

Pastor Hugh Brown

John 11:25-44 "Living Hope"

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

²⁷ She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

²⁸ And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you." ²⁹ As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly and came to Him.

³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. ³¹ Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there."

³² Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³ Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. ³⁴ And He said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"

³⁷ And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸ Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been *dead* four days."

⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up *His* eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. ⁴² And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said *this*, that they may believe that You sent Me." ⁴³ Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" ⁴⁴ And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

Introduction.

1st Corinthians 13:13. "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love,"

Hope is included here in the list of only three things that will remain forever so this tells us how much value God places on hope. It is why God also specifically includes hope in one of the greatest promises in His

word, "I know the plans I have for you says the Lord, plans of peace and not of evil, plans to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11.

Another Bible verse also teaches us in more detail why hope is so important for us. Hebrews 6:19. "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which enters the Presence behind the veil." In the same way as an anchor keeps a ship steady/ immovable and safe during a storm, hope keeps us steady and immovable, and it protects our minds through all the storms of life. That is why it is called the helmet in the armour of God,

1st Thessalonians 5:8.

"Put on as a helmet the hope of salvation." The hope of eternal salvation in Jesus who is the Resurrection and the Life. This living hope of the resurrection is the central teaching of Christianity. 1st Corinthians 15:14. Here the Apostle Paul says if there is no resurrection then "our preaching is empty, and your faith is also empty."

The whole chapter of 1st Corinthians ch 15 right through to V58 is a detailed explanation of the resurrection. It is interesting that it finishes with these words "Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." steadfast & immovable, that is what our living hope does for us.

In today's Bible reading Jesus said "I am the Resurrection and the Life, whoever believes in me though he may die, yet he will live." There are some other very important and very precious things we can learn from this John's gospel chapter eleven today.

1. The Silence Of God. When God Seems Cold.(uncaring) V. 5-6.

This family was among Jesus' closest friends but when they needed Him the most He didn't even reply to their request.

When we read this it seems there is a big inconsistency between V5 and V6. We expect that if Jesus loves this family He will respond immediately to their cry for help but it says He didn't move for two more days. We might think it is strange that He did not rush straight away to be with them. The problem is we only see a small part of God's plan. We expect God to work according to our timescale but He doesn't.

V4 Jesus was not taken by surprise when this happened, He told His disciples from the start V4. "This sickness is not unto death but for the Glory of God, that the son of man may be glorified through it." This sickness and death of a very close friend of Jesus was one of the biggest episodes in the whole plan of God for Jesus' life. This incident is what made the Jewish leadership hold an emergency conference and finally decide to have Jesus crucified, V50. The crucifixion of Jesus is the central and most important event in all of history and this incident was the trigger to start it all happening. This was all planned in every detail, and it all happened at exactly the right time. Until now Jesus had often said "My time has not yet come." But Jesus knew this was it, the time had come to fulfill the purpose of His birth into this world. He would go to

His death on the cross at exactly the time planned by God. This is the incident that started the ball rolling and nothing happened by chance or coincidence.

Of course, Lazarus and Martha and Mary could not know this was all going perfectly according to plan. Jesus sometimes has to allow those who are closest to Him to suffer the most. The question and the challenge to us is, could God trust us with His silence when it seems everything is falling apart in our lives. The thing we need to remember at such a time is that the more He allows us to suffer, the greater the blessing we will experience later. After this so many people came to believe in Jesus through Lazarus' testimony that the Jewish leaders even wanted to kill him too. John 12:10-11.

V21 We often feel like Martha, and Mary, V21 "Lord if you had been here our brother would not have died." They are really saying, why did you not come sooner? Sometimes even while we are praying and crying out to God for help, the situation just goes from bad to worse, and even gets to what seems to be a complete disaster. We need to remember that God is never late, He has been planning every detail in advance and He can turn any tragedy into a triumph for us.

Our God loves to make a way where it is humanly impossible to make a way. This is one of the main characteristics of how God works because it is how He alone will get all the glory. We can see this all through the Bible, He leads us into an impossible situation and then says, "Stand still and see the Salvation of your God." One of the clearest examples is the crossing of the Red Sea. Exodus 14:13-14. God deliberately led Moses and His people into an impossible situation that looked like a dead end disaster, then He opened a way forward where there was no other way.

2. How Much Jesus Cares.V35.

This is often called the shortest verse in the Bible. The shortest verse but these two words show us one of the most important truths in the Bible.

These two words tell us that Jesus does care about what happens to us and He shares our feelings and He feels our pain as if it was His own.

Some of the people who saw Jesus crying completely misunderstood His tears.

V36 "see how much He loved him." They thought Jesus was crying for grief over Lazarus, but that isn't why He was crying. He knew from the start and told His disciples that He was going to raise Lazarus back to life. If He was crying because He would not see Lazarus again like the Jews were thinking that would have been false tears, but Jesus was never false.

When we look closely at the context of these words

V33. "When He saw her weeping and the Jews who were with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled." The reason He was crying was He felt their pain. This is one of the most important things for us to remember because we can easily think that God knows how we feel but He does not care. We see here that Jesus feels all our pain and suffering as if it was His own. The most amazing thing about Jesus' tears for me is that even although He knew that in a few minutes time, Mary and her friends would have nothing to cry about and would be laughing with Joy, but the thing is He still felt their pain as if it was His own in that moment.

We sometimes think when we are suffering, "why would God share our pain or our feelings when He knows this is just something we are experiencing temporarily. Here it was only going to be a very short time but it didn't mean He was not sharing their pain.

Acts 9:4. "Saul, Saul , why are you persecuting me?" He didn't say "why are you persecuting my disciples?" What you are doing to my disciples you are doing to me.

Matthew 25:40." The King will answer them and say in as much as you did it unto one of the least of these My brothers you did it unto Me." Explain that the context is the final judgement and it is the same for doing good or bad things to other believers. We all need to be careful what we say and do to other believers in Jesus because we are doing it to Jesus Himself.

Matthew 18:5-6. These words are some of the severest and scariest words Jesus ever spoke, but they also tell us how much Jesus cares about what happens to even the smallest of one of His believers.

Matthew 10:29-31. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore, you are more value than many sparrows." At first in our Christian lives we like to see God guiding us or helping us in big things that affect our lives. However as we progress in our faith we come to see that God is in control of the smallest details of our everyday lives. This is an even greater experience than seeing God's hand in the big life changing things. It is when we see that the God of all creation is involved in the smallest details of our lives that we learn in personal experience how much God cares for us. The more our faith grows the more we will see like Jesus that God is in control of every little detail, and the more we can see how much He cares about us. Who else would care about the number of hairs on our heads? Every time we wash our hair the number of hairs left changes, but God still knows everyone of them. The point of Jesus telling us these things is written in V31 "Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows..."

3. The Promise of Eternal Glory .V 40.

In today's Bible reading we started at V25 where Jesus stated clearly "I am the resurrection and the life," and then a few minutes later He proved it by raising Lazarus from the dead. Straight after this He said to Martha. V40 "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the Glory of God." Jesus is saying the same to each one of us today because He hasn't changed at all. "If you believe you will see the Glory of God." He has clearly promised this to every one of His believers.

John 17:20-22. This prayer of Jesus is called Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. In V20 it's clear He prayed this for us here and now who have come to believe in Him through the witness of His Apostles. Also in this prayer of Jesus for all His followers we can see what His priority is for us."And the Glory which you have gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as we are one."

Jesus said here that He has given us His Glory for the purpose of making us all one as He and His Father are one. Perfect unity the same as He and His Father had and He said this is the most powerful and effective witness that He is sent from God. "That the world may believe that you have sent me." Now if this is

clearly Jesus' priority for His followers, and it is the most powerful witness to the world who Jesus is, then surely it should be our priority as His followers..

I have often thought that an international church has a special opportunity to be a powerful witness for Jesus. Where there are people of different backgrounds and cultures who can worship the Lord in perfect unity it is like a foretaste of Heaven. In Heaven people from every nationality and race will worship in perfect unity so we should start getting used to it now. An international church is probably the best place to do it and Jesus will be greatly glorified and other people will be drawn to Him.

V24. "Father I desire that they also whom you gave me may be with me where I am, that they may behold My Glory which you have given me before the foundation of the world." Every believer in Jesus can look forward to seeing Jesus in the fullness of His Resurrection Glory. Jesus has prayed for this so it is definitely going to happen, no prayer of Jesus is ever unanswered.

John11:41-42.This is Jesus prayer just before raising Lazarus" Father I thank you that you have heard me, and I know that you always hear me but for the sake of those standing by I said this that they might believe you have sent me."

Conclusion

1st John 3:2 "when we see Him we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is." This means we all are guaranteed new resurrection bodies of the same kind that Jesus has and clearly showed to His disciples after His resurrection. A new resurrection body that will never grow old and never get sick again. This is the hope that is at the centre of the Gospel because it means we are going to see Jesus face to face and be transformed into His likeness.

This is the hope of the resurrection, and the hope of eternal Glory.

Jesus is the same today and says to you and me, "Did I not say to you that if you believe in me ,you will see the Glory of God."