

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED

JOHN 11:28-45 AT THE LORD'S LOUD COMMAND -- LIVE!

She [Martha] went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you." As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there."

Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying.

And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."

Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.

If two boys were sitting quite near the front this morning, by themselves, and weren't behaving; and if I said, "would you two settle down," or if I said, "WOULD YOU TWO SETTLE DOWN !!" What's the difference? I think everyone would agree, when I spoke loudly, it was clear even to the boys, that I meant business! In our text today we see that Jesus, in working with His people and their woes, that Jesus means business! He ever has each individual's best interest at heart. He ever has the power, the authority, to deal with any issue.

After Martha had spoken with Jesus and had been comforted knowing that He was the Messiah, the anointed Servant of God, who had come, that He was, as He said, The Resurrection and The Life, she sent for Mary. I doubt that her intention was to have Mary just put in her appearance, or to have Mary put a little pressure on Jesus. She wanted her sister to have the same calm comfort from the Master, the Teacher, that she had received. She "secretly" called her so that she could be with Jesus alone rather than with all the accompanying mourners. Yet they did accompany her anyway--we hope, not just because "it was their job" as mourners, but because their hearts reached out to her. Martha told Mary that the Teacher was calling her and wanted to see her. Mary hurried to Jesus.

Jesus always wants to see us, is always calling us. He does not just control the world and your life without personal concern for you. He wants to encourage you. He wants you to come to Him every day! Like a mother who hears her youngster crying and calls out gently, "Come here." The child runs to mama, Mary "ran" to Jesus. Go to Him for your every need. Put your pride aside, if you are too proud to ask. Put your fears aside, if you are too afraid to ask. In love He calls for you each day. At His command, all things are under His loving control.

Mary's first words were the same as Martha's. "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." We, all, so often see only one-fix to the hard situation at hand. "Lord, You could have prevented this." Do you know the world "prevent" really means to get someplace ahead of someone else. Lord, you could have prevented this. You could have gotten here ahead of this incident, this mishap, this tragedy, this death, and stopped it. In spirit He was there all along, holding all things under His command, in the best way, in the way we haven't seen yet or thought of yet. Trust Him.

Do you think the Lord is emotionless? The scene before Him led Jesus to groan from within. Other people's sadness can bring tears to our own eyes. Jesus felt their pain and sorrow. He was and is true man, your Brother, not just some aloof, supreme supervisor. Be assured He knows everything you face and are going through. Here He groaned within. He wanted to see the burial site. His emotions were strong.

The text says, *Jesus wept*. Why did Jesus weep? What was it that was hurting Him? Surely it was the entire scene at hand. Lazarus was His friend. Lazarus was dead. This is not what the Father had in mind when He made Adam and Eve. Death was not part of the picture. Sin brought death. Jesus surely wept to see the harsh effects of sin on human life, to see what sin had done to mankind. Death that came with sin was not good. And the grief that death brings to those who are left behind is not good. Surely Jesus wept to see how Satan had mangled the lives of the Father's beloved creation—Adam and Eve and their children. He weeps for you too. When sin messes up your life. When your own sins bring a parade of suffering and grief to you, Jesus weeps for you. In love, He has come to take the penalty for you at the cross, in love He forgives you, in love He will use His almighty “command” to soothe your heart.

His tears of sadness left an impression on the mourners who had come to comfort the sisters. *See how He loved him*. Your love for one another leaves an impression on those around you as well. If you bicker, fight, claw, and even take one another to court, all so that you can come out on top, that doesn't say much to those outside, does it? But when you gently resolve your issues, shed tears for each other's situation, when you understand one another's point of view, that also leaves an impression. Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you. By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you love one another “ (John 13:34-35).

The mourners said amongst themselves, *Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?* Couldn't He have done something? It was the same question Martha had and Mary had. Yes, He could have. Now let's ask that same question on even a bigger scale. Couldn't the Lord have nipped this whole sin and death issue in the bud? Couldn't He have kept Satan out of the Garden of Eden? Couldn't He have made Adam and Eve so that they couldn't sin? Couldn't He have annihilated Satan and undone his very existence? Yes, yes, yes. So, why didn't He? Why didn't He change the course of events for the history of the world with Adam and Eve, for Lazarus, for you? Because He knew it was better for people like you and like me, if He didn't. Better?! Think of Martha and Mary. Would they have loved Jesus if He had come earlier and had healed Lazarus before He died? Yes absolutely. Do you think their grasp of His love and His command would have been as great as it is about to be now?—that Christ raises Lazarus from the dead??! I think not. That same principle applies all the way back to the Fall into Sin. When you see the Lord's love and command for you, that He would send His Son, to go through your suffering and death and then rise in victory, do you have more love for Him than ever before? Exactly.

Jesus stood at the grave, confronting death head on. *Take away the stone!* Martha thinking of the unpleasant “stink” objected. Jesus said, Trust Me. *Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?* Our objections to God's ways are always a lack of trust in the Lord. Stop thinking that your way must be best. Surely Martha thought, “How can opening the grave and letting the stench out help matters?” She had no clue what was about to happen. Even though she believed in the Resurrection and that Jesus was the Resurrection and the Life, in her wildest dreams she had no clue what was about to happen. The same for you. Trust Him.

The grave was opened. Surely, the foul stink of the onset of decay rolled out. Jesus raised His eyes to heaven to thank the Father for the Rescue Mission on which He had sent Him. He said this aloud, not for His own benefit but for the benefit of those standing there. Again Jesus is seeking to assure His people that He has come with His love and His command to fix our every last problem—rooted in sin and death. He wants you to know the same too.

Then Jesus' voice burst out, LAZARUS, COME FORTH !! With a “mega-voice,” He called out in power! My mother often said, when we as children got too loud, “Are you trying to wake the dead?” Jesus was not just trying, but was waking the dead. In His love and in His command He meant business! Lazarus, still bound in the grave clothes, came out. The process of decay reversed. The stench disappearing. The Life, the soul, had returned to the body! “Loose him and let him go.” Jesus had just loosed him from death. Loose him from the grave wrappings also. Sadness turned to boundless joy!

This is what we see in this Lenten season. Jesus undertaking His mission to loose us from death, to bring life to us with His love and command. He received the punishment for our sins. “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?!” He was abandoned by the dear Father. Who could have understood why? Who could have seen any good in this? Why did Jesus not fight back? Wasn't He able? Yes, He was able. But it was better this way, for you, for us. Now there is forgiveness and life by His mighty Command. “Come forth and live!”

Many of the Jews who had seen these things believed in Him. Believe in Him. Trust Him and Live. Today, tomorrow, the rest of your life, in the life to come. By the Lord's loud command of love, You Live!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach----