

Series Title: ENOUGH
Sermon Title: I Am the Resurrection - *Eternity*
Text: John 11:1-43
Date: August 1-2, 2009
Speaker: Garth Leno

This song, "God Speaking," was sung right before the message:

Have you ever had a love song that set your spirit free?
Have you ever watched a sunrise and felt you could not breathe?
What if it's Him? What if it's God speaking?

Have you ever cried a tear that you could not explain?
Have you ever met a stranger who already knew your name?
What if it's Him? What if it's God speaking?

Who knows how He'll get a hold of us,
get our attention to prove He is enough.
He'll do and He'll use whatever He wants to
To tell us, "I love you."

Have you ever lost a loved one
who you thought should still be here?
Do you know what it feels like to be tangled up in fear?
What if He's somehow involved?
What if He's speaking through it all?

Who knows how He'll get a hold of us,
get our attention to prove He is enough.
He'll do and He'll use whatever He wants to
To tell us, "I love you."

His ways are higher.
His ways are better though sometimes strange.
What could be stranger than God in a manger?

Who knows how He'll get a hold of us,
get our attention to prove He is enough.
Who knows how He'll get a hold of you,
get your attention to prove He is enough?
He'll do and He'll use whatever He wants to
To tell us, "I love you." God is speaking, "I love you."

The video clip we watched a moment ago was taken from a movie called *The Ultimate Gift*. It's about an arrogant, spoiled young man named Jason Stevens. Jason expects a huge inheritance when he hears that his grandfather has died. What he gets instead is a crash course in life.

Jason is required to do twelve tasks—what his grandfather calls "gifts"—designed to challenge him to stretch beyond his limits. Among Jason's tasks is the challenge to make one true friend within a month. He soon befriends Emily, the young girl you saw in the video. She's battling leukemia.

"I think about dying," Emily said, as she began to cry. "There's something basically unfair about a person dying..." And then Jason says, "You know, I don't know much about God or Jesus, but I can promise you that those arms are meant for you."

That was a really good line in the movie. And then Trish sang for us:

*Who knows how He'll get a hold of us,
get our attention to prove He is enough.
He'll do and He'll use
whatever He wants to
To tell us, "I love you."*

If you have ever sat beside a person like Emily, who is dying, I suspect you have thought the same thing: There is something basically unfair about a person dying.

I'm sure that Mary and Martha felt that way when their brother Lazarus died... Let's have a closer look at John 11...

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."

This family was very precious to Jesus. He had a unique personal affection for them. He liked being in their home. It was a place he could slip off his sandals and relax. But now things had changed and the household was in disarray because Lazarus was very sick. So they sent for Jesus.

But they did not send an invitation or even a request. They did not say, "Lord, please come!" They just assumed that as soon as the Lord learned of the situation, he would hurry...and come. But his answer in v. 4 gives us a hint of what was going to happen...

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."

In other words, death would not be the ultimate tragedy here. Something very unusual was about to happen, and it would bring glory to God. The heart of the text comes in verses 5-6...

⁵Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

*Who knows how He'll get a hold of us,
get our attention to prove He is enough.
He'll do and He'll use
whatever He wants to (even leukemia!)
To tell us, "I love you."*

Jesus loved them. It says so in verse 5 and 6. He loved them. Knowing this, we might expect Scripture to say, "Upon hearing that Lazarus was sick, Jesus went to the stable, saddled up the blue-ribbon quarter-horse, and rode as fast as possible to be with Lazarus!"

But that's not what the text of Scripture says. It says Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus so much that he stayed away! Incredible! How do you get your head around *that*?

From our perspective it sometimes appears... *it sometimes appears* to us that even though we are God's children, and we love him, and we serve him, it sometimes *appears* to us that he does not care about us anymore. At times, humanly speaking, our hard luck circumstances seem to indicate that God does not care. He's not coming, he's not answering our prayers, he's not intervening when and where we think he should!

But John 11 makes it clear that no matter how it may appear, these mysterious, perplexing, baffling delays are actually delays of love. That's what our text says. He *loved* them...

I believe that Jesus delayed coming to his faithful friends in Bethany in order to strengthen the love and faith and trust of those who follow him. And, I believe he often does the same thing today... God often delays his coming in a time of need so that we learn more about love, and faith, and trust.

For two days our Lord calmly went about his work far away from the anguish of Mary and Martha. They probably went to the door every hour to look down the street, hoping to see Jesus walking toward their house. *No such luck...*

After two days, which seemed like two months to Mary and Martha, Jesus decided it was time to respond to the need...

⁷*Then 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?"*

⁹*Jesus answered..., ¹¹"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."*

¹²*His 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.*

¹⁴*So 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."*

¹⁶*Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."*

Good old Thomas! Always looking on the bright side! *C'mon men, get your stuff, we're going to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. When they kill the Master, they're gonna kill us too!"* They could not believe Jesus was heading back into the midst of trouble to visit a dead guy!

And Lazarus was indeed dead. They had prepared his body for burial, wrapping him in white linen and anointing his body with special spices to mask the smell.

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, 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.*

That refrain had probably come often from the lips of Mary and Martha in the past few days, don't you think? The wait had been agonizing as they wondered, "When will the LORD get here?"

Martha's words were almost a reproof to the Lord. But in verse 22 she caught herself:

²²*But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."*

Have you ever felt that way? *Where were you, Lord? You came too late. Why didn't you answer when I called? Where were you when my loved one died? Where were you when my marriage dissolved? Where were you when we got the diagnosis? Where were you when my father left us? Where were you when our teenagers went astray? Where were you, Jesus...?*

Please notice – the Lord Jesus does not rebuke Martha for her words! He did not scold her, or ask her what happened to her faith. He did not ridicule her or put her down in any way.

He simply says, in v. 23...

²³*"Your brother will rise again."*

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

...as if to say, "Lord, I know he will rise again, I know that...but what about now? I'm hurting! Right now I'm in so much pain! My brother is dead!

Notice how Jesus responds:

²⁵*"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."*

She had been tested with grief and loss, and she had allowed her Saviour to call out her faith.

²⁸*And 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."* ²⁹*When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.*

³²*When 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."*

There's that refrain again. *If you had been here...* It was the song of bereavement upon their lips. *If you had only been here, Lord Jesus...!* Then comes one of the most beautiful and deepest truths in Scripture:

³³*When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.*

He was *deeply moved*... This word comes from an ancient Greek word that describes a horse snorting. Strange, isn't it? The word describes a horse snorting?

But when it appears in this context, it implies that Jesus let out an involuntary gasp. (demonstrate – then ask the congregation to do the same!)

When Jesus saw Mary weeping it knocked the wind out of him. He was so caught up in the sisters' pain and grief that he let out this involuntary gasping sound. He was troubled. Mary and Martha's sorrow troubled him.

³⁴*"Where have you laid him?" he asked.*

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

³⁵*Jesus wept.*

We have a Saviour who loves us, who sometimes delays and stays away for our own good, who allows us to go through excruciating pain, and then he comes and enters our sorrow.

And you see – *that* is the perspective Christ wants us to have. That's the perspective Jesus wants you to have today if you are hurting today. He wants you to know that he weeps with you. If you are grieving the loss of a loved one today, Jesus is weeping with you. If you have been rejected or alienated or hurt by someone, may I remind you that you have a great high priest who sympathizes with every pain and sorrow in your life. Not one tear drips off your chin without his knowledge or permission!

³⁶*Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"*

³⁷*But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"*

There have always been mixed reactions to Jesus and his claim to be enough, to meet our deepest needs. It happened in John 11, and it still happens today. People don't really know what to do with him...

But Jesus asked to be taken to the tomb. A typical tomb in those days had eight occupants. It was a hollowed-out room, perhaps in a hillside. It had three indentations on one side, three on the other, and two at the end. Lazarus' tomb could well have been occupied by other bodies from previous years.

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."

I can understand how Martha felt. After all this misery, why open up the grave now? Why look at the face of a decomposing corpse? She did not understand what Christ wanted to do.

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. 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."*

Picture the scene. The stone was rolled away. They could see Lazarus' body, and possibly other bodies in the tomb. The eager crowd pressed forward. Suddenly they grew quiet. The sisters, who had been weeping stopped with a renewed sense of expectation.

Suddenly Jesus called out in a loud voice:

⁴³*...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."

Can you imagine that scene? As the crowd stares into the bowels of that grave, they see movement. They see Lazarus shift carefully off the stone ledge, then stand erect and emerge into the sunlight. Mary and Martha feverishly unwrap their brother as they weep with joy. They hug him and kiss him and dance around him in their bare feet.

And all of a sudden, the funeral turns into a celebration!

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Yes...there is something fundamentally unfair about a person dying. Especially if that person is close to you. A mother, father, child...or a best friend.

Yet...

*Who knows how He'll get a hold of us,
get our attention to prove He is enough.
He'll do and He'll use
whatever He wants to
To tell us, "I love you."*

Trish went on to sing:

*Have you ever lost a loved one
who you thought should still be here?
Do you know what it feels like to be tangled up in fear?
What if He's somehow involved?
What if He's speaking through it all?*

Could it be that Jesus is speaking, right now, through your pain, your anguish, your disappointment? In John 11 we have the promise that Jesus is enough. He is the resurrection. He takes care of eternity. Your eternity and my eternity are in His hands.

John 11:25-26 NIV

²⁵"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."

That's the promise, from The Great I AM! But here's the clincher. At the end of verse 26 Jesus asked Martha, "Do you believe this?"

Do *you* . . . believe this? Do *you* believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life? Do you believe that Jesus is enough...for *you*, for your family, for your needs? Do you believe that he can look after *your* eternity? In recent weeks, in the ENOUGH series, we've said:

He is the Bread of Life.

He can provide for you.

He is the Light of the world.

He can direct you.

He is the Good Shepherd.

He can keep you safe.

But the question is...do you believe this? Do you believe that JESUS IS ENOUGH?