

February 13, 2005
A.M. Service – First Sunday of Lent
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“Resurrection and Life”

John 11:1, 11-27, 34-36, 38-44 (NLT)

A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha.
11 Then he (Jesus) said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up." 12 The disciples said, "Lord, if he is sleeping, that means he is getting better!" 13 They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was having a good night's rest, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died.

14 Then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. 15 And for your sake, I am glad I wasn't there, because this will give you another opportunity to believe in me. Come, let's go see him."

16 Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let's go, too--and die with Jesus." (We see in vs 7-8 why Thomas said this. When Jesus told His disciples "Let's go to Judea again." [for Bethany was in Judea] ... his disciples objected. "Teacher," they said, "only a few days ago the Jewish leaders in Judea were trying to kill you. Are you going there again?" So Thomas says, "Let's go, too--and die with Jesus.")

17 When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. 18 Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, 19 and many of the people had come to pay their respects and console Martha and Mary on their loss. 20 When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed at home. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask."

23 Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 "Yes," Martha said, "when everyone else rises, on resurrection day."

25 Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. 26 They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish. Do you believe this, Martha?"

27 "Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God."

34 "Where have you put him?" he asked them. They told him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Then Jesus wept. 36 The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much he loved him."

38 And again Jesus was deeply troubled. Then they came to the grave. It was a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. 39 "Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man's sister, said, "Lord, by now the smell will be terrible because he has been dead for four days."

40 Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that you will see God's glory if you believe?" 41 So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. 42 You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so they will believe you sent me." 43 Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 And Lazarus came out, bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"

More Lenten Savings

At Pathmark we continue to save you money on ***the items essential to helping you observe Lent***. This week, the savings on delicious fruits and vegetables like Red Ripe Strawberries and Fresh Large Broccoli can help serve your dietary needs. Meals consisting of favorites like Bumble Bee Tuna, Green Giant vegetables, and Tuttorosso Tomato Sauce will always please. Here's a lunch time suggestion: try our half tuna or seafood subs, and you have a delicious alternative to normal mid day fare. Have a cup of Maxwell House Coffee any time of the day, because at 1/2 Price, you'll have saved enough to buy plenty. ***Make this season of Lent a satisfying one with the good things you can save so much on at Pathmark.***

I'm not sure the season of Lent is to be *satisfying*. But I guess if you are not eating meat during Lent Pathmark can help you with "*the items essential to helping you observe Lent*." The 40 days of Lent began on Wednesday and continues through holy week (not counting Sundays, which are reserved for worship. We worship on Sunday to commemorate the Resurrection. It is a time for celebration not for fasting and mourning.). 40 is a number of significance throughout the Bible. Rain fell on the earth for 40 days and nights, Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the wilderness and facing temptation. The 40 days of Lent are oriented around the themes of repentance and renewal. Our church will be involved in a voluntary, corporate fast during Lent. Each Sunday information will be distributed to instruct you on a fast for that week (sorry Pathmark). Fasting during Lent invites us to get our hearts ready for remembering the passion of Jesus and celebrating His resurrection.

Today is the First Sunday of Lent. Lent ends on Easter Sunday with the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. We start Lent this year with the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead by Jesus. Lazarus was a friend of Jesus as were his sisters, Martha and Mary. He had gotten sick and died. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and many who were there and saw it believed in Jesus. This worried the religious leaders and from that time on they seriously plotted to arrest and kill Jesus. So this event seems like a good place for us to start Lent to remember what Jesus suffered for us and to better appreciate and celebrate His resurrection for us.

In John 11:25-27 Jesus reveals Himself as the source of resurrection life.

To understand Jesus' statement, we need to see it in two parts. First, Jesus explained the resurrection: "I am the resurrection . . . Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again." Then he explained the life: "I am . . . the life . . .

everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." (NLT) "They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish."

Lazarus had been a believer in Jesus; therefore, even though he died, he would live. Everyone who believes in Jesus and dies - lives again in heaven, the "after life" and everyone who is still living and believing will die, but not eternally. Christ did not promise the prevention of physical death; Christ did not prevent Lazarus's physical death (after being raised, Lazarus would eventually die again), but Lazarus had the guarantee of eternal life. What Jesus does guarantee is to give abundant life, which includes resurrection and eternity with Him.

Jesus Himself is the resurrection and He is the life. Only through a relationship with Him can we experience this resurrection and this life. Only one kind of life -- the life of God is truly life. A life of knowing God, following Jesus is not only as good as it gets it's better than you can image. Not a life without suffering but a life of fullness, joy, hope, peace, love in spite of circumstances. There is spiritual life that can overcome death. Jesus is this life.

Are you living this abundant life? Are you experiencing a life of faith, hope, and love? Are you experiencing a life of fullness, meaning? Have you experienced a "resurrection" from a life of living dead to a life worth living? Are you being controlled by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23 NLT) "...when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

(Gal 5:19-21 NLT) When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, 20 idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, 21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Last week we sang the chorus: (God speaking to us) I will change your name. You shall no longer be called: Wounded (by someone else's sin and abuse), outcast, lonely or afraid. Your new name shall be confident, joyfulness, overcoming one. Faithfulness, friend of God; one who sees My face. Jesus gives resurrected life.

What is your life like, wounded, outcast, lonely afraid, or confident, joyful and overcoming?

They brought Jesus to the grave of Lazarus. It was a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. Jesus told them, "Roll the stone aside." Martha, the dead man's sister, said, "Lord, by now the smell will be terrible because he has been dead for four days."

Jesus responded, "I don't care how bad he smells. I care about the glory of God. **Didn't I tell you that you will see God's glory if you believe?** Roll the stone aside." So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus shouted the dead man, "Lazarus, come out!" And Lazarus came out, bound in grave clothes (probably individual limbs wrapped because Jesus called him and he was able to walk out ...ever see the mummy? It was like that, not completely free, but bound in the grave clothes, so Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"

Death had a hold of Lazarus until Jesus called him out of the grave. Lazarus heard and obeyed. Death has a hold of you. It may be in the form of sin. What sin or sins have a hold of you keeping you from truly living? What habits keep you from truly living? What guilt do you insist on carrying? What shame do you refuse to admit? Who are you refusing to forgive? Because that refusal has you bound. Is it insecurity or low self-esteem that controls you or makes you want to control?

Jesus is here today. You know, when Lazarus died **Jesus showed up at the right time** – God's time - to meet his need. Jesus is here and it is the right time to roll the stone aside. No more excuses. Let God bring light to that place you want to keep in the dark. "But," you say, "It's too painful, it's too embarrassing, it's discussing, the 'smell' is terrible." Jesus knows that, but you have to expose it to heal it (like physical surgery). Jesus wants to bring you freedom today and if you believe, you will see God's glory, you are going to see what God can do and you will be giving Him glory. Roll the stone aside. Stop protecting yourself from what is keeping you dead in a tomb. Admit your hurt, admit your sin, admit your need. What has you bound? Do you have it in mind right now? Good! Now, listen, Jesus shouts to you "Come out!" Just as **He called to the dead man Lazarus...by name**; just as Jesus wept for him and the people who were standing nearby said, "See how much He loved him." Jesus with that same love weeps for you and says, "it's time" and shouts to you today, calling you by name...put your name here, "Jerry, come out!" I want to go to each one of you today individually and say your name and shout to you "come out!"

Now, **Lazarus obeyed the voice of Jesus.** He came out. He did not come half way out. He didn't keep one foot in the grave. He came out completely and he did not go back. Yet, he was not immediately, completely free. He still had to deal with the grave clothes. And **he needed help getting out of those grave clothes.** Jesus told others to help him, "Unwrap him and let him go!" So you need to give, yield, surrender your life from now on completely to Jesus and not look back, but you may need the help of others as you continually work at taking off the old things that kept you bound and learn to put on the new things that will make you free. And here's something else, if you are being helped by others don't become dependent on them, or if you are helping others don't let them get dependent on you, "Unwrap him and let him go!" Help them to be dependent only on Jesus. He is the resurrection and the life. He can resurrect your life. If you believe and answer His call.