

That you may **Believe**

Funeral for Bill Sense
February 27, 2020

There hadn't been a happier home in the little village of Bethany. They had everything a family could possibly need. A comfortable home. Plenty of good food. *More* than that, like the Sense home, it was a home whose doors were open to many. They loved each other and they had a love for Jesus. A sure foundation for a happy home!

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany. So his sisters sent to Jesus, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."

Jesus loved Lazarus and Mary and Marth, so what did He do? What would we *expect* Him to do? What would we *want* Him to do? Come and heal Lazarus. Come and heal us. Heal our loved one. *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.* Jesus stayed. He didn't go to them. He didn't heal Lazarus.

(Denzel Nonhof)

Why? That's often the question, isn't it? Why God? God *loves* you, yet trouble comes to your home. Why? For your good. It might not be our definition of good. Our definition of good is what? Smooth sailing good. Everything going my way good. A here and now, touch and see good. That's the good we're looking for.

But God is working something far better than our here and now, in the moment, short-sighted, good. God is working all things together for our *ultimate* good. Our eternal good. *And we know that for those who love God **all things work together for good**, for those who are called according to his purpose.*
(Romans 8:28)

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this, he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ... Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there ... [In other words, it was a good thing I wasn't there. Why? How could that possibly be good?]

*"Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there ... **so that** you may **believe**"*

God is working all things together for your good. And what is good? That you might look away from yourself, look away from your life, look away from your circumstances. And that you might look to Him. That you might believe.

Believe what? No, not what, but whom. That you might believe, not in an idea, not in a concept, not in a theory, not in a set of facts. But that you might believe in a Person.

*"None is righteous, no, not one ... no one does good, not even one."
... Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.*

*... **But now** the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it [point to it] - the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ...*

(Romans 3:10-23)

... and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings [Well, they're no good, are they? How can our sufferings possibly be good?]

... we rejoice in our sufferings ... knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope ... (Romans 5:2-4) For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ... that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God! (Romans 8:18-19)

... Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there ... so that you may believe"

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live ..."

In other words, don't look to yourself for your hope. Don't look to perfect circumstances for your hope. Don't look to everything going your way for your hope.

Don't look to the future for your hope. Look to ME for your hope.

The resurrection isn't merely a thing, or a day, but a Person. And where that Person is, where Jesus is, there is hope, there is resurrection and there is life - even in a world of sin and death.

(James Douthwaite)

... Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." ... and he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go!"

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

(Romans 8:28-30)

Why? That's often the question, isn't it? Why God? God *loves* you, yet trouble comes to your house. Why? God is working all things together for your ultimate good. Believe in him - unto eternal life!

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

(Psalm 100)

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

(1 Corinthians 15:55-57)