

Sunday Sermon: April 2, 2017

Sermon Text: John 10:, 17-27; 38-45

Sermon Theme: The Savior has Power to Save.

¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴ Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

⁴⁵ Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.

I have always loved superheroes. This is a love that I have shared with my children. We sit together and watch the superhero cartoons and movies together. From time to time, you can even hear dad answer a question about radioactive spiders or gamma radiation.

So it was not surprising that that one of my children wanted to do a science report on the super powers of some of these heroes. They wanted to do some research on how they got the powers and if it were even possible to have these powers. After several days of research, there was a little bit of disappointment in the voice of my child when they realized that many of those heroes have powers that can't happen.

They realized that the science behind the super power wasn't real. There really isn't a radioactive spider, a being who gets powers from the sun, or gamma radiation that can turn us into super humans. They also realized that the things the super heroes did defied the laws of nature that we all live by. People can't really fly or pick up a mountain.

In short, they realized something that adults have known for a long time. Superheroes and their powers are made up. There are no mind-control beings, teleporters, flyers, people who can become really big or small or people who shoot laser beams from their eyes. They are fun stories that make for blockbuster movies, but they aren't real.

While we know that superheroes and super powers aren't real, we read our sermon text for this morning and it has details in it that seem to come out of a super-hero movie. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. Seems unbelievable, seems made up. Unlike the super-powers of the super heroes, Jesus power is very real. Unlike those heroes who can't really do what they say they can do, Our Savior Jesus has the power to save, just as he says he does.

Why did Jesus do miracles? Some have said that Jesus never really did any miracles. They say that miracles in the Bible are just fables with the moral for us to treat each other kindly. Others have said Jesus was more like a magician than a miracle worker. It was the power of positive suggestion and positive thoughts and

feelings that helped people. Still others have said that Jesus did miracles merely because he loved people and wanted to help them be free from misery.

Why did Jesus do miracles? Jesus did miracles to prove to the people that what he was saying was the truth. Jesus did these miracles to show them that he was the Christ, just as he was saying, who did things only God could do.

There was an occasion early on in Jesus ministry that illustrates why Jesus did miracles. A paralytic man was lowered through the roof of a house where Jesus was preaching. The man's heart must have been heavy with sin because the first thing Jesus said to him was, **"Friend, your sins are forgiven."**

The Pharisees were immediately upset because only God can and does forgive sin. Jesus asked them, **"Which is easier, to say, 'your sins are forgiven,' or 'Get up and walk,' But so that you will know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, I tell you get up, take your mat and go home."** The man immediately got up, took his mat and went home praising God.

Jesus didn't act like a street performer. He didn't do a miracle and then melt away into the crowd as the people were staring with their mouths hanging open in disbelief. When Jesus performed these miracles he was always preaching and teaching the people that he was the Messiah and Savior sent from God to save all people. The people heard this message and they could see the proof in the miracles. No one could do miracles as Jesus could. Not even the prophets of old could perform miracles as Jesus could or heal in the way he healed. This man was special; he preached with authority and healed with the power of God.

Jesus teaching was not difficult. John records seven times that Jesus uses "I am" statements. When he said, 'I am the way and the truth and the life', 'I am the bread of life', 'I am the water of life,' he was teaching the people that he was the Son of God, the Messiah and Savior, sent from God to take away their sins.

In many lessons, even though Jesus' teaching was simple and his miracles showed that he was the Son of God and Messiah people still rejected him in unbelief. This lesson is different, we don't see unbelief in this lesson, Jesus uses this miracle to build faith and to prove he is a Savior who has the power to save.

The family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus were very close with Jesus and his disciples. When we hear of a close friend who is ill or is nearing death, if at all possible, we drop what we are doing to make the time to visit to say our final good-byes. Jesus didn't do that. It seems odd that although Jesus was close to Bethany, only 2 miles, about an hours walk away, that he didn't rush off to Bethany when he first heard that Lazarus was sick. Not only that, but Jesus doesn't even come in a timely manner, he waits until 4 days after Lazarus has died to finally go.

On arriving, Jesus is greeted by Martha. We remember Martha, she was the one who had gotten caught up in all the preparations of the meal and had missed the opportunity to sit at Jesus feet and listen to him preach with her sister Mary.

In the midst of her grief, Martha is not angry with Jesus for not coming sooner. She is not scolding him with her words. Quite the opposite, she looks to him in faith believing in him and knowing that he can raise Lazarus. **"Lord, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."**

Yet, the conversation goes in a completely different direction.

"Your brother will rise again."

"I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

What does our conversation with God sound like when we have troubles and trials in our life, when we experience the death of a loved one, or are even facing death itself? What do we sound like?

Do we call out to Jesus in faith, believing in him and relying on his promises? Do we believe that the Savior knows what is best for us and our loved ones, or do we feel that he has made a mistake in our lives and has turned his back on us?

Jesus' final response to Martha is and "I am" statement, **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."**

Jesus has just given Martha a very important truth to think about: Do you believe that I am the Savior? Do you believe that I am the one who will raise your brother from the dead when the last day comes? Do you believe that even though he is dead, he will rise again?

In the midst of trial and trouble these are the same things that Jesus asks us to think about. Do you believe that I am the Savior and the God of heaven? Do you believe that I am I control of all things and that my

hand is over all things for your good? Do you believe that I am the author of life and death and that I will welcome those who believe to his side?

Martha believes. ²⁷ **“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”**

Often our response when Jesus asks us if we believe in him, is nowhere near as faithful as Martha’s. We are impatient with God, not wanting to wait for his deliverance. We become angry with God: Why do I have this disease, these troubles, and not someone else? Why did you take my loved one from me?

Martha gave a wonderful declaration of faith which Jesus had led her to, now Jesus will show her her faith is not misplaced.

Jesus goes to the place where Lazarus is buried and asks for the stone to be rolled away. It seems Martha has taken Jesus words to heart, she believes that Lazarus will rise again someday, she just doesn’t think that that will be today anymore. She tries to stop Jesus from opening the tomb. **“By this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”**

Jesus prays, letting all who are there hear his call to his heavenly Father. “Father, let them see that I am the Savior who has the power to save that they may believe that you sent me.” Then he says, “Lazarus come out!” and Lazarus rises from the dead.

Jesus cemented many in faith that day. Jesus not only claimed he had the power to save, he showed that he has power over life and death by raising Lazarus to life. By showing us his power over death, Jesus shows he has the power to bring us to our heavenly life.

This is often what we miss when we are going through struggles and are upset, even angry, with God. We are looking for the earthly miracle, the earthly power, and we miss that Jesus has already done a miracle by giving us our heavenly home. We miss that Jesus came to prepare us for the life to come. His mission is not to save us for big houses, fancy cars, and longer lives here on earth, he came to save us from this earth and to bring us to heaven. And he has the power to do that.

Jesus does something that seems unbelievable. He raised Lazarus from the dead. He did this that we might believe that he is the Savior who has the power to save us . Amen