

Lent 5 / March 26, 2023

John 11:25

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

What is the most amazing thing you have seen? Have you seen something so amazing, you wouldn't have believed unless you had seen it? Have you seen something so amazing that you couldn't believe what your eyes had seen? Throughout John's gospel Jesus has done amazing things, all of which caused people to rub their eyes in wonder. Jesus ordered the servants at the wedding in Cana to fill six large jars with water. When it was served, it had become wine. He revealed His glory and His disciples believed in Him. Jesus ordered a man paralyzed in his legs, “Get up, take up your bed and walk.” Instantly he was healed. He told His disciples to distribute five loaves of bread and two fish among a crowd. Five thousand were fed, with twelve baskets left over. When the multitude saw what had happened they wanted to make Him their king.

In Jerusalem, Jesus saw a man who had been blind from birth. He approached him, spat on the ground, made mud, and without announcing Himself or asking permission, He anointed His eyes. He sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam. When he washed, he could see. Seeing certainly was believing for him. Sometimes we can't believe what our eyes have seen. Sometimes we don't want to believe what we have seen. Some refused to believe what their eyes had seen and condemned Jesus as a sinner, because He had worked this miracle on a Sabbath. But this man saw with eyes of faith and worshipped Jesus as his God and Saviour.

How would we respond if we saw one of those great signs? They say ‘seeing is believing,’ but if we saw one of those great signs without the context of our faith and knowledge of the scriptures, we might rub our eyes and wonder if we could believe what we had seen. We see, because through the witness of the scriptures and working of the Holy Spirit, we believe. Jesus told the disciple Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed. All signs lead to today's gospel and Jesus' greatest miracle and display of divine glory, raising Lazarus from the dead. Jesus called Lazarus to come alive from his tomb as the greatest sign that He is our God and Saviour. Jesus waited until Lazarus was good and dead, four days in the tomb. He raised him on the fourth day, because He wanted Mary, Martha, their friends and us to believe the most important thing; that He is the resurrection and the life; and that everyone who believes in Him will live.

John did not record everything Jesus did during His public ministry. At the conclusion of his gospel he says, “Jesus did many other signs which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, that believing you may have life in His name.” He chose seven signs to show beyond any doubt that Jesus is our God and Saviour. Neither John nor the other evangelists give an exhaustive, chronological account of Jesus' ministry. They selected certain events in Jesus' ministry and sometimes placed them in a different order, to make specific points about Jesus; the nature of His being and the purpose for which He came into the world. They want us to know of first importance; that He is our God and Saviour, who gives forgiveness and life to all who receive Him in their hearts through faith and believe in His Name.

The evangelists want us to know that more than a human prophet, Jesus is the eternal Son of God. The author of Hebrews writes, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets. In these latter days He has spoken to us through His Son.” He is the image and radiance of the glory of God. The evangelists want us to believe that rather than teaching a path to salvation, Jesus is the way of salvation. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.” The evangelists want us to believe in Jesus as the only way to the Father. He calls all people to Himself. He will never turn away anyone who comes to Him. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Everyone who believes in Him has life in time and will live in eternity in His resurrection.

In our gospel Jesus gives the greatest sign that He is our God and Saviour. He does what only God can do. He raises the dead. Jesus wasn't the first or only person through whom life returned to the dead. The prophet Elisha prayed the Lord to restore life to a woman's son. God answered the prophet's prayer and restored her son to her. The apostles Peter and Paul are both associated with life being restored to the dead. A woman named Dorcas had died. Peter prayed and the Lord restored her to life. A young man fell from a window and was taken up for dead. Paul took him in his arms and God restored life to his body. Returning life to the dead is the rarest and greatest display of God's glory and the power of His word. The power of death is in the hands of anyone who wishes to use it. Only God has power to give life. God gives life to the spiritually dead through faith in Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit through words of the prophets and evangelists.

The prophets and apostles spoke as God's representatives when they called the dead to return to life. When Jesus called a widow's son, a synagogue ruler's daughter and Lazarus to rise from the dead, He spoke as God. He is the resurrection and the life. He is not simply the means through which God restored life to the physically dead. He is the Source of life for all things living. He is God through whom all things were created and in whom all things hold together. He is our Saviour, who gives life to the spiritually dead through the gospel of forgiveness, received through faith in Him as our God and Saviour. The miracle of giving life to the physically dead was a sign of the greatest miracle of giving life to those who are dead in spirit, through faith in Him as God and Saviour.

Before He gave this greatest sign, Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me shall live even though he dies." Then He asked "do you believe this?" Martha replied, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." Martha's answer showed that a greater miracle than giving sight to the blind or raising the physically dead, had already been worked in her soul. Jesus through His word and by the working of His Holy Spirit had called her from darkness to light, raised her soul from spiritual death to life and given her faith to believe. Raising the dead would be a real eye opener, but there is no greater miracle than faith that believes Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who has come into the world for our salvation.

We might wonder how great it would be to see one of Jesus' signs. Not everyone is blessed to see signs and wonders, but we are all blessed with the wonder of God's word. St. Peter saw signs and wonders but he said we have something more certain: The prophetic word, to which we do well to pay attention, "as to a lamp shining in a dark place." In the word this morning, Jesus calls Himself the resurrection and the life. He promises that everyone who believes in Him will live in time and eternity. He asks, if we believe this? This is the most important question we will ever be asked. Our answer will affect our eternal destiny. Do you believe this?

Jesus' question isn't meant to frighten or intimidate us. He calls us to Himself that we may receive Him as our loving God and Saviour. He did not come to condemn the world. He came to save the world through His death on the cross. He came into a world dead in sin, under the condemnation of death and blind to the true knowledge of God. He gives sight to the spiritually blind and life to the spiritually dead through faith in Him as God and Saviour. In our gospel, Christ calls us to see Him through faith and live in Him. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life." He promises, "whoever believes in me will live even though he dies." He assures us, "Whoever lives and believes in me will never die." He asks, "Do you believe this?" God bless us always to say with Martha, "Yes Lord; I believe." In Jesus' Name. Amen