

The Resurrection of Lazarus
John 11:17-44
HUMC 31 October 2021

The most famous clock in the entire world is London's Big Ben. This huge four sided structure stands by the House of Parliament and towers over Westminster Abbey on the Thames River.

The chimes inside the clock, play a simple tune from Handel's Messiah called "***I know My Redeemer Liveth.***" There are four times that it plays.

15 min

30 min

45 min

60 min

Go to the link and hear the tunes.

<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/what-tune-does-big-ben-chime/>

My scripture text is about our redeemer, the Lord Jesus who raised Lazarus from the dead. And this story is a bold reminder that someday God will raise us from the dead and it should impact us on how we should live.

John 11:17-44. ¹⁷ **On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.** ¹⁸ **Now Bethany was less than two miles^[a] from Jerusalem,** ¹⁹ **and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.** ²⁰ **When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.**

²¹ **"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died.** ²² **But I know that even now**

God will give you whatever you ask.”²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” ²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied.³⁵ Jesus wept.³⁶ Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” **Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ “Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”**

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I

thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

In today’s gospel text, we are introduced to Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus. From the other Gospels, we learn that their place in Bethany was a home away from home for Jesus and the 12 Apostles.

We are told in verses 1-16 that while Jesus was away, Lazarus had become ill. We don’t know exactly what was wrong, but it is believed that he had some type of fever.

In those days, a fever without the aid of any antibiotics was deadly. It often began with the chills, and then progressed to profuse sweating, hallucinations then death. It was a difficult situation for the two sisters to helplessly watch their brother grow weaker and weaker by the hour.

And this sickness was serious enough for the sisters to request the aid of Jesus who was their close friend. And it was assumed that he would come, since he miraculously met the needs of so many others, He would meet their need also.

When Jesus didn’t arrive like they expected, perhaps they felt betrayed. After all the times they hosted Jesus and his apostles, now he neglected them in their greatest hour of need.

When a relative’s grandmother was on her deathbed, she asked for her five sons to come and say their goodbyes. Three of the brothers lived in Pennsylvania got in a car and drove to Connecticut to pick up the other two brothers. Once there, they

were invited to stay for lunch, unfortunately they took too much time and the grandmother died.

I suspect the grandmother must have felt like Martha and Mary and Lazarus in the sense that she was disappointed her boys did not come. And likewise the five brothers had their regrets as well.

When it comes to grief, family members react in unpredictable ways. And from what we can see, Lazarus' family, there was frustration, anger, deep emotional feelings. Those type of feelings that are in today's family.

Incidentally, the shortest verse in the entire Bible is verse 35. It says, "**Jesus wept.**" I have observed in funerals, those people who say they have to be strong break down in emotion of grief. Even though Jesus was fully God and fully man, he shed tears.

In Biblical times, there was an ancient Jewish superstition that when a person died, their spirit will hover near the body for three days. So, if the deceased was buried in the tomb, the spirit of the deceased individual could actually hear the cries of the mourners outside the tomb.

So for three days, family and friends would go to the tomb, cry out "Depart in Peace" in hopes that Lazarus would hear.

Rabbis taught that on the fourth day, the dead person's soul would finally leave the tomb and because of this, family members would become more emotional in their grief.

Jesus who said "I am the Resurrection and the Life" arrived on the fourth day. Was that a coincidence? I don't think so. Jesus first resurrection miracle with the Jairus' daughter who had been dead about one hour. Then there was the widow of Nain's son who had been dead at least 4-6 hours. And then Lazarus, 4 days.

As EMS/Fire, we periodically come upon end-of-life issues. Some are deaths are reported immediately but some deaths are not discovered until days later. Regardless of time frame, it is unmistakable, unforgettable and the worst part of the job.

So when you think about it, our religious faith is one of hope. It is a resurrection religion. And if we were to remove that one key component, then what we have becomes philosophical.

Lavon Brown, the author of the book, "Here Comes a Miracle" wrote how people would climb this particular mountain in the Italian Alps and would walk the Roman Catholic Stations of the Cross and people would pause and meditate before each one.

But on this one particular day a tourist who was in the area; and went through the stations, and when he arrived at the final one, he was about to leave. But then he noticed a trail that had been neglected and led beyond the final shrine.

He decided to go further. He fought through overgrowth and brush and to his surprise, he came upon another shrine which contained an empty tomb.

Almost everyone had gone as far as the cross as the final station. But they didn't go any farther.

It made me think, in our spiritual lives, it is important that we move beyond the cross and embrace the empty tomb. When Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he spoke those words that we might live in hope. Every person who asks Christ into their hearts, that is an act of faith in the resurrection.

- When we forgive others that is an act of faith in the resurrection.
- When we feed the hungry in the name of Christ that is an act of faith in the resurrection.

- When we baptize that is an act of faith in the resurrection.
- When we turn over our difficulties to Jesus that is an act of faith in the resurrection.
- When we come before the altar of God in marriage that is an act of faith in the resurrection.
- When we give ten percent of our income to God that is an act of faith in the resurrection.
- When we wake up with peace in our hearts that is an act of faith in the resurrection.
- When we go to work with joy and contentment in our hearts that is an act of faith in the resurrection.

On this All Saints Day, we remember our loved ones with the hopes that we will see them again. And with an admonition to talk to the living about their souls, to pray for our loved, to look for additional opportunities to bring them into the kingdom of God. I regret there are some people who have passed on and I didn't do more to bring them into the kingdom and have resolved to do better.

Every day, the chimes of Big Ben in London proclaim, "I know my redeemer liveth." Let me ask. Do you have that assurance in your heart that Christ lives?

Do you go beyond the crucifixion to the resurrection? Do you share your faith with others?

May God bless you to reach beyond and know that your Redeemer lives.