

\*\*\*\*\*

The sermon text for today is based on John 11:1-45 & Ezekiel 37:1-14

\*\*\*\*\*

When you think about death what are your feelings? If you attend a funeral what are your feelings and thoughts surrounding death? What about when you hear of someone close to you that is dying of cancer or from something else, what are your thoughts and feelings?

Death will come to us all but death is not final.

Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. Then after this He said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?”

Now what a strange way to show love? When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He didn’t hurry there to heal him, rather He stayed two more days. What is going on? Jesus has been sent word from the sisters of Lazarus that the one whom you love is sick. Then we are told by John that Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So this surely is a strange sort of love.

When we think of love do we think of love in action? If you were Jesus would you have gone to the ones you love and heal this friend? Yet Jesus stays two more days.

Is this because Jesus is being a little too casual in His work, just sort of relaxing a bit or is something more going on?

The clue lies in the early words of this text.

When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

Jesus said to them, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.” Then His disciples said, “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.” However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.”

This becomes plain for the disciples now. Jesus clearly says Lazarus is dead. Then He goes on to say that He is glad for the sake of the disciples so that they may believe.

So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

The scene is set. Lazarus has been in the tomb four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem or the same distance the horses run for the Melbourne cup not a long walk at all. Death seems final here, the stone has been rolled over the entrance of the grave yet there is hope. Martha speaks the truth to Jesus, and Mary repeats it. If you had been here my brother would not have died and of course Jesus could have healed Lazarus to full health. But this happened for the glory of God that the son may be glorified through this miracle for Jesus is about healing for eternity. He dies on the cross for all people but notice He raises Lazarus so those who see will believe and in faith, just as for you and me, we have the resurrection and the life in Jesus to son of God who has come into the world.

Jesus didn't need to hurry from Jerusalem to Bethany to do the easy thing. To take away the sickness. Rather Jesus takes His time because He knows that death is not final. He knows this is not the final chapter for Lazarus nor for those who witness what is about to happen. Jesus after all is the life, the resurrection and the life.

Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, “See how He loved him!” Then

many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.

Day by day Jesus breathes life anew in you by His word. Jesus lives in you by His word and by His spirit you believe. You have life now, to the full and in Jesus name you have life forever. You are forgiven and set free to follow Jesus boldly not for your benefit but for those around. Just as Jesus didn't raise Lazarus for His own benefit but to glorify God we follow Jesus and live by faith not for selfish reasons but to glorify God in our good works and deeds and to share God's love with those around us so they too may believe. You see it is less about preaching from our mind with rules or intellectual ways, rather it is preaching the living Jesus in action.

We love because Jesus first loved us. We love not to serve self and say well I am doing good deeds because I am good, rather we serve each other in good deeds because of God's love for us first. Our lives are a response to the love of God poured out in His only son the Christ the resurrection and the life Jesus.

After Jesus washes His disciples feet He says "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Let us live this out, walking with the resurrection and the life Jesus. When we face death always we know that in Jesus death is not final. Death has no sting, death has been defeated, death never has the final word for in Christ we have life. Let us live as people of the resurrection and in the full life here on earth we have now in Jesus for He is the resurrection and the life, do you believe this?

Amen.