



Sermon for Sunday Judica 2017 (Proper Lent 5A)

Jesus says: "I am the Resurrection and the Life!"

Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach



The Word of God for this Sermon is written in John 11, 17-27:

- **ESV** ¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.
- ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off,
- ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.
- ²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.
- ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.
- ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."
- ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."
- ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."
- ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,
- ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
- ²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

• *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and give us a new heart which will leave behind the old shackles and constraints which we place on the universe as we see it. Shatter my heart of stone which clings to its own world-view. Lead us into Your new creation where death is not even an option any more. Amen.*

• **Dear Beloved of the Father!**

- Jesus was so late, He wasn't even in time for the funeral. The only other time Jesus came across a funeral procession He touched the brier and the man was resurrected. With Lazarus, the man He loved, He only came after four days! In those days the dead had to be buried quickly, because they didn't have cooling rooms. It was the fourth day, the day decay sets in, bringing a nasty smell with it. Death is a terrible thing. Decay is something we don't even want to think of.
- Many Jews had come to comfort Mary and Martha. When Mary heard that Jesus was

on His way she ran towards Him and almost reprimanded Him, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. She cried at His feet. When Jesus saw how Mary and the Jews following her all cried it says *“He was deeply moved in Spirit and was troubled ...”*. Then when they showed Him the tomb, He even wept.

- Now, the Jews interpreted His weeping as *“see how much He loved Him”*. But some of them critically asked, *“Could not He who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”* There is an accusation in there.
- But Jesus is not put off. He came to reveal the Glory of God. He commanded them to take away the stone. Then prayed aloud to His Father so that all standing around Him could hear Him and believe that He was sent by the living Father in Heaven. Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice: *“Lazarus come out”*. And the dead man, now alive, came out. His face still wrapped with a cloth.
- Indescribable, Jesus called a dead man to come out of the grave himself with bindings on and all. Nobody, neither friend nor foe expected this to happen. Dead people don't come back to life again. Here he did. Lazarus was resurrected- a mighty deed that confirms beyond any doubt that Jesus had been sent by God the Father. Satan cannot pull off a resurrection from the dead. Only God is the giver of Life. Satan can only fake things.
- So, one would expect that after seeing this sign of all signs, everybody who saw it would simply believe that Jesus was the anointed Messiah of God.
- This is the other astonishing side of this report: Many Jews did believe, but some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the Sanhedrin gathered and eventually decided that it is better that one man dies than the whole nation to perish.
- Astonishing it is how hard-hearted hearts of people can be. It shows that signs and wonders don't necessarily convert those hearts of stone. The evidence was overwhelming. They had experienced it themselves, or at least they had heard first hand eye-witness accounts of the mighty deed of Christ, and yet, they would not believe.
- So, whoever claims, that seeing is believing, does not know what he or she is talking about. Seeing the facts with ones own eyes is not necessarily going to lead to faith.

Two people seeing the very same sign, the one interprets it as seeing the Glory of God, the other one interprets it as meaning danger for the temple, for the nation.

- It all comes down to trust. The one who trusts in Jesus hears His Word and understands and sees what He is pointing to with this sign, namely, [25-26] *"I am the resurrection and the life. Whœver believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

- Dear congregation, here we have one of the most comforting passages in the Scriptures, especially for funerals: What does Jesus say here? He personally, in His person with spirit and body, is the Resurrection and the Life. Christ is I AM. He is Life. He is the giver of Life. Here we see what it practically means for those who die trusting in Him!! Look at Lazarus- He was loved by Jesus- that is you and me. He has baptised you and me. We have His Name. We are his brothers. He is our Lord who serves us by giving us His almighty gift, taking away our sins and turning that gift into wine, into eternal Life- holy Spirit. Lazarus, that is what happens to the believers in Christ.

- We would say, he gets sick and dies. And our whole world falls apart, because death is so final, we say and often think. Jesus says, he got sick and sleeps! Do you spot the difference? Jesus says, he is not dead- he sleeps. And Jesus proofs it to all- He goes and wakes Him up by calling Him with a loud voice, like you would call your children to wake up on a Sunday morning.

- Whœver dies in Christ in reality only sleeps in Him. And remember Lazarus' body had already started to decay, so even if your whole body has decayed away, that's not an issue at all. The kernel goes into the ground and when it rises it is a plant- the same kernel went into the ground, but out comes a plant.

- Those who die in Christ sleep in Christ until the Last Day and then Jesus will simply wake us up for the everlasting Easter-morning! So, to say to a Christian, rest in peace is quite appropriate. We will rest from all our works. We have our rest in Christ. Our identity, our DNA, so to speak, is guaranteed and saved by Him. He knows you by your name.

- You live although you die! Whœver believes in Him, that is whœver trusts that He

has taken away all Your sins- well, if they are gone, there is nothing that separates you from God any more- you will never die!

• Do you know what this means? You don't have to fear death any-more. If you are in Christ, you are indestructible- forget about all those super-robots and superman, and superwoman- you, the poor in Spirit, are blessed are indestructible- nobody can wipe you out.

• Your current body is perishable, yes, and by the way all that serves the body too. So, don't put all your effort into serving and protecting and securing your current body and things that it needs for this time only- all of that perishes away.

• You don't have to fear death any-more and that basically makes you fearless to all people, to all things and powers accept the Holy Trinity. We don't have to fear the future in our devastated country. We should not ask, like those Jews who were concerned about their nation, what will happen with the nation if they would follow Jesus, because Jesus does not fight with physical force, with armies and means of politics!

• Jesus secures our Life for all of eternity. What can the evil foe and its allies do to us? The worst they can do to us is, to deceive and provoke us into hatred towards others and strife amongst ourselves. As baptised children of God, born from above by water and the Spirit, we have everything we need to live forever, to be forever young in Him. Jesus has even provided us spiritual food which will carry us through the days we have to spend in this wilderness, His own Body and Blood.

• Here in His Body, and we should see it very locally and bodily, here in one of His congregations we have our place in His Body, where we receive real Life, eternal Blood and Spirit. We are united with His kingdom which is a reign where death is Out.

• So, we can take it very literally and apply it to us and our loved ones who sleep in Christ: Jesus says, your brother, your sister, your father, your mother, your husband, your wife, your daughter, your son will rise again. And once you go to sleep in Him you will also rise again. This will all happen at the right time. God's time is the right time. This is most certainly true. Thank you dearest Jesus. **Amen.**

• *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.** [Phil 4,7].*