Lent 5 John 11:17-27, 38-45
March 29, 2020 402-428-332

Behold Your Glorious Savior!
I. Glorious in His wisdom and love.
II. Glorious in His promises and power.

Dear Christian friends,

Sometimes something can be RIGHT IN FRONT of us and we don't see it. That's ANNOYING when you're looking for something in the refrigerator. But that can be DOWNRIGHT DISASTROUS when we do that in our **spiritual life**. And WE DO do that **sometimes**! Paul wrote that ***"our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."*** Yet how often don't we dwell on WHAT'S WRONG and lose sight of God's **comforting promises** and **power**?

That can be especially true when we're DEALING WITH DEATH. Standing at the **open casket** and seeing the **cold body** of a loved one we can forget what Jesus says here, ***"I am the Resurrection and the Life."*** As Jesus stood with Mary and Martha at Lazarus' grave He asked them, ***"Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"*** As we look at this familiar miracle – BEHOLD YOUR GLORIOUS SAVIOR! Jesus is 1)**glorious** in His wisdom and love and also 2)**glorious** in His promises and power.

I. Glorious in His wisdom and love.

Mary, Martha and **Lazarus** were all dear friends of Jesus. They loved their Lord. MORE IMPORTANTLY Jesus loved them. Then Lazarus took sick. The sisters turned to Jesus for help. They sent Him a message beautiful in its SIMPLICITY and HUMBLE FAITH. ***"Lord, the one You love is sick."*** That's all they said. They left it up to Jesus what He **should do**. They looked **for His help** NOT BECAUSE of what they've all done for Jesus – **not because** they love Him so much – but because Jesus loves them so much.

Jesus didn't rush **right over** but waited a few days. He told the messenger, ***"This sickness is not going to result in death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."*** It was a STRANGE ANSWER. The sisters heard it and waited. Lazarus grew worse. Lazarus died – and STILL NO Jesus! Where was He? WHY was He taking so long? Jesus had said, ***"This sickness will not end in death"*** but now Lazarus was JUST THAT – **dead**!

Finally Jesus started out for Bethany. He told His disciples, ***"Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I'm glad I wasn't there, so that you may believe."*** When Jesus finally arrived – FOUR DAYS AFTER Lazarus had died! – both Mary and Martha said, ***"Lord, if You had been here, our brother would not have died."*** While trusting in Jesus they were having a hard time FIGURING OUT and ACCEPTING **His ways**.

How often don't we STRUGGLE with similar thoughts and **feelings**? We know God loves us but **so often** it just doesn't LOOK or FEEL like it. God's ways just DON'T MAKE SENSE to us. Why doesn't He **do something**? We CAN'T DENY the harsh realities of life – including death. We can't WISH AWAY our problems. Ignoring them **doesn't solve** them. We SEE our problems but in our tears and frustration do we LOSE SIGHT of our **Savior**?

Jesus knew all along **what was happening** AND what He was going to do about it. But Jesus didn't explain **everything** to Mary and Martha ALL AT ONCE. They were to TRUST His love and wisdom. Jesus didn't tell them, "Your brother will die but I WILL RAISE him back to life **four days** later." Instead Jesus gave them His PROMISE, ***"This sickness will not end in death. It is for the glory of God."***

We have a SIMILAR PROMISE. ***"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him."*** God doesn't fully explain to us HOW He will **make everything** work out. We don't always understand **God's ways** but that doesn't mean GOD DOESN'T KNOW what He's doing. ***"My ways are not your ways,"*** God says. **In other words** God's saying, "DON'T TRY to figure Me out – JUST TRUST Me." And we can trust God!

One thing we can BE ABSOLUTELY SURE of is God's love and wisdom. Isn't that one of the lessons of **Lent**? There is the HARSH REALITY of our rebellion and **defiance** of God – of our sin. We can do nothing about our **sin** and **guilt** JUST AS we can't do anything about **death**. IGNORING – DENYING – MAKING EXCUSES for our sins doesn't make them **go away**. NOT TALKING about death doesn't stop us from dying. But BEHOLD the glorious love and wisdom of our God! God PROMISED and eventually sent His own eternal Son to be our Savior. HANGING on the cross – bloody, **beaten**, **dying** – Jesus LOOKED ANYTHING BUT our **almighty** Savior. But BEHOLD the glorious love and **wisdom** of our God! **In** that perfect life Jesus lived all the commandments have been **fully obeyed** for us. In the blood Jesus shed on the cross all our sins have been washed away. IN JESUS God reveals **His love** for us – God carries out His **plan to save** us – God forgives all our sins and promises us eternal life in heaven. WHAT A GLORIOUS and loving Savior Jesus is!

Now Jesus gets Mary and Martha ready for this miracle. He wants them to see **not just** their DEAD BROTHER **but also** their LIVING LORD – their Savior…

II. Glorious in His promises and power.

Martha finds out Jesus is coming – sort of BETTER LATE than never. But Jesus isn't coming to **simply** PAY HIS CONDOLENCES. Jesus is going to do more than REMINISCE with them about all the GOOD TIMES they had with Lazarus. Memories are **precious blessings** from God but they can't provide the REAL COMFORT and hope we **need in the face** of death. Only Jesus can do that with His GLORIOUS PROMISES and power.

"Your brother will live," Jesus tells Martha. Martha thought Jesus was **talking about** the LAST DAY. But Jesus was getting her ready for THIS DAY. She was to base her hope of the **resurrection** and the **life everlasting** ON JESUS. So Jesus continued with those beautiful words, ***"I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."*** Oh treasure that promise, dear friends! BEHOLD your GLORIOUS SAVIOR and His promise!

Jesus is actually making TWO promises here. The first concerns the DEAD **Christian**. ***"He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies."*** We SEE the lifeless body of the Christian. Jesus says, "LOOK AGAIN! This **Christian** is now living with Me in heaven." **Then** Jesus promises us living Christians, ***"And whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."*** ALREADY NOW in Jesus we have **eternal** life. We don't have to wait **until we die** to get it. It's because we ALREADY NOW HAVE **eternal life** that we ***"will never die."***

We must understand what the Bible teaches about death. Death is NOT NATURAL. Death is not a NORMAL PART of life even though it has become SUCH A PART of life now. God didn't create us to LIVE SO LONG and then drop dead of whatever.

Death is ***"the wages of sin." "The soul that sins, it shall die."*** We die BECAUSE we are sinners. Death is God's punishment on our disobedience. But it's not just the death of the SOUL LEAVING the body. It's that and the SOUL – and eventually the body as well – ENDING UP in hell forever separated from God. Eternal death in hell's punishment is the ULTIMATE WAGES of sin. That's how seriously GOD TAKES our sin **even if we** don't. We can protest that. We can argue we're **not** ALL THAT BAD. But with death God says, "YES you are!" Every funeral we **attend** – every obituary we **read** in the paper – is God saying, "GET READY – YOUR TURN is coming – and maybe sooner than you think!"

That's why it's so important for us and **everyone else** TO BEHOLD our **glorious Savior** with His promise of eternal life in heaven. Jesus is GOD'S ANSWER to our **sin** and **death**. Trusting in Jesus' **innocent death** on the cross we have God's forgiveness of all our sins. CLOTHED by faith with Jesus' perfect life we are FIT TO LIVE with God in heaven. God ***"gives us the victory"*** over death and the grave ***"through our Lord Jesus Christ."*** Trusting in Jesus WHEN WE DIE our soul goes immediately to be with Jesus in heaven. On the Last Day Jesus will raise our dead bodies back to life **and glorified**. THAT is the comfort God gives us **in Jesus**. Comfort that is SO MUCH MORE than that their sufferings are **now over** – comfort **so much more** than JUST MEMORIES and pictures.

That promise of eternal life is **not just** EMPTY WORDS. We don't have to CROSS our fingers or KNOCK on wood. Jesus is more than a SHOULDER **to cry** on. With a simple but stunning miracle Jesus PROVES HIS POWER to **keep His promises**. Simply by saying, ***"Lazarus, come out!"*** Jesus raised Lazarus back to life. ***"The man who had died came out"*** BUT he wasn't dead anymore! SUCH IS THE POWER of our glorious Savior – the **power** of our almighty God ***"with whom nothing is impossible"*** – not even raising dead people back to life. And with that same almighty power Jesus WILL RAISE our dead bodies **on the Last Day** and take us **body and soul** to live with Him forever in heaven where ***"there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain"*** – where ***"God will have wiped every tear from our eyes"*** and ***"made everything new."*** THAT is the glorious promise of our GLORIOUS SAVIOR – the glorious Son of God!

By the grace of God you already know all this. I haven't told you ANYTHING NEW. Every Sunday **we confess** that we "believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." Every sermon from this pulpit proclaims that **in Jesus crucified** and risen WE HAVE God's forgiveness of all our sins and His promise of eternal life in heaven. Every funeral from this church points us to Jesus' promise, ***"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."*** But those blessed facts can **sometimes** be RIGHT IN FRONT of us and we don't see them. And when we don't see them we HAVE NOTHING – no real comfort, peace, hope. **Yes**, our problems are real. We **live in** CONFUSING and for many SCARY TIMES. Death is **real**. AND SO IS JESUS – our glorious Savior! Amen.

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