

June 10th, 2018

Scripture:

John 11:17-44

“The resurrection and the life.”

According to theologian and John scholar Gary Burge ---- the book of John is divided into 2 main parts.

First there is John chapters 1-12 ---- with the public ministry of Jesus Christ.

And then there is the second part ---- chapters 13-21 ---- where the focus is on the cross ----- and Burge goes on to say that chapters 13-21 can also be described as the book of glory --- the book of glory.

According to Burge --- chapters 11 and 12 of John’s Gospel --- part of which we will look at today ---- serve the special role of preparing us for the book of glory.

Jesus ---- saying ---- “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” --- points to the glory of His resurrection --- and points to the glory of our resurrection.

John chapter 11 --- “I am the resurrection and the life...” --- and then John chapter 12 ----- the anointing at Bethany ---- Mary and the perfume and her washing Jesus’ feet and wiping them with her hair ----- these 2 events prepare us for the glory of the cross --- the second half of John’s gospel.

But for today --- John 11 --- Jesus with His close friends --- and the death and resurrection of Lazarus.

Here in John 11 --- we have a beautiful and familiar story --- one many of us have likely heard at a funeral at some point in our life.

And if we haven’t heard the whole story ---- we’ve likely at least heard a few of the verses at the heart of the story ---- words like ----- “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”

Jesus --- once again ----- similar to last week in John 6 --- Jesus is declaring His divinity.

Only God can give life --- only God can give life to the dead ----- and yet here is Jesus saying --- and more importantly showing that He too --- can give life --- and bring back the dead.

This is another story --- another event in John's Gospel ---- all about Jesus revealing the glory of God.

Someone has died ----- Lazarus ----- Mary and Martha are sad --- very sad -- - because they think Jesus is too late to help.

If only Jesus had have arrived earlier He could have helped they both say.

They somehow still see Jesus as limited in His powers and abilities --- at least for now --- He's limited because He's late --- He's limited because the time frame for Him to help has already passed and there is nothing He can do --- there is nothing anyone can do now.

Verse 21 ----- "Lord" ---- Martha said to Jesus --- "if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

And then skipping ahead to verse 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."

Both Mary and Martha say the exact same thing --- word for word even ----- --- "Lord --- if you had been here --- my brother would not have died."

Yes they have faith in Jesus --- He could have saved their brother --- but they also somehow think He is limited as well --- it's too late --- He's too late ---- He's already died --- it's over.

There is a hint of defeat in their voice when they say --- "Lord --- if you had been here ---- my brother would not have died."

"You're too late --- there's nothing to be done now." ---- they say.

Which of course also means --- you're limited ---- the window of opportunity has passed --- the finality of the imitations of this world have set in.

They still think of the glory of the Lord as something for later on only.

Verse 23 --- "Jesus said to her --- your brother will rise again."

The next verse ---- "Martha answered --- "I know he will rise again at the resurrection at the last day."

Martha still thinks Jesus' glory is only for later on --- at the last day.

Verses 25 and 26 --- "Jesus said to her --- I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die."

And Jesus means now.

Jesus means I am the resurrection and the life --- and now.

Jesus has a news flash ----- The tomb does not get the final word.

The tomb does not get the final word.

And this news flash applies now --- here today --- with Lazarus --- not just then later ---- at the end of time --- but here now today --- beginning with Lazarus.

Things are different --- things have changed --- things have already changed Jesus is saying.

Martha however still thinks things will change ---- not have changed but WILL change ---- sometime later.

Lazarus --- her dead brother will rise again --- but later.

The Kingdom of God yes --- but later.

Many of us ---- are a lot like Martha --- the Kingdom of God ---- but later.

Part of what Jesus is saying here --- is the resurrection isn't just coming --- the resurrection is already here ---- and it is here in me.

Like Mary --- and like Martha --- we too ---- often think that God's glory is all about a future time.

Heaven --- the afterlife --- you know later on.

The glory of God is here and now --- ever --- and all around us.

That's part of what Jesus is saying when He says --- "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die."

We are made new --- we can be resurrected from the grip this world --- our belly --- our feelings ---- our need --- fears and anxieties.

I have seen people made new --- changed into new people through Christ right in front of my eyes --- as I'm sure many other of us here today have too.

You can teach an old dog new tricks --- people can be changed but they need Christ.

Yes it is rather rare --- most people are so self certain and sure of their perspective that they cannot move or change --- but God does make things new each an everyday ---- right now someone somewhere is changing in Christ --- why not you? --- why not us?

We don't have to wait until the end of time for the resurrection.

We don't have to wait until the end of time for the activity of God.

The resurrection isn't just coming ----- Jesus says today in John 11 --- it is already here --- it is I.

The tomb does not get the final word --- our feelings do not get the final word --- what we think is not the final word.

Newness of life starts now.

There were plenty of people who called themselves healers in and around Jerusalem.

At the time of Christ there were many -----many people ---- in and around Jerusalem who called themselves healers.

In fact there weren't just plenty of people who called themselves healers --- there were indeed plenty of people who were healers.

But Jesus isn't just referring to Himself as a healer.

He is referring to Himself as a resurrector ----- and there is a huge difference.

“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die...” --- Jesus says.

“I am a --- I am the resurrector” ----- Jesus says.

This was without parallel --- it was unheard of.

This what Jesus says --- and most importantly this is what Jesus does.

Gives life.

Resurrects.

Gives life even to those declared dead.

But only God can do that --- right????? – give life --- take life --- give back life.

Jesus is declaring His divinity.

This little incident ---- tucked off to the side ---in Bethany ----- on the outskirts --- where Jesus so often worked --- is breathtaking ----- He tells a

friend --- whose body is stinky and decaying --- to get up and walk --- come alive again --- and He does.

That's Jesus --- speak a word --- and things change – if ever you had doubts about the importance of words ---- that can all change --- Jesus speaks a word and a heart starts pumping once again --- rooted skin heals – lungs fill with air --- muscles move ---- eyes flicker --- new life.

But as if that isn't enough ----- there is more going on here as well.

In fact there is much much more going on here.

This isn't just a story about the power of Jesus.

This event --- also reveals something about Jesus we rarely ever see ----- rebuke ---- indignation ----- annoyance ----- anger.

Remember the only other time we really see Jesus angry -- is when He cleanses the temple courts.

Overturning the tables and taking a whip and driving out the animals and money changers.

Well here again we see Him annoyed ---- indignant --- irritated --- angry.

Most translations say Jesus was “deeply moved” --- or “upset” --- or “disturbed in spirit.”

Most translations say that Jesus was ---- in verses 33 and 38 --- “deeply moved --- or “upset” --- or disturbed in spirit.”

Look at the NIV --- for example --- the version we have in our pews --- “When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled” ---- verse 33.

And then verse 38 ----

“Jesus, once more deeply moved...”

“Deeply moved” --- is how the NIV --- translates ----- “embrimaomai” from the Greek.

Well “embrimaomai” -- can mean “deeply moved” ----- but people like Eugene Peterson --- and people like Gary Burge --- and people like me ---- think it means something much more specific than just deeply moved.

Listen to John 11 verse 33 ----- from The Message --- Eugene Peterson’s translation of the Bible --- and remember Peterson is a linguist ----
 “When Jesus saw her sobbing and the Jews with her sobbing, a deep anger welled up within him.”

And then John 11 verse 38 --- also from the Message ---
 “Then Jesus, the anger again welling up within him...”

Jesus isn’t just deeply moved ---- He is angry.

Anger is welling up within Him.

The Greek word --- “Embrimaomai” --- means a whole lot more than just deeply moved ---- it’s far more specific than just moved.

Was Jesus moved to tears --- was he moved to joy – or was he moved to something else.

Jesus isn’t just deeply moved --- He is irritated ---- He is annoyed --- He is indignant --- He is angry.

Jesus is standing in front of the work of darkness --- death --- and He is annoyed by it.

He is irritated --- and angry ---- that the prince of darkness is trying to assert his power at the wrong time and in the wrong way.

So Jesus strips the prince of darkness of all His power and resurrects Lazarus --- right then and there --- just like that.

As quickly as he overturned the tables in the temple courts --- He brings back His friend to life.

He doesn’t wait --- or teach or preach about it much here --- He acts decisively.

One thing about being around Jesus and His followers --- you had to be ready for decisive action.

Jesus isn't just another teacher.

Jesus isn't just another Rabbi.

Jesus isn't just another healer.

He is the great I am.

He is the resurrector.

He is God --- and like God --- Jesus can bring life out of death --- and the prince of darkness --- the shatan --- satan --- cannot do anything to stop Him.

The resurrection --- new life ---- the activity of God --- isn't just something for the end of time.

Resurrection --- new life --- the activity and the presence of God --- doesn't always come gradually --- sometimes it is instant and potent and powerful beyond words.

The activity of God --- resurrection life --- new life --- is here and now --- whenever --- why ever --- and however God so chooses --- and if we're not ready for it ---- it can knock our socks off.

John is a great one for word play --- his Gospel is far more sophisticated and sublime and artistic and divine than the other Gospels ---- if you read John closely and carefully there are all kinds of nuggets --- bits of wisdom – divine character and divine attributes to be unearthed.

His gospel is sophisticated --- and sublime.

And John 11 is a perfect example of this.

In verse 34 --- we have the crowd replying with these words ---- “come and see Lord”

Jesus asks Mary and the other Jews who are weeping over the death of Lazarus --- where they have laid the body.

Verses 33 and 34 ----- “When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

“Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.”

“Come and see” --- they say to Jesus.

Well this is most certainly a come and see moment.

Only it's not Jesus who is about to come and see something it is them.

They are about to see the glory of Jesus like never before --- they are about to see the resurrector --- give an order --- “Get up Lazarus!”----- they are about to see the prince of darkness rendered weak and useless.

“Come and see indeed --- come and see the glory of God” --- would be one way to state what is about to happen --- the resurrector --- Jesus Christ in quick and decisive ----- action mode.

“The tomb does not get the final word --- the prince of darkness does not get the final word ----- come and see.”--- Jesus is saying.

Come and see ----- “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”

Jesus is annoyed --- He's irritated ---- deeply moved and then some ---- that the prince of darkness --- keeps trying to thwart what it is He is doing.

So Jesus decides to take some decisive action --- and raises a dead person --- raises a friend back to life – just like that --- He doesn't even break a sweat here.

And He does it ---- just to make it abundantly clear who is in charge here --- now and also later.

We do not have to wait until the end of time for God to act Jesus is saying -- --- I ---- God ----- will also --- is also ----- acting here and now --- look no further than our brother Lazarus.

These are words of great comfort --- this is an act of great comfort.

Jesus is declaring His divinity ---- His power --- His authority right then and there in front of His grieving ---- “you got here too late” saying followers.

And He does the very same thing in our midst too.

Jesus prepares us --- us readers of John’s Gospel – us people of the way --- us Christians in the 21st century --- us here now in the Durham region of Ontario.

Jesus prepares His followers --- some of His closest followers --- some of His best friends --- remember Jesus was close --- very close with Mary --- and Martha --- and Lazarus --- they were His peeps.

Jesus prepares them for what is about to come --- for what He can and will do ---- new life – change situations --- taking that which seems hopeless --- and making new life come from it.

Jesus shows them in one fowl swoop --- that He can reverse the action of negativity --- despair --- hurt.

Jesus shows them in one fowl swoop he can take a dead situation and make it alive once again.

Jesus shows them in one fowl swoop that He can render the prince of darkness powerless --- by simply speaking a few words.

“Lazarus come out.”

These 3 words changed everything.

“Lazarus come out.”

With those words ----- satan was defeated.

A summary of the last verses from our passage today in John 11.

“Jesus called in a loud voice ----- “Lazarus come out.”

“The dead man came out.”

Then Jesus said --- “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

And everything changed ----- the empty tomb --- Easter isn't that much of a surprise if we remember John 11 Lazarus.

Everyone is all tied up in knots --- why would Jesus wait --- why would he delay His arrival --- if he had of been here none of this would have happened.

Panic --- anxiety --- despair --- resentment perhaps even --- why would Jesus do this.

A few words from Jesus.

“Lazarus come out!”

And in one fowl swoop ----- everything changed.

And just for fun ----- “Lazarus” ----- means “God helps.”

God helped all right.

God helped people to come and see that Jesus could do anything ----- why -- -- how --- with whom --- when ever He so chose.

“Lord --- if you had been here ----- my brother would not have died.” --- Martha said.

“Lord --- if you had been here ----- my brother would not have died.” --- Mary said.

“Get up and come out.” --- Jesus said.

And then he did.

Jesus wasn't too late.

He was right on time.

Some people had already made up their mind that Jesus was too late – but He wasn't --- He's never too late --- He's always right on time.

Sometimes it's us who must wait --- before there can ever be a resurrection - -- there first has to be a death ----- we all want resurrection – but we don't want the death part that must come first.

In order for there to be new life there must first be death.

There is often great pain before there is any growth.

The tomb does not get the final word --- but Lazarus had to sit in it for a while before He was changed --- and as his sister said ----- it got stinky in there --- see verse 39.

The prince of darkness does not get the final word ---- God does --- Jesus does --- but sometimes we have to sit in it for a while.

Maybe the only way the people would have had any sense of wonder and awe was to first experience the pain of loss.

The resurrection and the life walked onto the scene --- and contrary to what even some of His best friends thought ----- the resurrection and the life wasn't too late.

Jesus wasn't and isn't just another healer --- He is also the --- and the only -- - resurrector.

He can ---- He will --- He does change everything.

He can --- He will --- He does ----- take that which looks dead --- that which may even be dead ---- and bring it back to life once again.

All this ---- and yet many still only see Him in worldly terms.

Just after our passage ---- John 11 verse 48 ---- “If we let him go on like this --- everyone will believe in him ----- and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.”

They still only see Jesus in political terms.

“If we let him go on like this --- everyone will believe in him ----- and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.”

So they plot to kill Him.

What irony --- He --- Jesus just showed them that He has power over death.

Jesus just showed them that He can do whatever He wants whenever He wants ---- He just showed them that death is like playdoh in His hands.

And they still don't get it.

Hardened hearts --- fearful hearts --- know it all hearts --- are very very hard to break into.

What marvel --- it must have been for Mary and Martha and Lazarus ---- that day.

Jesus was among His closest friends --- they knew He had power ---- they already knew He was something else.

They just didn't realize how much He could already do.

It took something very dramatic for Jesus to get their attention ---- and they were close --- very close to Him.

So --- why this story --- why this event?

Why does John include this Jesus among His closest friends event?

The answer --- because it reminds us even those of us who know Jesus well -
--- really well --- aren't fully aware of all that He can do --- and think we
know what He can and can't do.

It reminds us that even those of us who know Jesus well --- really well ---
like Mary and Martha did ----- can still be totally surprised by Him and His
power and His authority and His ability.

We must have a profound sense of wonder and awe ----- humility.

If we truly have even the slightest inkling of just who Jesus Christ truly is.

We must have a profound sense of wonder and awe ----- humility.

And mw must remember that He can act --- He can take a situation and
change it just like that --- the problem is most of the time --- we want the
change to happen the way – and why and how and when we want it to
happen.

You're too late they said to Jesus ---- they had already made up their minds.

To sit in the presence of God is to be silenced in wonder --- and awe and a
profound sense of gratitude that arrests ---that literally apprehends our very
being.

The majesty of God is something to behold.

The glory of God is something to behold.

We mustn't ever lose our sense of wonder and awe and mystery --- the jaw
drooping realization --- that He can do what ever he wants --- why ever ---
when ever and however.

In John 11 ----- in Bethany ---- just outside of Jerusalem --- a few very close
friends of Jesus had an experience of majesty and glory and power.

An experience of awe ----- and wonder like nothing they had ever
experienced before.

What beauty--- what truth --- what goodness must have seized their souls that day.

May we allow God to seize and silence our souls too.

“Lazarus come out.”

Jesus calls us to come out of our shells and our tombs and our fear and our anxiety ----- and trust --- and walk in new life.

It's not too late --- it's never too late.

To God be the glory --- now and forever Amen.