

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Romans 8:6-11

John 11:28b-44

Sermon March 26th, 2023

Death Moves Jesus to Act!

I've walked with many people as they grieved the death of a loved one. And though everyone grieves in their own way, there is one common denominator. Death is greatly disturbing to us. It flips our lives upside down. It wounds us. It angers us. It changes us.

Whether it is witnessing the devastating loss we experience from a natural disaster or a war. Or walking with someone who is dying from a terminal illness. Death is greatly disturbing to us.

Whether it is getting that nightmare phone call or knock on the door informing you of the sudden death of a loved one. Or learning about a murder that happened in your community. Or grieving the death of your 95-year-old grandparent. Death is greatly disturbing to us.

Whether it is experiencing the dying or death of the institutions you hold dear. Or witnessing the death of someone's culture and language. Death is greatly disturbing to us.

Whether it is the death of the forest you used to camp at, or the death of the lake you used to spend your summers at. Death is greatly disturbing to us.

This is probably why we do everything in our power to ignore death. To suppress our feelings towards death. Death is greatly disturbing to us.

In our gospel, we see that Mary too is greatly disturbed by her brother's death. She cannot hold back the tears when she goes out to meet Jesus. She can't understand why Jesus took so long to respond to their news. All she can do is fall to her knees in tears, and ask why. Death is greatly disturbing to Mary.

Well, like Mary, like us, Jesus too is greatly disturbed by death. In our gospel, Jesus is so overwhelmed by the death of his friend Lazarus, and the wailing from Mary and the Judeans that Jesus can no longer hold back the tears.

But unlike us, who try to ignore death, who try to suppress our feelings towards death, Jesus is moved to act. Jesus is moved to breathe new life into our grieving hearts. Helping us see that though our lives will be forever changed from this death, we will come to a place where we will experience healing and redemption from our suffering. We will experience new life. Through Christ Jesus, God will put flesh on our dry bones. And breathe God's spirit within us.

In Ezekiel, we hear his vision of the valley of dry bones that represent the Israelite community in exile. And like Jesus does with us, Ezekiel gives hope to the Israelites from this vision that God will liberate Israel from exile. God will heal and redeem Israel from the death of what they used to be. God will put flesh on their dry bones and breathe God's spirit in them. Giving them new life.

Jesus is greatly disturbed by death to the point that he is moved to act on our behalf.

Like the Israelites, like Mary, Martha, the Judeans, like us, Lazarus the one who has died will also experience healing and redemption from his suffering. Lazarus will be raised from the dead.

Jesus is moved to breathe new life not only into those who grieve, but into those who have died, promising them and us when we die, that we will experience eternal life. That we will experience new life as well. That we will be in paradise with thee.

Yes! Death can be greatly disturbing for us. Yes! We experience the sting of death. But through faith in Christ Jesus and his promise of new life we also hope that with death comes new life. That though a tragic event like the earthquake in Turkey and Syria devastates us, we find hope that Jesus will breathe new life into these communities. That those who have died from this tragedy are in paradise with thee.

That though we grieve the death of a loved one in our lives we find hope in Jesus' promise that Jesus will breathe new life in us. Jesus will breathe new life in our loved one. Healing and redeeming us from our grief. Welcoming our loved one into paradise with thee.

That though our churches have suffered great loss over the years as this institution that we love so dearly is changing, we find hope in Jesus' promise that he will breathe new life into our churches. Whatever that will look like.

That though we grieve deeply for what happened to the indigenous people in the residential schools, they will experience healing, redemption, and new life from the suffering they endured. Being reconnected to their lost culture and language. Inviting us to be active participants in this healing and redeeming work.

That though we hurt when we see what is happening to God's creation, we find hope that Jesus will heal and redeem all of creation. Inviting us to be active participants in this healing and redeeming work.

That though Jesus himself suffers a horrific death, he rises on the third day, and reveals to those who follow him that new life is possible.

Yes! Death can be greatly disturbing. But through Christ Jesus we also bear witness to new life breaking through the ashes. We bear witness to the empty tomb, the resurrected Christ.

Let us pray, loving God, comfort us when we grieve. Give us hope in your promise that with death comes new life. As the church, help us share this good news throughout our grieving world. **Amen.**

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