

John 11:1-45

¹Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." ⁵Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." ¹¹After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." ¹²The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." ¹³Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

¹⁷When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that God will

give you whatever you ask of him." ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

²⁸When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³²When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵Jesus began to weep. ³⁶So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe

that you sent me." ⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

John 11:1-45, 2017

Today is a great day of celebration for Lily Lehr, for her family, and for us as a community of faith, as a part of her family in Christ as Lily is confirmed.

We are recognizing that she has completed her catechism studies of the faith we hold so dear, and is ready to take on the responsibilities of her relationship with God,

but of course with the continued help and support of her family and all of us here.

Lily will later affirm her faith in God who we understand to exist in the Holy Trinity,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Today may be a good time to talk about the communal, accessible nature of the God we know and experience in Jesus Christ through the witness of the gospel of John.

I am struck by what I have read and learned about our faith in my studies of Luther during this Lenten season I believe Luther's primary goal was to wipe away all the things that are not truly necessary to faith,

and unveil that things that are essential.

In doing that of course he ruffled many feathers. But it all came down to this for Luther, the Holy Scriptures.

The Holy Scriptures were his measuring stick for truth, for practice, for church life, for all aspects of life.

Four hundred and ninety-seven years ago Luther wrote about how it is a righteous, free and pious Christian becomes so saying,

“There is one thing and one thing only that is necessary for Christian life, righteousness and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God,

the gospel of Christ as we find in John 11:25.

“I am the resurrection and the life.
Whoever believes in me, though he die,
yet shall live.”

These are words Jesus spoke to Martha after she lashed out with her accusing words because her brother Lazarus died.

“Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died.”

Believe Martha.

God’s Word is filled with commandments and promise. This is a word of promise.

Even though you die, yet you shall live.

The focus of Luther’s work was on the Word of God.

He also said that the purpose of preaching the Word of God is to establish faith in the person that Jesus may not just be Christ, but personally be Christ for each and every one who hears.

I would go a little bit farther and say it is not only in preaching, but also teaching, reading and

studying the Holy Word of God that this faith is established,

and these are to be life long practices

In our listening, reading and studying we learn why it is Christ came, what he bestowed,

and what benefit it is to us to accept him.

That is what Catechism is all about.

It is about having listened so sermon notes are prepared.

having read the scriptures together and at home, individually and with family.

It is about having studied so there is study material, and there is work to do with family at home,

all of this to establish and nurture her faith.

In the Lutheran Church our children are baptized as infants, or a very young age.

Then later on they are given instruction, they are taught, they read and study.

Then they are confirmed in an affirmation of their faith.

That is what happens today.

Lily affirms, she says yes, this is what I believe. I believe in the God I have learned about, that we know and profess as the Holy Trinity;

Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

My prayer for Lily is that she has learned in her studies that:

Jesus came into the world, not to condemn the world, but so the world might be saved through him;

so that she might hear those words and be able to claim them for herself,

so that she knows and believes that Jesus came into the world, not to condemn her, but so that she might be save through him.

That Jesus came to die on a cross to take all her sins into that grave with him so she might know,

experience and have

all the grace, love and mercy he has to give.

That Jesus came into this world so that she will have life even though she dies.

In confirmation we use the Affirmation of Baptism service because it is in Holy Baptism that all these blessing are initially bestowed

And today Lily takes on the responsibility of her relationship with God established in the baptism that Kellie and Steve brought her to.

In her baptism into Christ through the washing with water and Word joined together Lily is bound to Jesus.

Luther put it this way:

“...faith unites the person’s soul with Christ as a bride is united with the bridegroom. Christ and the soul become one flesh and hold all things in common. Christ takes our sin, death and damnation while we take his grace, life and salvation.”

I don’t know if, as a 12 year old, you can relate to this analogy,

but he is saying that Jesus’ relationship with you is so intimate that

he is willing to make everything about you part of him,

and make every thing about him part of you.

Therein lies the benefit of Jesus coming into the world.

I pray that through your life you will experience the power of God’s love during those times that will be challenging, painful,

and the times that will be joyous and free like today.