

Sermon Series: Christ at the Crossroads—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—3/13/2005

Title: “Christ at the Crossroad of Death”

Text: John 11: 1-45

Intro.: “What if . . . (the Challenger and Columbia accidents) the unexpected inevitable”

Theme: Confronted with the inevitable consequence of sin in our life—death, we need Jesus, as the Resurrection and the Life, to lead us to chose the path to hope and life rather than the one of despair and destruction.

Our human, common reaction to death

- We joke about it
 1. We try with humor to cover over a very sobering reality
 2. **ILLS.: THE CRASH DUMMY MESSAGE**
 3. The Bible is very plain-spoken about why death happens
 1. “The person who sins will die.” Ezekiel 18: 20
 2. “And so death passed to all people because all sinned.” Romans 5: 12
- We live in denial over it
 4. Much of Western culture today traffics in the business of the denial of the onset of death
 5. Much of our lives and plans and existence makes no plan or concession for the possibility of death’s interruption
 6. **ILLS.: The Last Thing We Talk About (Death destroys beauty) Joseph Bayly**
- We fear it
 7. There is no delusions of self -trust when you face the moment of death (no make-over or 401k or vacation will help)
 8. **ILLS.: Quote from Joseph Bayly, The Last Thing We Talk About (living in the shadow of death)**
 9. But in the midst of that fear at the crossroad from life to death, God stands with his grace and hope
 10. *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me. Ps 23: 4*

When death showed up for Jesus and his friend Lazarus

- Sickness turns to death (**Print and read John 11: 1-16**)
 11. Mary and Martha and Lazarus never expected the illness to turn terminal
 1. **ILLS.: A chest cold turned life-threatening**
 12. Mary, Martha, and disciples expected Jesus, the Great Healer, to do something about it (*he whom you love is sick*)
 13. Jesus plan was to use this time to get Lazarus family and friends to focus on Him as their hope and salvation
 14. *Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. 1 Peter 4: 1*
- Delay leads to blame (**Print and read John 11: 17-37**)
 15. In the pain of disappointment sisters both said, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” (21,32)
 16. Fickle/cynical crowd, “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have kept this man from dying.” vs. 37
 17. Sometimes we listen to the howls of Satan convincing us that God is vindictive/uncaring/impotent and fall away
- Grief leads to faith (**Print and read John 11: 38-45**)
 18. When lying flat on our back looking up is when we are ready to look to Jesus for deliverance in face of our mortality
 19. Jesus leveraged Martha’s moment of grief to bring her to a crossroad of faith (**Read vs. 23-27, 39-40**)
 20. Is moment of death a time of our greatest faith boost? Are you preparing yourself and family for it to be that way?
 1. **ILLS.: Confirmation class field trip to the funeral home, tonight**
 21. Do you and I live as if we have faith that Jesus is **OUR** resurrection and the life?

Standing at the crossroads of life and death

- Choose faith's forward vision rather than intellect's backward glance
 22. Thomas could only see the potential of Jesus' death (*Let us go that we may die with Him. Vs. 16*)
 23. Martha could only see a rotting corpse (*Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days*)
 24. *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Phil 3: 20*
- Choose hope not despair
 25. *Brothers and sisters, we don't want you to be ignorant about those who have died. We don't want you to grieve like other people who have no hope. 1 Thess. 4:13*
 26. Preparing to process your grief for growth (that means talking about death, grieving, hope, and heaven)
- Choose to be in the process of living not dying
 27. *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (Vs. 25-26)*

WHAT IF

On a bright, crisp January 28th date in 1986, a gleaming space shuttle stood poised to be hurtled into space off the launch pad at Cape Canaveral, Florida. What made this trip stand out as unique from the previous 24 launches is that this was one carried this first general member of the public, a school teacher named Christa McCalliff. The decision to allow a non-NASA-non-military person on board the shuttle was controversial because of the concerns for safety. However, this highly publicized controversial portion of the flight was not where the real cause for concern was. Little know to any except a few top NASA officials was a decision to go forward with a critically flawed O-ring on the solid rocket boosters. Tests had show that if the outdoor temperatures at launched dropped into the 30's that the rubber would become brittle and possibly cause a critical and potentially catastrophic failure which would surely kill the crew and destroy the shuttle. The night before the launch forecasts were fore extremely cold temperatures. Launch controllers debated with NASA officials about scrubbing the launch. A decision was made to go forward because of three previous delays. The launch counted down 6, 5, 4—commit to lift off—3, 2, 1, liftoff. As the shuttle roared to life and slowly lifted off the pad, many in mission control thought that they had dodged a bullet. However, at 73 seconds the command for 105 % throttle up was barked out, the shuttle pushed forward and suddenly—a catastrophic explosion occurred. Stunned on-lookers and mission controllers looked on—first in confusion, then in disbelief, and finally in outright horror and grief. In the days and weeks to follow many **WHAT IF'S** were voiced. A lot of finger pointing occurred all because everyone belabored politically correct decision-making and wrongly designed O-rings and a school teacher placed in harms way on a technology that had not yet been perfected.

The Last Thing We Talk About (Death destroys Beauty)

Death destroys beauty. . .When the automobile's victim is human, when a child not a bird, a man not a mole lies dead on the road, we see the true nature of death. . .Beauty destroyed by ten pills, achievement terminated by a seven-story fall, youth's glory ended by a grenade, women and children charred by napalm: these are the faces of death. Coronary, cancer stroke, infection. Death comes, even normally, in a multitude of ways, to every human condition, every age. Shall we deny death and try to make it beautiful? A corpse is never beautiful, animal corpse or corpse of man. . . We cannot beautify death. We may live with it and accept it, but we cannot change its foul nature." (Joseph Bayly, *The Last Thing We Talk About*, rev. ed. [Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1973], pp. 14-15)

The Last Thing We Talk About (living in the shadow of death)

Dairy farmer and sales executive live in death's shadow, with Nobel prize winner and prostitute, mother, infant, teen, old man. The hearse stands waiting for the surgeon who transplants a heart as well as the hopeful recipient, for the funeral director as well as the corpse he manipulates. Death spares none! (Joseph Bayly, *The Last Thing We Talk About*, rev. ed. [Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1973], pp. 11-12)

John 11:1-45

¹Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. ³So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." ⁴When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." ⁵Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. ⁷Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." ⁸"But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?" ⁹Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. ¹⁰It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light." ¹¹After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." ¹²His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." ¹³Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. ¹⁴So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

¹⁷On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰When 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. ²²But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶and 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." ²⁸And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." ²⁹When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. ³²When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴"Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. ³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸Jesus, 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." ⁴⁰Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I 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." ⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The 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." ⁴⁵Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.