

"Uncertainty of Mortality"
John 11:17-44

Wow, little did I know when I selected our Lenten theme: **Embracing the Uncertain**, how appropriate it would be...these truly are UNCERTAIN times. The Coronavirus, Covid 19 has taken over our lives....the symptoms we are seeing are: Panic, Fear, and Anxiety because of the uncertainty of it all.

Panic....will not have what you want or think you will need. Hand Sanitizer, Food, water, toilet paper. Panic spreads...it is contagious. The evidence is seen in the empty shelves of the grocery stores.

Covid 19 is serious...we all know that....the uncertainty is, How Long is this going to last and how are we going to manage? What's going to happen...next?

Fear is contagious....it spreads. Maybe it has spread to you? Why? Loss of Control. Acting out of fear...trying to get control back of the uncertain. When you don't know what's going to happen in the future....you lose HOPE. We need Hope...we need it as we need food & water....we need Hope to live.

But part of our fear is our own mortality...the fear of death. The Lenten season begins with Ash Wednesday's reminder that we are "dust and to dust we shall return" it is a difficult reality to ignore. Yet the message of Lent is to prepare us for Easter! You see, even in the midst of death....there is Hope! (Read scripture)

It was death that greeted Jesus when He arrived at Bethany. The 1st thing Martha expressed to Jesus was her understandable grief and anger: **Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died"** She blames Jesus for Lazarus' death...when someone dies, the first thing we do is to want to blame someone...Martha blames Jesus..."if you had been here," you can almost hear the pain...and the anger in her voice..."if you had been here."

Yet even in her anger and grief....there is still hope. For in the very next breath she says, **Even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of Him.** "Even now -

...Martha has hope...hope in Jesus...she isn't sure what Jesus will do...whatever He might do...but her hope is in Jesus...and hope in Jesus is never misplaced Hope!

Jesus tells Martha that her brother will rise again. Martha thinks Jesus is talking about the After Life...and says she knows that. Yet that doesn't comfort her in the moment.

Jesus realizes that Martha doesn't get what he is saying...so Jesus says plainly: **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.** Immediately Jesus asked **Do you believe this?** That question, "Do you believe this?" Hangs there...and still rings out....not just to Martha...but to you and me. "Do YOU believe this?" Well....do you?

Many of us...just like Martha, answer **Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.** In other words, I believe in YOU JESUS...I believe in Jesus. Yet notice she doesn't answer the question....the question was...do YOU believe "that everyone who believes in Jesus...even though they die, will live....and everyone who lives and believes in Him will never die?"

So let me ask the question another way....When do you believe that your eternal life begins? When you die? If so, then we need to hear again what Jesus said: **I am the resurrection and the life.** The "Resurrection and the Life" was standing right in front of Martha...and she didn't see it...she is blinded by death and her grief. **Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believe in me will never die.** What Jesus is saying is....that your eternal life begins the moment you accept Jesus as your personal savior....if you believe in Jesus...then your eternal life has already begun.....even if....even if...you die....yet shall you live.

WOW...that's a Hope that transforms the way we live...doesn't it? That takes away the Uncertainty regarding our Mortality. And to prove it....Jesus goes to the tomb....if you have ever lost a loved one....hear those words....**JESUS GOES TO THE TOMB!** Thank you Jesus...that He still goes to the tomb.

Jesus told the people to roll away the stone that sealed Lazarus' tomb. Martha protested... like, Jesus don't you know he's dead? He's been in the tomb 4 days...there's going to be an awful smell of death and decay. **Did I not tell you that if you believe, you would see the glory of God?** So what happened? "So they took away the stone."

That is so powerful....**If you believe....You WILL See.** our scripture is of course about a literal tomb.

BUT figuratively.....**what stones in your life need to be rolled away?** What hopes and dreams have you sealed away because you thought they were dead? Let that question settle in... I'm going to ask it again. What hopes and dreams have YOU sealed away because You thought they were dead?

Let me ask another question: **What has died in you that needs to be resurrected?** Faith? Hope? Love? Perhaps Jesus is saying to you today...."If you believe" Roll away the stone! Are you going to protest....LORD, it is too late...my faith has died....all hope is gone....love stinks! The Resurrection and the Life is standing right in front of YOU....saying, "If You Believe, roll away the stone....and I'll do the rest."

Lazarus! Come Forth!

Feeling Uncertain? What needs resurrecting in your life today? Faith? Hope? Love? When all the things in life shall pass away....3 things remain: Faith, Hope and Love. But the greatest of these is.....Love.

Everything is contagious: Fear, Panic, Anxiety.....but Faith, Hope and Love are contagious also....what are you going to spread? May we spread: Faith, Hope and Love. Why? Because we...Believe in Jesus...the Resurrection and the Life.

Let Us Pray: *Loving Everlasting God, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, who is the Resurrection and the Life. In the midst of these uncertain times, may we trust in You. May Your perfect love cast out all our fears. In faith, may we embrace the uncertain, knowing that You are with us...and that You will protect us. In the sure and certain hope that even if we die, yet shall we live. May we live to Your glory as we share faith, give hope and spread Your Love. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*