

# The Resurrection & The Life

John 11:1-45

March 29, 2020 at Fairfield Grace

Last Friday, I joined religious leaders from churches and synagogues in Fairfield for the teleconference with First Selectwoman Brenda Kupchick and other town leaders.

They informed us what the town is doing to protect residents and we all decided to do our best to make ourselves available to all the Fairfielders and help our community get through this difficult time for us all.

We are very thankful for all those people, including reporters, medical professionals and civic, state and national leaders, for their extra endeavor to keep everyone safe. Aren't we?

We have to tip our hats to everyone working out there for us.

1

All the news we hear these days make us tired and depressed and down. They are scary and threatening.

More than 650,000 (exactly 674,466) infected by the coronavirus and more than 30,000 (exactly 31,619) died in the world as of yesterday. We heard that more than 10,000 people died in Italy.

The United States now has the most coronavirus cases in the world. The US has more than 120,000 cases and more than 2,000 death as of today.

Now our federal government is advising residents of NY, NJ and Connecticut not to travel domestically. Stay home. Stay home.

Connecticut has as of this morning, 1524 people infected by the virus and 33 death. Fairfield county we live in has 752 people infected and 15 death.

And as these numbers keep growing fast.

You might say, “Pastor Cho, Kun Sam. That is enough. We hear these alarmingly growing numbers and we are tired of hearing these depressing news. Please stop now.”

I am on the same page with you. I don’t know about you. Intentionally I turn the TV and my smartphone off and do something else, such as reading, praying, walking and listening to music. I need to maintain my sanity in the middle of the flood of the alarming news. How about you?

2

This morning. I do have a good news to share. I am glad you are here to listen to this good news.

It is awesome, amazing and incredible unbelievable news. It is the Good News. Are you ready to listen to this Good news?

Jesus raised Lazarus from the tomb where he was buried for 4 days. Yes, you heard it right. Jesus made Lazarus alive. Wow.

I am sure the Bethany Post put a big headline, “Dead Man Walking” in their evening paper and the Jerusalem Times “Dead man in Bethany out of tomb” in their morning paper. Wow Wow.

Incredible.

Is it really happened? How can a dead man walk alive out of tomb? It is a breaking news. It is a big news. It is a good news. Wow. A dead man returned to life.

3

Guess what. There is one more big news. More amazing, more awesome and more wonderful news! Are you ready for this news?

That is God raises you out of tomb today. God has a resurrection for you. God gives you a new life. God empowers you to have a new beginning. God is the resurrection and the life.

Most of us are like Martha who said: "I know Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." She didn't realize that Jesus *is* the Resurrection and the Life.

Jesus did not say, "I will be the resurrection and the life." Jesus said, "I AM the resurrection and the life."

Resurrection is a present divine activity taking place in our everyday life and Life is a present divine gift available here and now.

We all face many deaths that imprison us. What are those tombs you are imprisoned in today?

Fear or anxiety? Anger or resentment?

Loneliness? Pessimism? Low self-esteem?

Discrimination or Hatred?

Jealousy or greediness? Unforgiving or blaming?

Despair or desolation?

What keeps you from living freely and loving fully?

What tombs are you in now? Which tombs are you imprisoned now?

The Good News is that Jesus does not ignore us when we are suffocated and imprisoned inside the tomb.

Jesus has a resurrection for us. He offers you and me a resurrected and new life today.

Why? Not because of our goodness, but because of his mercy and love to us. Jesus wept. Jesus who wept is our Compassionate God who knows our pains and struggles and reaches out to help us.

Jesus resurrected Lazarus. He raised him up and brought him out of the tomb. "Lazarus, come out," he said. See how personal this was! He called him by name.

The same Jesus calls you by name today. Now, if you will listen real carefully this morning, you can hear him calling your name.

"Kun Sam, come out!" "Tom, come out" "(put your name), come out!"

"I am here. I want to and I will set you free from the tomb that is imprisoning you and suffocating you."

Can you hear Jesus calling your name?

If you will hear his call and respond in faith, Jesus will raise you up and give you a new start, a new chance, a new life. Jesus, Compassionate Savior, set you free. Jesus has a resurrection for you. He has the power to do it.

Yes, all we need to do is to hear Jesus calling our name and respond in faith. Then, we receive Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life. Then, Jesus, The Resurrection and the Life lives in and with us.

Living with Jesus, the Resurrection, we see a new beginning taking place before your eyes.

Living with Jesus, the Life, we see a new life celebrating before you.

Elsie Kerekes is one of us, one of three founding members still with us, living in the Crosby Common in Shelton. Whenever I visit her or talk with her, she mentions about her favorite song. One day at a time.

One day at a time. Day by day. Morning by morning. Jesus is calling your name.

“Here I am Lord” when you respond to him, you will be resurrected and renewed and recreated. Your daily living will be full of life and love.

Then, day by day, these Paul’s words will be ours. “Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Eugene Peterson translates this way, “Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace.” (The Message)

Daily, we can join Paul the Apostle saying with joy,

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Back to the ranch....

We find one more exciting news from today's story.

Notice what happens when Lazarus comes out of the tomb. Jesus turns to his family and friends and says, "Unbind him and let him go. Unwrap him and set him free."

The Bethany post might put a subtitle below the headline, "Dead Man Walking" that goes like "people touched him." The Jerusalem Times below the headline, "Dead man in Bethany out of tomb" "people helped him walking."

Why? Why did he ask family and friends to do so, instead of finishing his resurrection ministry all the way by himself?

Jesus knew how important we are to one another in this new life journey.

Jesus knew how important it is to have our family and our friends helping us, surrounding us with love, supporting us, encouraging us as we continue to live a new and resurrected life in this world.

Liz Savage, one of our faithful members is now under hospice at Bridgeport Hospital. Sooner or later she will die.

Whenever I thought of her, I felt bad that I did not call her more often and even blamed myself for not taking more time with her.

Last Thursday, since I was not allowed to visit her at the hospital, I called her and talked with her over the line.

Before saying good bye to me, she said, “Kun Sam, do me a favor. Please give my greetings to all the church family and friends. You are a good pastor. Thank you also for all you have done for me. I have been blessed by you. I pray for you and your family and Fairfield Grace.”

As I heard Liz talking these words, I noticed that tears filled my eyes. Yes, I cried. Her last words of kindness and encouragement set me free. She unbound me and set me free. I felt like an eagle, flying high up in the air.

Another phone call I had last week.

It was Pastor J. To my surprise, Pastor J called me in the early morning last Friday. I have been a caller and he a receiver. What a pleasant surprise. We had a good conversation for a good 20 minutes.

And before he hung up, he said to me, “Preach well, Pastor!” This is what he used to say to me every Sunday right before the worship service.

“Preach well, Pastor” I felt like hearing the Lord saying to me. “Kun Sam, do preach boldly. Do share the message with confidence. I am with you.”

Pastor J unwrapped me from timidity and anxiety and let me go free.

5

Fairfield Grace has been so caring and encouraging to me that I have been able to do what I have been called to do. I tip my hat to all of you.

I am sure you would join me to say, “I don’t know what I would have done without Fairfield Grace. I couldn’t have made it without Fairfield Grace.”

We are God's people called Fairfield Grace. We encourage one another, support and love one another as we do live daily as Easter people.

So I thank Jesus who calls your name. I thank Jesus who calls my name.

We thank Jesus who calls our names and gives us a new life day by day.

We also thank Jesus who gathers us as Easter people and strengthens us to love one another and pray for one another at Fairfield Grace.

So... we sing together with joy, "Thank You, Jesus! Amen! Thank You, Jesus! Amen! Thank You, Jesus! Amen! Hallelujah! Amen!"