

March 26, 2023: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ Fifth Sunday in Lent ~

"They saw the Glory of God."

Our services can be found on our website at www.barrechurch.com

Scripture Reading: John 11 v 1- 45

1. Introduction:

Those of us who have lost loved ones, know the incredible feelings of pain and loss. Whatever the circumstances are surrounding the passing of a loved one, death leaves one with mixed emotions such as the agonizing and unbearable pain and grief, the uncertain feeling of how to move forward without that person, and sometimes anger and unresolved feelings that can linger for a long time. When someone dies, there is the need to be comforted, for some it can be to be alone with the immediate loved ones, and for others the need for a larger gathering of loved ones and neighbors and friends.

2. Jesus wept:

This passage is about the death and the resurrection of Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, and the one whom Jesus loved. It is a story of the incredible loss and pain that go with it, especially for the sisters of Lazarus.

When Martha called for Jesus to come to their home in Bethany, because her brother was sick, Jesus decided to wait a few days, because He had just arrived in the area across the Jordan River where John the Baptist had baptized Him and others. It was a strange reaction from Jesus, their friend, not to come immediately, because He loved Lazarus so much. For them it was an urgent call, because they needed Him to comfort them, and for Jesus, in His mind, there was still time, because everything is in God's hands. As we continue reading, we see that He already knew that Lazarus had died, even though He told His disciples that Lazarus was asleep. For the disciples this was puzzling, but they knew they were dealing with their Lord, the One who knows what to do. For Jesus to get to Lazarus in Bethany meant He had to return to Judea, where He had stones thrown at Him in

Chapter 8 by the Jews for claims He made about Himself that He was the Son of God, and the fact that He was born before Abraham. His disciples were concerned about His and their own safety. Jesus knew He had to take this dangerous journey. It was a journey He had to take, not just to see Mary and Martha and Lazarus, but a painful journey to the cross.

Jesus' responses to both Martha and Mary's words, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died," are very interesting. To Martha He sounded confident, saying her brother will be raised again, by which He meant, he will live again. I will raise him from the dead, but I will give him more than just his mortal life back. I am the life, and I am the resurrection. Death is not the end, Martha, by which she acknowledged that He is the Christ, yet not fully understanding what He was saying to her. His interaction with Martha revealed His divinity. Jesus' response to Mary took a different turn. When Mary spoke to Him, she was weeping, because her brother was already dead for four days, and had been buried. Where were you, Lord? To Mary, Jesus' full humanity is on display. He was disturbed by what He saw! The Greek word for His reaction, is *embrimaomai*, means He was deeply agitated and experienced a deep displeasure at what He heard from Mary. Jesus' visceral reaction, says FF Bruce in his commentary on John, is because of the presence of sickness and death, and the havoc they created in human life. Jesus wept at what He saw. He showed how truly human He was, fully incarnated into the human experience. He understood and felt the pain and therefore He wept.

3. They saw the glory of God:

This story, however, is more than the story about death. After He cried, Jesus acted. He asked that the stone in front of the tomb be removed, and He called for Lazarus to come out, and he came out, alive, still wrapped in the grave cloths. What a miracle! The story is about life and the One who is the giver of life. It is also about the glory of God, in the words of Jesus in John 11 v 4 after He heard the news about Lazarus, "*When he heard this, Jesus said, 'This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it'*", and verse 40, in response to Martha, "*Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?*" While we know that Lazarus had died, more important was the demonstration of the glory of God in the raising of Lazarus from the

dead. This passage shows us how divine He truly is. He speaks with a divine authority, and about the glory of God that is beyond the human understanding, but can be seen with the human eye if we truly believe. It is through the union of the Son with God, that the glory of God will be manifested in this miracle that follows, the resurrection of Lazarus. However, even though everyone there would see the miracle, Martha's faith will see something more, the glory of God, which is beyond the spectacular miracle. It is through faith in the Living God that reveals to the believer in Christ the divine presence of God, and that it is the divine presence that gives birth to the miracles we see in Jesus' ministry, and also in our lives, because our eyes have been opened to the work of the Spirit of Christ, of God. The glory of God which is too much for the human eye to observe, is made manifest in the miracles we can observe, and experience. The glory of God and God's miracles are therefore not out of reach for us, when we believe, Christ declares to Martha.

4. Conclusion:

In our mortal lives we experience illness, and through God's grace and the help of the medical profession, we get well, our surgeries and all the medical interventions out there are incredible. We pray for the sick and we aspire to have faith in God for the healing of ourselves and our loved ones. We also remind God of God's word about the promise of healing and the miracles of Jesus in His ministry on earth.

What stands out for me in this passage is how Jesus sees and listens to the agony of suffering. Because He is fully human, He understands it all. He stands in the situation, and He gets agitated, and He weeps. But then, when He speaks and acts and we see the resurrection of Lazarus, He reveals the glory of God for everyone to see. It is that glory we experience when we worship God in spirit and expect God to show up in ways beyond the comprehension of the human eye, ear and senses. We know then that God hears our prayers, and that God is with us. That is faith, as Jesus says, when you believe, you will see the Glory of God beyond illness and death. I pray that we all will believe, and see, and recognize the glory of God in the small and the large miracles in our lives. May God brings us comfort in the glorious revelation of God with us! Amen.