

## **Sermon for Holy Communion at Burton on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

Lord, as we come to your Word, we pray that you will open our hearts and our minds, that we may understand your will, and live in your love. For we pray in the name of Jesus our redeemer. Amen.

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An elderly man, who lived alone, wanted to till his sizable potato garden, but it was backbreaking work.

His son, who usually helped him, was recently sent to prison.

The old man mentioned this in a letter he sent to his son.

He wrote:

"I'm not sure exactly what to do.

I'm just getting too old to be digging the garden.

It looks like I won't be able to plant it this year after all."

A few days later, he received a short note from his son:

"Dad, for goodness sake, don't dig up the garden, that's where we buried the cash from the robbery!"

At 4 a.m. the next morning, the police arrived to look for the stolen property.

After digging for hours, they gave up, apologized to the old man and left.

A few days later the elderly gentleman received another letter from his son:

"Dear Dad,

Under these circumstances, that's the best I could do.

You should be able to plant your potatoes now."

Sometimes we're like the stubborn earth.

A stubbornness that stands in the way of experiencing a fully transformed life in Christ Jesus.

Instead of trusting God, instead of taking his commandments and promises to heart we let this flesh take control of our life. We let the flesh harden our hearts.

We don't allow the garden of our soul to be tilled.

We remain a potential garden, a potential garden in need of being tilled; tilled by the one who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life - by Jesus.

And a potential un-tilled garden will become hardened over time.

And today's Gospel lesson speaks to this...

Martha apparently bolder than Mary, went out to meet Jesus, perhaps to have a private conversation.

Immediately she affirms her faith by saying:

"Jesus, if you'd been there, my brother would've been saved."

Jesus said to her:

“Martha your brother will rise again.”

She responded:

“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”

Then Jesus shared these words with her:

"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."

Jesus proclaims I am the Resurrection and the life.

What did he mean when he said these words?

Are they the same thing or are they different?

When Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life," he was clearly claiming that he was the source of both.

He's the resurrection, which means that those who believe in him will live, even if they die.

This is the final resurrection the one that Martha spoke about.

Jesus was also making a statement concerning His nature. His divine nature.

He does more than give life.

Jesus is life, and therefore death has no ultimate power over him.

Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life

He offers life to everyone who believes in him.

They will never die.

For all eternity they will **never** die.

With a loud voice he proclaimed those mighty words:

"Lazarus come out!"

This story of Lazarus obviously foreshadows the resurrection of Jesus, but they're **different**.

Lazarus was called to a restoration of a mortal life.

Lazarus would face death again.

Jesus was resurrected.

He conquered death. He would rise to never face death again.

How many of us need a restoration?

How many of us need the hardened soil of our hearts tilled by God?

Jesus shared with us these words of comfort:

"Let not your heart be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me."

We often only trust what we can hear, what we can see, and what we can touch.

Yet nothing here on this earth will last.

Nothing on this earth is eternal.

Don't seek that which is material.

Don't put your trust .in that which is earthly.

Jesus also shared this beautiful promise:

"I will never leave you nor forsake you..."

These are words you can trust.

And he has assured us with this future promise:

"I am going to prepare a place for you..."

This Earth isn't our eternal home.

When we leave this side of eternity, when we leave this earth, this island in the universe; then we will reach home.

Our name is written there.

Our citizenship is there.

Our Saviour is there.

Our inheritance is there.

And our Lord is clear on how we obtain this eternal life:

"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."

In our gospel story the people obeyed Jesus and removed the stone from the tomb of death.

And that is what faith is all about.

Yielding every aspect of our life to allow Jesus to be Lord, Lord of all.

For In the midst of tears and weeping, with faith a disciple of Christ still trusts.

Still follows.

Faith doesn't mean that we won't feel pain, that we won't feel weakness, that we won't feel brokenness.

Faith doesn't even mean that we must fully understand.

Faith means that in spite of death, in spite of adversity, in spite of tears, that our trust remains in God.

For he is the resurrection and the life.

**Amen**