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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
November 22, 2015  
Last Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 35:4-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12  
Hymns: 351, 608; 307; 315:9,10

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 11:21-27

Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup> Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. <sup>26</sup> And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup> She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: It's the End of the World!

Most commonly that expression is used to reference that something is or isn't really bad. When something negative happens we might say, "Well, at least it isn't the end of the world." We're simply

saying that it could have been a lot worse, which implies that nothing could be worse than the end of the world.

On this last Sunday of the church year it is the practice of the church to consider the end of the world and exactly what that event will bring. Of course it will be horrible, won't it? Doesn't it have to be? The Lord tells us in His Word that the universe and everything in it will melt with a fervent heat (2 Peter 3:10). It's hard to think of that and not think that when we talk about the end of the world we must be talking about doomsday, and we will be doomed, and it will be horrible!

That's the end of the world as the world sees it. That is not what the end of the world holds for the child of God. The end of the world will bring wonders that are great and glorious, wonders that will sweep us along into the glory that awaits us. Among these wonders we know that Jesus will visibly return with power and great glory. The angels shall accompany the Lord, and we will hear a great trumpet blast that will signal the Lord's call for all the dead to rise and come forth from their graves. That is the **resurrection**. For some it will be a resurrection unto eternal death, but not for the child of God. Again for us this wonder of resurrection is an amazing wonder of grace, and it is a treasure not only for our future, but a truth which is already now treasured in our hearts. So then on this last Sunday of the church year, as we consider the End, let us turn our hearts and minds to a meditation on --

**THEME:** Resurrection Truth.

Our text begins by directing us to –

## **I. The Comfort of Resurrection.**

Death and the grief that accompanies death is common to all people. Yes, it visits the child of God as surely as it visits the unbelievers in this world. So it struck the home of some of Jesus' close friends. Mary and Martha who had welcomed Jesus into their home had lost their beloved brother, Lazarus. He had become sick, and even though they turned to the Lord Jesus for help, Lazarus died. Our text reveals how a devout child of God struggles with the

pain of loss even as she wondered why the Lord had not delivered her loved one from death.

**John 11:21-24** Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.” <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” <sup>24</sup> Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Jesus addresses Martha’s grief with the assurance of the resurrection. He told her that her brother would rise again. This is an amazing truth to communicate to those Christians who have lost a loved one. Martha received this welcome word of comfort from her Savior, even while she struggled with the why, why Jesus had not come sooner, and the knowledge that with Jesus all things are possible, even when her loved one had passed into death and the grave. In the turmoil of her grief Martha held onto the comfort of knowing that the grave was not the end. The grave was not victorious. She had learned from Jesus and the Scriptures which Jesus taught that the grave would be forced to give up its victims in the resurrection at the last day.

That truth of the resurrection was an important comfort for Martha as it remains for us yet today. As we share our faith with one another, and especially with our loved ones we give them that wondrous comfort to hold onto, that we are children of God. Along with the confidence that we also are children of God comes the confidence that we too shall be included in that resurrection to life on that last day.

But is this real? Or is this some deception that brings us a false sense of comfort while we try to struggle through the devastation of losing someone we love? The world would have us believe that many of the truths we cherish are no more real than the fables and folklore of the heathen who seek comfort in the lies of reincarnation and spirit guides. That couldn’t be more wrong. Jesus addressed this very issue of certainty of truth and --

## **II. The Reality of Resurrection.**

**John 11:25a** “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life.’”

Such great and wondrous truth is expressed by our Savior in these few words that I’m not sure we can fully comprehend the grandeur of the truth that is expressed with this assertion of our Savior. It starts with that truth, that Jesus is our Savior. He is not just another man. He is not even simply a great and good man who was enriched with wisdom from above. He is God come down to earth to free us from sin and death. He was even then directing His life to Calvary where Jesus would be the ransom paid to set us free from the curse of the law and the debt of our sin. Jesus gave Himself over to death and the grave for us, and then He rose again to demonstrate the reality of resurrection.

When Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life,” Jesus was declaring the truth of His divine person as the eternal Son of God. He is the great I AM! As such He is the embodiment of the gospel. He is the resurrection for as the Son of God He is not only the author of physical life, but the author of spiritual and eternal life. Jesus is the life. As such Jesus brings life to those who are dead, dead in sin, dead in the grave. Jesus’ voice calls forth from the grave, and cannot be denied, for the authority of the omnipotent Son of God, our Redeemer, over death and the grave is absolute.

Resurrection isn’t a whim, a fancy, a fantasy from feeble minds. It is very real indeed. It is as real as Jesus our ever living Lord and Savior is real. With this reality comes --

### **III. The Hope of Resurrection.**

Jesus statement to Martha continued with this truth

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**John 11:25b-27** He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. <sup>26</sup> And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” <sup>27</sup> She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

Hope isn’t based on wishes. It really has nothing to do with wishing something was or wasn’t true. It is based on the facts of

what is going to come to pass, or is already the truth of the situation. Sometimes, indeed oftentimes the truth is greater than we can comprehend with our feeble minds. That doesn't make it any less true. It does however bring us to the point of faith in that which we know to be true even when we are not able to explain or comprehend it.

The gods of this world are all lesser gods, less than the minds of those who made them up, those who devised the philosophy to accompany these imaginary gods. Who can find solace in the imaginings of one's own mind when **“the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth”** (Genesis 8:21)? Our God is in the heavens. Our God is the God of life. Our God is Jesus Christ the Lord! Our relationship with Jesus is created by God the Holy Spirit who has worked faith in our hearts that **we might know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent** (John 17:3).

Jesus brings us hope. That hope empowers us now as we struggle in this life with the many trials and tribulations and temptations that comes into our lives. Many of trials may lead us to feel like we have been singled out for special trouble, and some of these difficulties in life may even at times tempt us to despair. This is when we need to remember these precious words of Jesus, these words that bring us the hope of life!

Jesus addressed these words first to Martha who was struggling with the reality of death. She needed hope and Jesus gave her that hope in the greater reality of life in Jesus. Jesus confirmed the hope she already possessed concerning her brother, **“He who believes in Me though he may die he shall live”** (v.25). However, we need to note that this hope is connected to Jesus. Jesus gives this hope substance so that it renews our souls in the face of death. In Jesus we have strength to persevere.

This hope of life, this hope **for** life is often and correctly thought of as hope for eternal life in heaven. However there is another component to this hope of life that we possess in Christ. Resurrection gives us hope for this life as well as for the life which is to come. We have eternal life through Jesus and faith in His name starting right now while we live and breathe in this world

during this temporal life. Jesus asserts that all who live and believe in Him shall never die (v.26)!

I won't die! I have seen this attitude in some young men. At times they may live a rather reckless manner of life as if the reality of death is something foreign to them, that it just isn't real. They live like they will never die. They live like they have a charmed existence.

Is this what Jesus is promoting? Not at all! Jesus assures us of the certainty of spiritual life that has begun in us right now by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit. That spiritual life is eternal in its nature. Even though this body shall fail, and my bones may rest in the grave, my spirit which has been made alive by the Spirit will live with God as I await the resurrection on the last day.

This truth emboldens us to live, not in a reckless manner, but in the confidence of faith, confidence that erases the fear of what man might do to me. This confidence rests in Jesus who loved us and gave Himself for us, and rose to life. He has not only destroyed the power of death, but He has overcome the world. **“What can man do to me”** (Psalm 118:6)?!

That confident hope extends to every aspect and every challenge we have in this life. We have hope because we have Jesus, and it is all built upon the foundation of the gospel that cannot be taken away from us. **“The gates of Hades shall prevail against it”** (Matthew 16:18)!

The question that brings it home for us, that brought it home for Martha was, **“Do you believe this?”** Do YOU believe this? Do you? Martha's answer was right on the mark. It started with the strong affirmative: **“Yes, Lord,”** but it didn't stop there. She continued her confession of faith: **“I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”** It was tied to her faith that this man standing before her named Jesus was the Christ, who had been promised of old by god through the prophets, that this Jesus was more than a man, she knew that Jesus was and is the Son of God who was to come into the world.

So it is that truth about Jesus which we hold by faith in our hearts that brings us this hope for life. We also by God's grace believe not just that there is a God somewhere out there, but we believe in Jesus, that **He** is the Christ the Son of God, and that He came into this world to save us. This is the fountain from which our hope springs forth. He lightens every day. It gives us the perspective we need to look forward not only to tomorrow but on to the end of the world with joyous anticipation with assurance that comforts with unfailing hope! This is the Truth of the Resurrection!

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.