

The title for today's message is: **There Is Hope**

Jesus Said: **I am the Resurrection and the Life**

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen

Our gospel lesson this morning is the familiar story about Martha and Mary's brother Lazarus, his death and resurrection from the dead.

Now in this story we see the faith of both Martha & Mary, as well as the grief of Jesus.

Now this part of scripture is also used for Easter and funerals because it gives us a glimpse of the resurrection to come of all those who believe in Jesus.

It's a story of hope as Martha hopes that when Jesus arrives to mourn Lazarus' death, He would do something about Lazarus.

As we read through this text we see that there is even hope in the mist of despair. The following story illustrates this hope

A young boy named David tells about growing up with his parents in the country. When he was 15 years old, his house caught on fire.

The family and David escaped with only the clothes on their backs. There were no one close by to help them.

So once the fire was out, David and his father walked to a distant village to get some supplies that they would need.

As they returned they saw something that stayed with the young boy for many years after.

As the two returned home, that is what had been their home. David's mother had made a table out of a log where she laid out lunch.

She had also placed a tin can filled with wildflowers on the log. The importance of all this was it became a symbol of hope in the midst of tragedy.

It also illustrated Christian faith. The mother didn't try to cover up the disaster with food and flowers, but it became a symbol of hope.

Martha had the hope that did not cover up the fact that her brother had died, but she had hope that in her grief, Jesus would act.

My friends, in this story we see that hope does not cover up what has happened here, but it does give the promise of something better to come.

The house was gone, but there was the hope of rebuilding, or at least getting the supplies to carry on with life. Martha had hope that something would happen because Jesus came.

She says to Jesus: ***And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.***

Martha certainly had hope. She didn't know exactly what Jesus had planned, but she had great hope that something would happen.

Then Jesus gives a glimpse of what was going to happen, Jesus said to her: ***"Your brother will rise again."***

Now Martha misunderstood what Jesus said. Martha said to Jesus, ***"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."***

To clear it all up, Jesus said to her, ***"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he 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, he who is coming into the world."

And it's here that Jesus turns Martha's hope into action. Jesus gives Martha a glimpse of what is going to happen when he says to her;

"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

Martha was thinking about the resurrection at the end of time and Jesus was talking about the resurrection now through him, and for all those who believe in him.

We use this text at funerals as it gives us the hope of the resurrection of the body that we proclaim at the Easter event.

Jesus is giving us here a glimpse of what is going to happen to all those who believe, that He, and He alone is the resurrection and the life.

Jesus then asks where they had laid Jesus' body. Now notice that Martha did not believe completely, as she says there will be an odor when the stone is removed.

But Jesus asks for the stone to be removed anyway, Jesus then calls for Lazarus, and were told: ***"he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."***

And then to the surprise of the many who had gathered there, Lazarus walked out of the tomb.

After his grave clothes were removed, were told that many of those who had gathered became believers in Jesus.

This is the prelude to the Easter story, a foreshadowing of what was to come. Again, the story of Lazarus is of hope, of resurrection, and of who Jesus really is, He is the son of God.

When Lazarus died it appeared as if evil were the master of life. The holiest and most lovable One who had ever lived was now dead and in the tomb.

A tomb owned by a rich man, a member of the Sanhedrin, yet were told he was a good and upright man.

Yet, Jesus the one who raised Lazarus from the dead was put to death by the most shameful means

A cross, three nails, and a jeering mob of evil souls, followed by a quick thrust of a spear in his side, which ended it all.

Those hours when His voice was stilled and His hands were quiet were the darkest through which the human race has ever lived.

Look, if Caesar could put an end to Jesus, then no man could ever dare aspire or hope again.

Hope, in such a world, could be nothing more than a mockery. Then came Easter morning and the glorious word's: **"He is risen!"** Could be heard.

No man whose heart was pure and whose labors were honest has ever had reason to fear or despair, that is if he believed in the Resurrection.

Even though Martha and Mary were discouraged when Lazarus died, within there discouragement they both saw hope, why.

Because Jesus said to Martha **"I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me though he die, yet shall he live. "**

And to us, to you and me as we live with our discouragement, our despair, our hurts, our pain Jesus says; ***“be still and know that I am God”***.

Now these are the same words God used when speaking to the psalmist long ago in Psalm 46 v 10-11.

“Be still’ and know that I am God. I am exalted among, the nations, I am exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

Again a story of hope, word’s that say out of despair comes hope for those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of the world

Look all of us face discouragement in life at times, and its at those times we need to turn to the Lord because he will act.

Today we all face what we would call great discouragement in regards to the corona virus which has attacked the whole world, many people struggle with the question, what should we do?

Who should we listen to? When will it be safe for us to mix with the people of the world again.

Look, if were asking these questions, of our family members, and our neighbors, etc., chances are we won’t get the correct answer.

Not that these people are intentionally lying to us, its that they simply don’t have the correct answers.

There's only one person that has the correct answers to our questions, weather about the corona virus or other things that cause us concern.

And that one person is our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. When we pray to Jesus we can without any doubt be sure were getting the correct answers.

This story of raising Lazarus from the dead. gives us hope for the future. Yes, Jesus wept for Lazarus showing us that he understands sorrow and grief.

That out of the sorrow and grief comes hope for a new life, hope for the courage to go on in the midst of our grief.

God weeps with us as we face all those things that separate us from the love of God in the world and then we have the hope that at the end of our time we will rest in the resurrection.

What about you? When you're in John's position, what would you do? When it's Saturday in your life, how do you react?

When you are somewhere between yesterday's tragedy and tomorrow's triumph, what do you do? Do you leave God or do you stand with Him?

John chose to stand with Him, therefore he was around on Sunday to see the miracle."

Jesus said; ***"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."***

Yes my friends, our hope for a new life beyond this one is assured as long as we believe. Amen

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.