

6/12/2016

ESF, Lord's day service message

## **The Ultimate Victory**

John 11:32-44

<sup>32</sup> *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."*

<sup>33</sup> *When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.* <sup>34</sup> *"Where have you laid him?" he asked.*

*"Come and see, Lord," they replied.*

<sup>35</sup> *Jesus wept.*

<sup>36</sup> *Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"*

<sup>37</sup> *But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"*

<sup>38</sup> *Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.* <sup>39</sup> *"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."*

<sup>40</sup> *Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"*

<sup>41</sup> *So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.* <sup>42</sup> *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."*

<sup>43</sup> *When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"* <sup>44</sup> *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."*

Before Christopher Columbus was born, the motto of Spain was *ne plus ultra*. This is Latin for “no more beyond.” The Spaniards believed that they’d already discovered everything worth discovering. One of the most beautiful monuments to Christopher Columbus today is a statue in Spain of a huge lion with the words *ne plus ultra* underneath. However, the lion is eating the first word *ne*. All that can be read is “more beyond.” This was Columbus’s greatest legacy—he proved that there was more beyond.

Jesus, too, has shown us that there is more beyond. Like the Columbus monument’s lion eating the words, the Lion of Judah erased the notion that death was the end. Through Christ’s death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, we can all say with assurance that there is more beyond death! (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

We have been or will be in a sorrowful situation because of someone’s death—death of a parent, close friend or child. The sorrow of death does not come only in physical death, it may come as the result of death of a marriage or relationship, the death of a career or the death of hope.

Death is the most powerful force in the world. There is no power which can overcome death. But in this text, Jesus overcomes the power of death by raising a dead man from the dead. By overcoming the power of death, Jesus gives us the ultimate victory— the victory over death.

### **Not according to man’s expectation but God’s plan**

When Jesus overcame death, He did not do it in the way people expected. He came to the family of the dead man four days after the man was dead and buried. He seemed to have come there too late to do anything for the dead man. So the sister of the dead man said to Jesus: “*Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*”

Why did He not come to Lazarus before he died or even right after he died? Why did He delay? Some people who came there to comfort the dead man's family said: *Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?* They wondered why Jesus came so late after everything was over.

Have you ever felt that way? You may have similar discouraging feelings while you are seeking God's help. When you need God's help desperately, and pray to God earnestly for His help, God may not answer your prayer as you expect. And everything seems to be over.

Then why does God not help you as you expect? Here Jesus gives the reason by what He said to the dead man's sister: *Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?*

Jesus said that the reason He delayed help was to let them see the glory of God. While Jesus delayed, Jesus followed God's plan. God's plan was to raise the dead man from the dead. God's plan was to reveal His glory by doing something impossible by man's standards. By turning the impossible into the possible, God wanted to receive glory from them. To follow God's plan, Jesus delayed. And by God's plan, it was not over.

Even if everything is over by our understanding, it is not over in God's plan. Even if it is too late for us to receive any help, it is never too late for God to help. So don't stop believing in God's help, even when everything is over according to your own understanding. Even if you cannot see anything bringing God's glory into your life, Jesus sees it differently. So even if it seems everything is over, just believe that God has a plan for you to give Him glory.

**Through God's sympathy with our sorrow and pain**

When Jesus came to the tomb where dead Lazarus had been buried, his sister Mary was in deep sorrow for her brother's death. When she saw Jesus, she said: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Mary poured her sorrow out to Jesus.

When her brother was sick she sent people to ask Jesus to come and heal her brother. But He did not come to her family when her and her family needed His help the most.

When tragic things happen, when the power of death hits our lives, why can we not see help from God? Does He not know our pain? Does He not understand our sorrow? Does He really care?

Yes! He understands and cares. How? By sharing our sorrow and pain. When Jesus saw the dead man's sister and the people weeping in deep sorrow over her brother's death, Jesus also wept. It is a word that literally means "He broke into tears." Jesus shed tears.

Jesus did not weep over the dead man. He knew He would raise him from the dead. He knew that in a few minutes the weeping crowd would rejoice by seeing the dead man's resurrection. So He did not weep for the dead man. He was weeping for the family and for the people there. He wept because He felt their sorrow. Can there be anything more beautifully descriptive of the nature of God than this? God sympathized with people in sorrow. God who sympathizes with us brings comfort beyond our understanding.

On April 20, 1999, John Tomlin, a student at Columbine High School became the first victim of the Columbine massacre. The death of this bright and ambitious young man left immeasurable hurt in the heart of his parents, John and Doreen Tomlin. Doreen, a deeply committed Christian, shared her story of pain in Today's Christian Woman. The intensity of her grief is felt as she told of a two-week period where she

just sat in her son's room. She left everything exactly as it had been the morning of her son's death. During this time she simply held and rocked his clothes. She so longed for his return that she frequently asked herself, "Am I going crazy?" Her journey through grief obviously has not been easy, but she notes, "I've experienced God's comfort in a deeper way than ever before. He hasn't taken away the pain of grieving, but he has become my partner in it." She went on to say, "I know I face a long road ahead, but I know that God will give me what I need in abundant measure."

Sometimes we feel that Jesus is doing nothing for us although we believe in Him. But Jesus shows us here that He is always doing something for us. He always shares our sorrows and pains. Jesus weeps when we weep.

Jesus Himself knows about deep sorrow from His own life. Isaiah 53:3 says, *He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Jesus wept! Those two words let us know that God is concerned about the things that break our hearts! God sympathizes with our pains and sorrows. By doing so, God lets us approach His throne of grace with confidence, and brings us victory over death. Hebrews 4:15-16 says: *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

### **With the power of God's word**

After weeping with those who wept, Jesus told them to take away the stone which covered the tomb. Beyond the stone, there was only the

corpse of a dead man. The corpse had been there for four days. Martha, the sister of the dead man, said *“Lord, by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”*

None of the people there understood why Jesus told them to take away the stone. So, they were reluctant to take the stone away from the tomb.

But, Jesus told them again to remove the stone: *“Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”* Jesus encouraged them to believe in hope against all hope. Finally, people obeyed Jesus’ word and took away the stone from the tomb.

And, Jesus prayed: *Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 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.* With this prayer Jesus called in a loud voice: *“Lazarus, come out!”* And the dead man came out alive, with his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus raised the man from the dead by just saying three words: *Lazarus, come out.* The power which brings victory over death is in the word of Jesus. In these short three words, Jesus conquered the power of death.

When you seek Jesus’ miraculous help, seek His word first of all. Before you seek anything else, seek the word of Jesus. When God created the universe, He used nothing but His word. He created everything with His word: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.* (John 1:1-3).

Here, we also can see that there is a remarkable combination of divine intervention and human effort in our Lord's miracles. Jesus could have raised the dead man from the dead without man’s help. But He did it

with the help of people removing the stone from the tomb. Jesus performed a miracle when people obeyed His word by their action. To see a miracle, we have to obey what the Lord tells us to do even if the word does not make sense at all to us.

Do you want to see God's help and His glory even when everything is over? Jesus can speak to every hopeless situation, to every hopeless individual, to every hopeless circumstance and bring hope and victory! In Jesus who has the power of the resurrection, we can turn every defeat into victory, every sorrow into joy. Try to listen to the word of God. Just obey what He may say to you.

You may have a dead Lazarus today in your life. You may have something which is dead, which is lost. You may have given up all hope. But Jesus is saying to you: *Have hope against all hope and believe that I will raise it up again. Keep obeying my words.*

Mothers don't lose heart if God has spoken to you about raising up a spiritually dead son or daughter. Wives don't lose heart if God has spoken to you about raising up a spiritually dead husband. Businessmen don't lose heart if God has spoken to you about raising up a bankrupt or closed business. With faith in Jesus' resurrection, don't give up on people even if they have hurt you and betrayed you. With faith in God's power of the resurrection, revive your dream again even if it has been shattered.