

Live Your Life 3-29-20

Every day is a new day. We really don't know what each day holds in store for us. We can plan our days weeks and months into the future, yet we make plans only to change them. A sudden storm arises, and the plans of the day may change to a day at home watching the gentle snowfall or the tumultuous wind and rain smacking against the windows of our homes, pummeling the rooftops. At times, an unexpected phone call from a friend or relative may alter what we thought were our well-made plans. So many things and people can change our days, but we should still awaken each morning happy to be alive and excited to live yet another day. For some, each day is the same, they wake up eat, wait for a couple of additional meals and go back to bed to do it all over again. Then there are those who can do whatever they wish, but never leave the comforts of their home, fear has made them a prisoner. Finally, and I hope this is most of us, there are those who go outside and do gardening, go out to eat with friends, shop, attend Bible studies, see the world and see it differently and more brightly each day. Yet, now in this time of quarantine even some of those items are off the board. But do not give up hope.

In the Old Testament in the words from the prophet Ezekiel is asked by the Lord to do something very unique. He is taken by the Lord to a valley of nothing but bones, no life is present but his own. The Lord tells him to order the bones to live if he, Ezekiel, thinks it possible. Of course, the prophet believes the Lord can do

anything and he follows his simple directions and soon the bones start rejoining. We all learned some or all the song telling us which bones were connected to which, but this gives that song true meaning as a prophet living long before those words were written watches it in real time action. He sees the hip bone reconnect to leg bones and so on, but it really isn't about the reanimation of just bones but people it represents. It was all symbolic of how dead the people of Israel had become without perishing. Sometimes we die a little each day not due to age, that happens too, but because we allow ourselves to dry out and give up. The Lord brought Ezekiel to this scene because he wanted him to lead the people back from this state of decay to life. God wants us to remain alive and not to die before our time. Even now with heightened depression due to our current circumstances, we cannot stop living.

We live such short periods of time even though some remain on earth many years longer than others, but relatively and in God's time it truly is just a blink of an eye. How we choose to take this precious time is up to us due to our free will God granted us during creation. We need to realize each day is precious, special, unique and live each one doing things we enjoy and with people we like or love. It may not always be a whole day because we have jobs and things that are expected from us, but even if it is one hour a day, we can truly say we are still living.

Lazarus was a friend of Jesus. We don't have the history to tell us how they met or why they became friends, but we know from the writings in the gospels they were indeed friends. Lazarus was never one of the disciples, so his friendship with Jesus was different. He was our outside of work friend to Jesus, someone he just liked hanging out with. Jesus is out and about working if you will and hears that Lazarus has taken ill, but oddly enough to the disciples he chooses to remain where they are an additional two days. Jesus had a plan, but he never seemed to reveal too much to anyone prematurely. Finally, when he does suggest returning to Judea the disciples become concerned as they had trouble there and were nearly stoned to death, now Jesus suggests returning to the very place they almost met their demise. Jesus informs the disciples Lazarus has fallen asleep, but they don't understand until he plainly says, "he's dead". Now what good was this perilous trip back going to do they must have wondered if he was dead, but of course, Jesus had a plan.

How much do we plan our future? We buy life insurance policies so our loved ones will not have to hold the burden of the funeral expenses. We take care to write wills to designate how our remaining assets will be distributed. We take out 401Ks to handle our money, so we don't run out when we need it the most. Yet, we really cannot plan what happens after we have left this earth. Plans go awry, money is not used as intended, family members argue over great aunt Helen's beautiful and

priceless artwork and in the end, we have no say at all. So, why not just live our lives while we have breath in our bodies and enjoy as much as is possible and still plan for the future?

Jesus gets back to Bethany after Lazarus is dead for a full four days. Martha, the more outspoken of his sisters comes to Jesus and questions why he could not have come sooner for his friend. Jesus informs her he will rise again, and she insists she knows what he means, yet she does not. We don't know the future and sometimes when we think it's all over for us, miracles do still occur. Mary comes to Jesus and cries pitifully at his feet, causing Jesus to weep as well. Yet the disciples stand by questioning his actions once again.

We question death constantly. Why so young? Why now? Why did he or she have to go first? What happened? So many questions, it seems nothing has changed. Why did the man who could make the blind to see not come running to save his friend from death? Perhaps they should have simply waited to see what he was going to do next. Life is a series of events. We live each day, planned or not waiting to see what happens next. It's like the best soap opera or evening drama you may watch, waiting to see how it all unfolds.

Jesus calls out to a tomb with a dead man. He summons him to come out, but how would that have been possible? He started out with a prayer to his Father in heaven. He asks him to make happen what he plans to do. He knows all who

see it will come to the Lord and believe, but it's a big miracle and he needs God's help more than ever to make it all happen. Finally, he calls out as loud as he can for Lazarus to come out, "Lazarus, come out!". Lazarus emerges from the tomb. Yes, he was bound in linens used to cover his body after death. He probably had a strong stench as he had begun to decay. He may have looked like a zombie not moving as fully as one does with much life in their bodies. It was a miracle and as the gospel text ends for this passage, many believed because they saw what Jesus had done for Lazarus.

God continues to work for us daily. He allows us to see each day fresh, but we must take advantage of all God does for us. We must live our lives, not just exist. We need to inhale the fresh air, allow the sun to warm our faces, and to savor each bite we eat. Even though we are living through a time none of us will ever forget, and a time we will tell our grandchildren about, we are still alive. We must continue to use every means possible to continue living as close to a normal life as is possible. We all still have communication devices, some more technical than others, but there's always a card in the mail. Call your friends, take the given time to catch up with old acquaintances and distant relatives. But don't distance yourselves from everyone. There are safe ways to communicate. Live your life, that is the message today. Amen.