

Easter: Jesus Calls The Dead to Life
Glen - Apr 1, 2018

Message Big Idea: Easter is our hope. You see, Jesus calls dead people from the grave to be alive. Jesus IS the resurrection and the life! When things go bad, when we make bad choices or when the bad choices of others hurt us it can feel like a death. The good often seems lost - like the period at the end of a sentence. But with Jesus, death and disappointment doesn't have to be the period at the end of a sentence, but a comma. Jesus is our Lord of new life, new beginnings, new hope and second chances. When the world puts a period in our life, we put our faith in the living Jesus who changes periods to commas. Jesus is calling dead people to life, even today!

Main Idea: Jesus calls the dead to life!

Main Text: John 11:1-44 (21-27; 32-25; 43-44)

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. *"What's done is done!"* In what context have you heard this phrase? What does it mean to you? What are some specific ways you've actually experienced this?
2. Faith believes that *"It isn't over until God says it is over."* How have you experienced something that seems like it was over and done, but in fact, with God, that was not the case? Put another way, we often put a period where God puts a comma. Share a time when you thought something ended with a period when in fact it was a comma leading to something else.
3. Jesus was close to the family in the story in John chapter 11. Who do you most resemble in the story right now? 1) Martha - sad but hopeful and having faith (11:21-27). 2) Mary - sad and believing that the death or end of something is final (11:32). 3) Onlookers (11:37) - questioning the goodness and power of Jesus. 4) Lazarus - something in you has died.
4. Jesus said in John 11:25 - ***"I am the resurrection and the life."*** What does that mean to you?
5. One of the shortest verses in the Bible is John 11:35 - *"Jesus wept."* Why did Jesus weep? What does this tell us about Jesus and the nature of God?
6. What in your life feels dead, is over and done or gone? Has God said it is done or is this a comma that is waiting for what God will resurrect and bring to life? In what way is Jesus calling what is dead to life? Share what you are sensing now. Share your questions and hopes.
7. After Lazarus came out of the cave alive, Jesus told them to take off the grave clothes that wrapped him. What are the grave clothes, the things that wrap us up in spiritual death, that need to be taken off to really live?

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Message:

I'm so glad you've joined us today to celebrate Easter. Easter isn't just a holiday. It is more. It is our declaration that we have a powerful living hope. Jesus died. But that was not the end. God raised Jesus back to life. Jesus is not dead. He is alive! And because he is the resurrection and the life we have this hope - **It isn't over until God says it is over.**

Have you ever heard the phrase - "What's done is done!" It sounds so final. I don't know when I first heard it. But I remember the time I heard it and was crushed by it. I was in middle school back in the days before the digital world we live in now. For Christmas I got a desk lamp. But no, not just any desk lamp, it was a lamp with a transistor radio in the base of the lamp - you know the kind that needs a 9 volt battery. I was so excited. I could do my homework AND listen to the radio. What a world!

But I also decided that it was dumb to plug the lamp into the wall and also have to use a battery, so on Christmas night, just hours after I got this gift, I tried to connect wires from the cord from the wall to where the battery was to go. As soon as I connected the wires, a flash happened and a puff of smoke came out of the radio. I took the wires off and put the battery back in. No radio. I ruined the radio. It was stupid thing to do. Now, my dad, an electrical engineer, was not happy with me. I asked him if he could fix it and I knew he could because he built high tech communication equipment for the NASA. He said; "What's done is done!" I was heartbroken. For years I had to use a desk lamp with a useless radio.

There are things in life that we can't reverse. Once you send that ugly hateful text or email, you can't unsend it. I've wished I could have "unsent" more than one email or text. And once words leave your mouth, you can't take them back. What's done is done!

Today we are going to look at a story in the Bible about something that happened that seemed so final. It's found in John chapter 11. Jesus had a friend who was ill. His name was Lazarus. He had two sisters, Mary and Martha. The Bible says that Jesus loved this family deeply. He had often stayed in their home. They sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was seriously ill. But Jesus did not go to their home right away. In fact, Lazarus dies before he arrives. What happened seemed so final. Death is probably the most final thing we ever experience.

Let's pick up the story as Jesus arrives, after Lazarus's dead body has been put in a cave. I'm reading from **John 11:21-27 (pg. 733-734 - NIV)**. For those of you with us live online, we have a Bible app you can use. And if you don't have a Bible, we would love to give you the one in the seat in front of you. It's our gift to you. So as Jesus arrived and first met Martha: ***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***

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whatever you ask.” What’s done is done! Right?! It’s true of death. It’s true of so many things in our lives. Relationships end. Dreams die. Abilities fade away. But Martha also has faith. She believes that **It isn’t over until God says it is over.** Let’s keep reading...

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.” Martha believed something that was a common belief in that day - that all people will be resurrected when the world ends. Some will rise to eternal life and some to eternal separation. So what Jesus said was no surprise to her, it would happen someday.

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. What Jesus says about himself here is the foundation of our faith. Jesus is the resurrection and the life! That is now, not just for the future. Jesus said: “I AM”...now! He alone is the one who can give new life to people and promise a life that never ends. Anyone who believes in Jesus will live, even when they die. **Death is not a period, but a comma.** Death is no longer the final period of our lives. Rather, death is a comma that leads to something greater.

And then Jesus asks: ***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.”***

Jesus asks Martha; “Do you believe this?” This is THE question! And it is the most important “yes” we ever say. Do you believe that death is not the end? Say “Yes!” Do you believe that Jesus is alive and gives life? Say “Yes!” Do you believe that Jesus calls the dead to really live? Say “Yes!” You see... **Jesus calls the dead to life!** That’s our hope. That’s what we need. We need to know that death is not the end.

Martha believed, even though it was hard to believe. When Martha first met Jesus she told him that if he had been there, he could have healed Lazarus and saved him from death. She knew Jesus had healed people. But then she says something profound. It was easy to miss as we read verse 22 - “even now...” ***EVEN NOW God will give you whatever you ask.*** New life, rebirth isn’t just something for the future. It is for NOW, even now, when dreams seem dashed, when relationships are broken, when hope seems distant, and when the odds are stacked against us. Even now there is the hope of resurrection, new life, a second chance and a new beginning. That is what Easter is all about. **Jesus calls the dead to life!** Jesus wants to bring to life to whatever has died in us and needs to live again. With Jesus, we don’t have to put a period where God put a comma.

The story isn’t over. Martha does believe. But Lazarus has been in a cave, which was his grave, for four days now. It seems like Jesus was four days late. God asks us to wait. There is often a pause which seems like a death. The comma in our lives can sometimes be four days, four months or four years in length. But faith doesn’t settle for periods, it looks for commas. The grave is like a period - it seems final. And we face many periods or deaths as we live. A period is when we allow our God-given dreams to

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be put six feet under. Disappointments don't have to be the end. When an adoption falls through, it doesn't have to be the end. When the relationship ends, it doesn't mean that life is over. When people betray us, it doesn't have to be a period. When we file for bankruptcy, it doesn't mean the future is lost. Why? Because Jesus is alive and gives new life. He is the resurrection and the life! Jesus is able to bring whatever has died to life, because **Jesus calls the dead to life!**

The story isn't over. Jesus then met the second sister, Mary, in John 11:32-35 (pg. 734 - NIV). ***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.

Verse 35 is one of the shortest verses in the Bible. Jesus burst into tears. Jesus lost it! Don't miss what's happening here. Jesus is God who came to us in a human body. God sheds tears. That is one of many reasons why God came to us in Jesus. We need to be reminded that God sheds tears! Then, when Jesus actually arrives at the burial site, the story says in verse 38 that he lost it again. Jesus, God himself, wept in compassion for those who were weeping.

Then Jesus told them to move the stone covering the cave but Martha protested. The dead body had been in there for four days. It will stink, she said. And Jesus reminds her to believe and trust in a good God. And here's what happened next in John 11:43-44 (pg. 734 - NIV) - ***43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"*** Can you imagine the moment. Jesus tells a dead man to come out. I imagine there was a moment of silence. What if nothing happened? The crowd was focused on the cave. ***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."***

This is an amazing moment. Lazarus is raised from the dead. A dead man comes back to life! Incredible! Then Jesus asks them to remove the grave clothes. That's what Jesus wants to do today for all of us. He wants us to really come alive! He wants us to take off the grave clothes that the world has put on us. Over and over things die or end and we put on more and more grave clothes. But they are only temporary. They are a comma, not a period. It is only with God and in God that we'll experience new beginnings and new life.

Of course this miracle foreshadows Jesus' own resurrection. Jesus will die on a cross. He will be prepared for burial and wrapped in grave clothes. He will be put in a cave and

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the stone will cover the entrance. And 3 days later, God raised Jesus from the dead. That's the story and hope of Easter.

This miracle also foreshadows our own resurrection. He is calling you out of whatever grave you have dug. He wants us to believe that what's done is not always done. If we make the decision to follow Jesus and if we truly believe and trust in Jesus, we too will not stay in the grave. Jesus will resurrect us to life that never ends. That is our hope. That is what our faith is all about. The resurrection of Jesus is the promise that life on earth is not the end. But it also a reminder that the many deaths and setbacks we experience before we die are also not the end. When those we love betray us, when a dream is dashed, when something ends before it should, when we are disappointed, these do not have to be periods, but commas. **Jesus calls the dead to life!** He's calling you to life!

So let me ask this. What has died in your life? Your passion? Purpose? Faith? Hope? Love? What are the "dones?" Where have you put or allowed a period to finish something? Has God put that period there? What robs you of life? Jesus helps us overcome the worry, fear and anxiety that kills real living. What needs life or new life? A relationship? Your emotions or energy? Do you need a new beginning with a meaningful purpose. Has hope died and you need that resurrected? Real living isn't just trying to live life safe and comfortable to arrive safely to death someday. That is so short sighted. God wants us to live life to the full now. With the living Jesus, we can experience real life now. And I say that as one who has experienced the power of the living Jesus who transformed me from a young man who was once fearful, disengaged and just lost to be able to live a life filled with adventure and impact.

Don't miss this. Jesus is calling, inviting us to come out of the tomb and into life. He's giving us a second chance, a second life. Jesus died on the cross to be the one complete and final sacrifice for all our sins, mistakes and failures. We are fully forgiven in Jesus. He took care of our past - whatever we have done is done - in a good way. But Jesus didn't die on the cross just to make bad people good. He died to bring dead people back to life! And he wants to do that before we die!

Let me suggest a couple of ways we can respond this Easter day. You might have come here today thinking that church is just a tool of religion that has no relevance to you or your daily life. I hope in the short time you've been here you might have gotten a glimpse that our church is different. We are not interested in being religious or making you religious! Jesus never came to create a religion. In fact, Jesus came to free us from religion. Religion is man's way to be good but religion can't give life to what is dead. Religion is a frustrating and painful way to get a new life. In fact, religion can hinder us from experiencing new life. So starting next week, we are going to do a series called *Lose Your Religion*. We are going to explore why religion is a dead end and how we can experience real life through a relationship with Jesus. I believe these messages will free us from the grave clothes of religion to allow us to walk in relationship with God as

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we follow Jesus. Join us. When you came in you should have gotten invite cards that you can use to invite others to join you. You can grab some on the way out too.

But what about right now? I want to ask you the same question Jesus asked Martha: "Do you believe this? She said "Yes!" Yes to Jesus can change our life. And maybe today you are ready to say "yes" and really start living and start over. You are ready for a new life, a second chance and new beginning. Jesus is calling you out of the grave of selfishness and self-centeredness to start following him to a new start. Today decide you are ready to follow Jesus and the way of Jesus.

If you have said yes or are ready to say yes to Jesus, then here's how you start this new life. It is something Jesus asked us to do - be baptized. Baptism is a vow we make to Jesus - that we'll follow him to the best of our ability going forward. Baptism is also a picture of new life. In baptism, you stand in the water and declare to God and others that you are ready to die to the old ways. They weren't working and that way of life is done! You go into the water like going into the grave - a watery grave. But you don't stay there. You come out of the water which is a symbol of your resurrecting to a new life of following Jesus. You promise to follow Jesus to the best of your ability going forward.

In a moment I'll invite you to come to be baptized as we stand and sing a song. Maybe you've known Jesus and loved God for a long time but never made the promise to follow Jesus in baptism. Come. Maybe you were baptized as a baby and you honor your parents for that. But you now realize you never actually made that decision for yourself. Come. Maybe you are ready for the first time to follow Jesus into a new life and new beginning. Come. We have everything you need - private changing rooms, clothes to be baptized in, towels and lots of people to help you. Don't hesitate. On Easter, when we celebrate new life, there is no better time to begin your new life. So as we sing and stand, come down here into the auditorium and go to the door near the stage on your left. We'll have folks there to help you and guide you. Jesus is calling you to come out of the grave to life. Let's stand and sing:

Invitation song: Grace to Grace w. video stories.