

**(LAZARUS RAISED) IT IS NEVER TOO LATE FOR JESUS
(JOHN 11: 38-44).**

We all believe that death is the great enemy. Many of us may live in denial of it because our culture tries to hide from death. We don't see bodies in the streets as in some parts of the world. The dead go straight to the morgue/funeral home. Out of sight and out of mind! Many don't want to see a dead body. Fewer have witnessed a person actually die. We don't like to talk about death. But it will happen to us. Every one of us, one day, will go! Does that sound harsh? Yes, Death is harsh! As we confront the reality of death, we also appreciate the hope of the Resurrection. *There is nothing like the Resurrection.*

John 11 begins with a sick Lazarus. His sisters Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus to come to his friend, but to Jesus does not go right away. He delays for two days until Lazarus is dead because he knew exactly what he was going to do even when Lazarus was stinking.

As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was approaching the village, she went to meet him. Mary remained seated with mourners at the house. This isn't strange! Is it? Was there a reason why Martha went out to meet Jesus while Mary stayed put? (v.20).

Martha's words to Jesus must have been hard to hear: "*Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died*" (v. 21). Given his great power and the signs he had performed already, Martha believed that Jesus could have prevented Lazarus' death. What she said next was extraordinary: "*But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you*" (v. 22). She has no idea what Jesus was about to do, yet she had some hope. It is as though she is saying, "I don't know what you are going to do but *even now* it is not too late for you. Jesus immediately comforted Martha saying, "*Your brother will rise again.*" (v. 23). Martha didn't understand what Jesus was going to do as she said: "*I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day!*" "***But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you***" (v. 22). She expressed hope beyond hope in the phrase ***even now!*** She held on to her Jewish belief in the Resurrection of the dead that will occur on the last day Dan 12:1-2. Her current hope was in the ***even now*** phrase! What is your, hope/ expectation ***even now?*** Is it over when you die? What is your, hope ***even now?***

Jesus wants to redirect our faith like He did with Martha's. He wants us to understand that our lives are in his hands just as he affirms saying, "***I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die!***"

I don't think Martha understood at that moment what Jesus said. What does that mean when Jesus says *Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live*? Why does the resurrection occur to those who believe in Jesus? Jesus says, *"Do you believe this?"* Martha said, *"I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."* Martha seems to understand the connection between the Christ and the Resurrection. She seems to remember the LORD promising David that one of his offspring will rule on the throne that God will establish forever. If this Messiah is to rule forever, then surely he will not be ended by death. Either he will never die, or if he does die, he will not stay dead. That is the connection between Jesus and resurrection or the Messiah and the resurrection Martha seems to understand it. But she also believed in the *"even now!"* So, when we grieve, we must grieve with hope of the resurrection *even now*.

Mary strikingly, expressed the feeling that *"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."* (v.32). Mary didn't express the *"even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."* Mary knew Jesus could have prevented Lazarus's death. But now Lazarus was dead and that was it! There was no more hope of even now! Mary did not entertain the idea that Jesus could do anything now because two days had passed and Lazarus' body was already stinky. Death, after all, is the great enemy. Jesus might to heal the blind (John 9), turn water into wine, etc., but *no one* can do anything about death once death comes. Right? Mary lacked the *even now* hope for the resurrection!

With all our advanced science and medicine, the best we can do is *delay* death. We can put it on the hold for some time. But we cannot prevent it from happening in the end. And once it happens, there is nothing we can do about it, just like Mary. The finality of death is clear to all man — past and present. Mary accepts this finality and there is no hope.

But in Jesus there is always something; there is always the *"even now!"* Jesus' comfort to Mary was nonverbal: *"When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, he was angry in his spirit and troubled"* (v. 33). Most translations say, *"He was angry!"* Why was He angry when he saw Mary's grieve?

Jesus was angry at the tyranny of death. He was angry to see what death does to relationships and to those left behind. Death is awful. It's terrible. This reason for Jesus's anger makes sense! Could it be that Jesus was angry and troubled because Mary grieved as one without hope? In fact, Jesus got angry a second time in response to what Mary's fellow mourners say: *"Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"* (v.37). Jesus' immediate response was again to become angry. Could it be that he was angry because the mourners too lacked hope in the face of death? Yes, the crowd knew Jesus was powerful — he opened the eyes of the blind man — he could

have *prevented* Lazarus's death. But once death has occurred they thought that not even Jesus could do anything about that, right? *Wrong.*

Neither Martha nor Mary knew that the story would end with a resurrected Lazarus. Mary saw death as the end, and not even Jesus could fix that. But Martha put her hope to work together with trust that Jesus could always do *something*. We should be more like Martha, Shouldn't we? Jesus is able to do exceeding, abundantly, and above all we can ever imagine to all saints who have gone before us. They are the blessed sleepers who will be raised to life eternal. Jesus says, "*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die!*" Jesus will call all who have aslept in him by name, Lazarus come out! James come out! Agnes come out! John come out! Mary come out!! Come out!! Come out!! All of you Come out Amen!! It is never too late with Jesus. Amen!