

5 LENT APRIL 10, 2011 CYCLE "A"

TITLE: JESUS OUR DOCTOR GIVES US LIFE.

READINGS: Ezek. 37:1-14, Ps. 130, Rom. 8:6-11, John 11:1-45

Doctors are so busy these days that their offices give us the feeling of an assembly line. At one doctor's office the receptionist asked the man who had just come in what he had. He said, "Shingles." So she took down his name, address, medical insurance number and told him to have a seat. A half-hour later a nurse came out and asked him what he had. He said, "Shingles." So she took his height, weight, temperature and blood pressure, gave him a blood test, administered an electrocardiogram, and told him to take off all his clothes and wait for the doctor. An hour later the doctor came in and asked him what he had. He said, "Shingles." The doctor said, "Where are they?" He said, "Outside in the truck. Where do you want them?" Doctors just like pastors are used to being kidded. But if you ask the American Medical Association, what is the leading complaint of Americans about doctors; the answer would be the amount of time spent in the waiting room. Waiting is frustrating and seems endless when we are sick, or worse when we are worried about a loved-one who is ill, or undergoing an operation.

Jesus, our doctor, was very close to the family of Lazarus in today's Gospel. He had shared many enjoyable evenings at their home in Bethany only a short distance from Jerusalem. As he was teaching one day, word came to him that Lazarus was sick and would probably die. "Lord, he whom you love is ill." Certainly Jesus would come at once to the aid of his sick friend, for he was Lazarus' last hope. He had healed many other people, surely he would want to come and heal his very dear friend.

Instead of going at once to Lazarus, however, Jesus stayed where he was for two more days. What seems to us to make no sense is that Jesus was only two miles away. He could have been with Lazarus in a matter of minutes. Instead he purposely stayed where he was for two more days. How would you feel if you or a loved one went to the Emergency Room and had to wait forty-eight hours for the doctor to show up and treat you? You would be outraged! If a loved one died while waiting two days for the doctor you would be more than outraged, you would probably want to sue the hospital. But something extraordinary is about to take

place. When Jesus heard that Lazarus was ill 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.” Jn.11:4. By the time Jesus finally made his way to the home of Martha and Mary, their brother was already dead and buried. Our Gospel today is about much more than a family, dear to Jesus, suffering a death. It is about the world that lives in sin and death. The purpose of this story is to reveal Jesus as the resurrection and the life here and now.

When the time was right Jesus and his disciples made their way to Bethany. Martha ran out to meet him. Her first words to Jesus were, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Jn.11:21. Jesus assured her, “Your brother will rise again.” and Martha took that to mean that he would rise on the last day. But Jesus made his point, “I am the Resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” Jn.11:26. Then it was Mary’s turn to come and repeat those same words Martha used, “Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died,” as if there was nothing now that Jesus could do. But just as the dry bones had to wait for God, the giver of life to fill them with flesh and give them life as we saw in the reading from Ezekiel, “I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.” Ezek.37:10. Also today’s Psalm 130 verse 5 reminds us, “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning,” so too did Lazarus and his family have to wait for Jesus to come, Jesus who **is life** and the **giver of life!**

Dr. A. L. Jenkins was an emergency-room doctor for 48 years in Knoxville, Tennessee. In this capacity, Dr. Jenkins saw the best and the worst side of the field of medicine. But his most vivid memories are of those moments that are medically inexplicable. He tells us of a man who was dead on arrival. It was Dr. Jenkins’ policy to attempt resuscitation anyway. After fifteen minutes of CPR, the previously dead man began to show signs of life. The man sat up, looked around him, then said to Dr. Jenkins, “Oh, I wish I was still out there! It was beautiful!” The man would never explain what he meant, but would only repeat that the place he had been was “so beautiful, so beautiful.”

Eternal life is available to each and every person through Jesus here and now and it is so beautiful, so beautiful! It doesn’t depend upon us, but upon God. The relationship we have with Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, is what

leads us to eternal life. What is most important in our lives is the relationship we have with Jesus. We can live our lives as victors when we have a right relationship with Jesus. Paul hits the nail on the head for us in today's reading from the Romans, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you." Rom.8:11.

There was a nurse who, before listening to the heart beats of children, would plug the stethoscope into their ears and let them listen to their own hearts. One day she tucked the stethoscope into the ears of a four-year-old. Then she placed the disc over his heart. "Listen," she said, "What do you suppose that is?" Thump, thump, thump. He drew his eyebrows together in a puzzled line and looked up as if lost in the mystery of the strange tap-tap-tapping deep in his chest. Then his face broke out in a wondrous grin. "Is that Jesus knocking?" he asked. Well, maybe so. Maybe Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart today. Paul would think so. And just maybe Jesus is ordering the stone rolled away from your tomb today and calling to you as he called to Lazarus, "Come out, come out and live!"

As Lazarus walked out of his tomb with his hands and feet bound, Jesus said some very significant words, words of liberation: "Unbind him, and let him go." We, too, have heard those words of liberation. The most amazing thing about eternal life here and now is that we can live each day in faith, no longer living in fear of dying. Jesus has rescued us from sin and death, giving us new life. Eternal life begins here and now because we place our faith in Jesus, the giver of life. Do not pass up your opportunity of giving yourself to the Lord, Jesus in faith this Lent, this Holy Week, this Easter. Today Jesus calls to you: "Come out, come out and live!" **Amen.**

Pastor Barney