v 49–50). Jesus has come to die for his people and, by so doing, gather all God's children together (vs 51–52).

It's good to see that Jesus doesn't float through the events of our story unaffected. Our sin and pain wound him, but he bears them freely, not willing for death to have the final say. Christ is the resurrection and the life after all!

As we take one final look at our story today, we see this was all just foreshadowing, a preview of something bigger yet to come. Resurrection coming on the heels of suffering and death? Death being swallowed up by life? Life for you and for me.

And this illness, our sin no longer leads to death because Jesus completed his journey. And it is all for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

Amen