LORD OF LIFE LUTHERN CHURCH GARNER, NC 3/29/20

Sibling Discipleship

In the name…

Let us pray…

In 597 BCE the prophet Ezekiel was deported to Babylon in the first wave of Jewish Exiles. The valley of the dry bones coming alive became a metaphor encouraging the scattered Israelites to rise again as the people of Yahweh. It gave them hope. Almost always this Ezekiel text accompanies the raising of Lazerus text.

One story is a metaphor, the other is very real. Lazerus dies, Jesus raises him, and we do not hear of it, but Lazerus will die again. On the surface, we think this is about Lazerus and Jesus. Some have postulated that Lazerus was the real disciple whom Jesus loved.

But we really can not leave Mary and Martha out. This Lenten season, I have talked about the Samaritan Apostle, I have called the man Jesus healed and then witnessed to Jesus, the healed apostle.

Now let us refer to Mary, Martha and their brother Lazerus as the sibling apostles. So Let’s look at the siblings, not just Lazerus singly. Lazerus gets sick, and the sisters send for jesus. They describe Lazerus as the one whom Jesus loves. Lazerus, humble as he was or not wanting to disturb Jesus, does not make the move to call Jesus, his sisters do.And what does Jesus do, He waits two days then decides to go to Judea and the disciples try to dissuade Him. Then after their discussion, Jesus says Lazerus has fallen asleep and He will wake him. Then Jesus said “Let us go to him.” Here it gets slightly confusing, Jesus had spoken of His death, but He is focusing on Lazerus, Lazerus is dead, and now the disciples may believe. Thomas. The first time he ever spoke up, said, let’s go with him.

Now Jesus waited 2 days, but when He got there Lazerus had been in the tomb 4 days.

When Mary and Martha are mentioned in the gospel of Luke, Mary sat at Jesus feet while Martha did the work of hospitality. It is turned around here somewhat. Mary stays in the house. Martha is waiting for Jesus, and has an intense conversation. You could have saved Him if You had been here. Even now I know You can do whatever You ask of God. She did not say why she thought that, we have to chalk it up to faith. Jesus says “Your brother will rise again”. Martha demonstrates she had been listening, studying her ancient catechism.I know he will rise again. Being a good Jew she believed in the resurrection.

Then Jesus lands the bombshell, “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 will never die.” Do you believe that. Yes and then she drops the bomb I believe you are the Messiah the Christ. This was not Peter saying it, or any other disciple, it was Martha who said it.

Now Mary is told the rabbi Jesus had arrived. We find out He was not even in the village yet. When Mary heard he was there she ran out to Him enthusiastically and said the same Martha did, “If you were here we would not have died.”

Mary is weeping and it becomes contagious, Jesus weeps. It is okay to grieve loved ones, especially if even Jesus can. Those who were bystanders saw Him crying and remarked how much Jesus loved Lazerus. They reiterated again “How Jesus could have saved Lazerus if He could give sight to the blind.

The rest is history except for a practical hitch from Martha when Jesus said take the stone away. She rminded Him Lazerus would stink, despite the spices they would have buried hi with, and she was probably mindful of disease, contamination, we can relate to that, can’t we. Jesus reminds Martha that she wanted to see the glory of God and she will. Jesus commands Lazerus, “Come out” He came out with his hands and feet bound with cloths.

Both Mary and Martha were witnesses to all that happened and showed their belief. Martha in that meaningful discourse, Mary witnessing to the Jews in the house and some saw and believed. And Lazerus deserved the attention, his sisters expected Jesus to act because he was one Jesus loved. The one lame, the blind man in the earlier miracles in the book of miracles, Their faith, spontaneous faith, made them well.

Mary, Martha, and Lazerus, by the way we finally have a family through whom we could dramatize this. I can embarrass the siblings we have Alyssa, Anna, and Joe. Anna and Alyssa would have to flip a coin as to whom they would play. Joe would have no choice but to fall sick , die and rise.

In fact we all play all three siblings at some time or other, we sit at Jesus feet, serve others, and grieve when loved ones and friends die; and we too all will die but we will be like Mary and Martha knowing that because Jesus is there with us and paved the way by His death and resurrection, we can know we will rise but unlike Lazerus leave our burial cloths behind.

Jesus truly is the resurrection and the life.

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