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“If you believed ...” **Sermon on John 11:32-44**

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There's more than one time change going on this morning, because for All Saints Sunday, we shift out of Mark's Gospel to the Gospel of John. And that's not a just a shift in authorship, it's a shift in time.

Time comes in two flavors. There's the kind of time that is thought of linearly, which sounds like it's time to set the clocks back an hour, time for church, time for the benediction, time for lunch, time for a nap because the Titans have a late game. Then on to tomorrow and the next day. That's linear time, and the Greeks had a name for that kind of time – “Kronos”.

The Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke move chronologically. It's one thing after another. But in John's Gospel, Kronos crashes into Kairos, and Kairos isn't measured in hours or minutes. In fact it may not be measured at all, for how do you measure things like light, life, and love?

So it is that there's a time change today in chapter 11 of John's Gospel. We'll find that Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, is ill. A message is sent to Jesus. “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” The real message, however, is, “You better get here quickly.”

But Mary and Martha don't want Jesus there just to say, “Goodbye.” They want him there to heal their brother. Jesus responds to their time with a time of his own. And the time of his own words from above, well, they're odd. Jesus says, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” John writes, “...after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer...”. That's some time change!

When Jesus finally arrives, he is confronted by Martha, who looks down at her chronograph and says, “Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

Her words collide with the words from above, for Jesus says, “Your brother will rise again”.

Martha looks down at her watch and says, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus answers with words from a different time zone, “I am the resurrection and the life, those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” Do you believe this?”

It’s a good question.

John 11: 32-44

³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶ So 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?”

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

“Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” If you believed...

I don’t know about you, but deep in my DNA there is some genetic code that has locked me into being a realist. I just look at the times we’re in and come to some down-to-earth conclusion about life. It’s just the way I’m made up.

A realist is often seen as the one who sucks the life out of the room, depressing, an Eeyore! I’m not that way at all. I’m not depressed. I just guard myself against irrational exuberance at all times. I believe in reality. And we all know that “Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, it doesn’t go away.” (Philip K. Dick, American writer, 1928 – 1982)

What I like about the real world is that you can depend on it. What goes up, must come down. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction.

When out of nowhere comes a virus, what's the reaction? In the 1980's during the AID's epidemic, the reaction was to keep those people with that virus out of the schools. When there's a pandemic, what's the reaction? Shut down the economy to flatten the curve. What's the reaction? People divide. What's the reaction? People lose their jobs. Some people, however, keep their jobs because, after all, we still need our sausage biscuits and our groceries delivered to our door.

But, what's the reaction? Business shut down.

But, what's the reaction? You can't get pledge envelopes because there's no glue.

But, what's the reaction? "Why would I want to pledge to some place that doesn't believe like I do? They force me to wear a mask!"

But, what's the reaction? Cut the budget. What's the reaction? Not my budget! I'm just a realist who knows it's easiest to follow Christ on your good days. But when the going gets tough, well, "I never knew him." "Look! I don't know who you're talking about." "I'm telling you; you're mistaken. I was never with the man." And when the cock crows, suddenly there's a time change.

That's not depressing, it's just the reality of the situation. You can depend on reality. "It's that which, when you stop believing in it, it doesn't go away."

It doesn't go away. It smells to high heaven. There's a stench. "If you roll away that stone, he'll stink." Mary and Martha are realists. Their brother is dead. "Lord, if you had been here, he never would have died." Every action has an equal and opposite reaction.

Jesus says, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" If you believed. If you believed. If you believed.

Belief is often associated with checking in your brain at the front door. All over the world, the church is on the way out because, after all, "How can you actually believe that stuff?" Believing makes science shake its head and say, "How can you believe that stuff?" Where on earth are you getting your information? The internet?

Jesus says, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" If you believed.

I'm a realist, but let me tell you the reality of my situation. I have found that when time changes and life goes south, there's division. When push comes to shove, we can really push and shove. History proves that time and time and time and time again.

I have to believe in the glory of God. I have to believe that the time has changed and in a dark world, there's light in this room. I feel that, and I know it from you, time and time again. I have to believe in the power of love. Last year, when we were worried about the budget, you came through. Unbelievable! Believe it! You have to believe that when push comes to shove, we are light, and we are love. I have to believe in the power of love. I know that love conquers all things. I have to believe that when

we hear the cock crow, when we've done our best, when we've denied the glory of God, I have to believe that the body and blood are broken. And after the body and blood are broken, Jesus always shows up. Our eyes can recognize him. Grace upon grace, mercy upon mercy, I have to believe. I have to believe that we choose to serve the Lord. We choose to shout into dark tombs, "Lazarus come out!"

When the tornado strikes, we don't run for cover. We help those people who need help. That's the reality. "Lazarus come out!"

When the flood waters rage, we're not going to let you sit in the dark or die! We're going to lift you up. "Lazarus come out."

When people have lost their jobs, "Lazarus come out!"

When negativity is all you hear, "Lazarus come out!"

When it's nothing but, "I want... I want...", "Lazarus come out! Let me give you my all!"

We have passed from death to life because we love one another. It's the reality that sustains me and it sustains you. I do believe the time has changed. I do believe we passed from death to life. It's just the reality of the situation that we love one another."

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