



St John Lutheran Church

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Funeral sermon for Marv A. Norris

John 11; Romans 8:28-39; Revelation 7:11-17;

"Jesus, help me"

When a person is ill... we want to run to their side. We want to help them... care for them... and nurse them back to health. This is our natural reaction towards those we care about. It is an expression of our compassion Many of you here who love Marv and Ruth came and did everything you could to help Ruth and ease her burdens. Such efforts continue and will continue, as your love and concern continues. That is what we do when someone we care about falls ill or gets hurt somehow...we drop everything and immediately see if we can help.

That's what so strange as we initially look at our Gospel lesson for today... When Lazarus, that dear friend of Jesus, fell ill... Jesus did not run to His friend right away. Instead, Jesus sat down and waited for two days.

Finally, He told His disciples that they were going to Lazarus so that He could wake Him up. The disciples, being earthly-minded... thought that Lazarus... like most sick people... was sleeping and would wake up feeling well. Jesus then spoke to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead."

When Jesus drew near to Bethany... Mary and Martha's town... Martha heard He was coming and ran out to meet Jesus. Her words confess a living faith, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." She knew that Jesus was the One... the only One, who could have helped her brother Lazarus. With a Word, Jesus could have taken away His illness and made Him whole. But now Lazarus lay dead in the tomb. It was the fourth day since He died.

Jesus was talking to Martha and told her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha, believing the Old Testament Scripture and all that Jesus had been teaching her, said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Martha, again, speaks confidently of eternal things. Her faith was in Jesus the Author and Giver of Life.

Our beloved brother Marv was a lot like Martha. He knew where his help was to be found. Like Martha, he was a sinner. He said so with his own lips. He believed what the Scriptures have to say about the sinful condition of man. He made that confession his own. Of course, he did not stop there... Marv confessed with Martha and the whole of the Christian church, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

Marv and Martha have much in common. **Their confession** of faith is exactly the same. **Both are gentle** pious believers who look out for others. **Marv's long service** to this congregation as an elder and a holder of many offices are but small examples of Marv's dedication to the faith and his Lord's Church. **His service** to our country in the Air Force is evidence of his love and concern for the land of the free that he also loved.

Marv's love for his beloved wife, Ruth... **their children... and all** those around him testifies to the Christ who loves him. **Many of the** things one looks for in a Christian are to found in our brother...**and they** all flow from the Love that our Lord Jesus first showed Marv. **Yet, these good** and kind attributes contributed nothing to Marv's salvation. **Heaven is not** Marv's because he was a good man. **Heaven is Marv's because Jesus is good** and **Marv was baptized** into Jesus' Holy Name... **and so** received the forgiveness of his sins and eternal life. **This was Christ's** great gift and blessing that He freely gives to Marv and all who believe!

In this time of your sorrow and grief, learn from our brother Marv and from Martha in our text. **Jesus has help** for you. **His Word** is your comfort. **When He says..."I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though He may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die..."** **Jesus is giving you comfort and hope.**

Our brother Marv has died... **yet he** is alive. **For his hope** is in Jesus... **and Jesus** never lets His Christians down. **Christ had baptized** Marv and so gave Marv the faith to trust in Him... **to trust** in the forgiveness of sins... **to trust** in an everlasting inheritance... **and to trust** that he (Marv) has a place at our Lord's table eternally.

Jesus was and is Marv's Rock... **his refuge** in the day of trouble... **and his Savior.** **This is and** was what Marv lived and believed...**this is** what our sister Ruth believes now ...**and it** is my great privilege to stand here today and tell you plainly... **that because** of such a Divine faith... **because of** the Divine hope given...**even as** we grieve... **we celebrate** with great joy the life Marv now enjoys... **and we** look forward with great joy to the time when we will see Marv and all who believe again in our Lord's Kingdom!

Marv was a pious Lutheran man. **He was steadfast** in attending the services in the Lord's House. **He liked to** read God's Word and study that Word. **He partook of** the Lord's Supper often. **Marv trusted completely** in our Lord's Promise to save him ...**and he** trusted completely in the forgiveness of sins communicated in the Lord's Supper. **This is why** coming to this House of Prayer and the Sacrament of the Altar **was so vitally** important to Marv. **Quite simply, all** of this was so important to Marv... **Because he believed the Words of Jesus.** **Jesus said, "This is My Body and this is My Blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."** **This means that** Marv was joined to Jesus in an intimate way. **Marv's sin** became Christ's... **and Christ's** righteousness became Marv's. **Jesus came to Marv...crossing time** and eternity...**Jesus came** to him and gave Marv comfort... **especially as** his body weakened this last couple of weeks. **Even as he** knew he was dying...**Marv's comfort** and confidence came from his Lord.

Do you understand what an amazing thing this is to witness?? **It is at** the same time, a privilege and a humbling thing to see! **Nothing short of miraculous!!** **Here is man** who is dying...**he is in**

great pain...**his body** is failing him in every way...**and yet...when I** would visit Marv and Ruth... **while he** was sometimes emotional... **he never** felt sorry for himself and he never doubted his place in God' Kingdom...**He never** doubted that he belonged to Jesus Christ!! **I would read** God's Word to him and Marv would wrinkle his face up into that impish little smile he had and would simply say with a sparkle in his eye..."**Amazing!**" **And amazing is** was and is...**truly...the last** couple weeks of Marv's life was a better sermon than I could ever preach!

Listen to what Marv believed!! Christ our Lord came down from heaven and was born of the blessed Virgin so that He could bear our sin. **All that plagues** us became His. **He took our** sin into His Holy Body. **He bore our** griefs and carried our sorrows. **Our doubts and** fears... **our pain** and suffering... **all this** was given to Jesus. **On the cross... He shed** His Blood to forgive all the sin of a broken, corrupt and lost mankind. **He bore Marv's** sins there and He bore yours too. **This is the** great comfort to us. **This is why** we may miss Marv greatly...**and yet** rejoice that his suffering is over and his God given faith is a reality!

After His three day stay in the earth, Jesus rose triumphant from the grave.

There is the proof that your sins are forgiven. **There is the** proof that the Father loves you with and wondrous love. **In the Resurrection** you see your enemies defeated. **The grave is** rendered harmless. **The bonds of** death... **and the** fear of death are broken. **This is our** joy. **This is now** Marv's reality...**for the Very One** who is able has rescued Marv from death...**and like Lazarus,** the grave cannot hold him because of Jesus Word and Command that Marv will live!

This is our confidence even on such a day as this. **For we are** baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus. **In those waters,** He washed our sins away and took us unto Himself. **There He gave** the faith that sustained Marv in his life ...**and which** will sustain you now and in the days to come.

As St. Paul said, "**nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?**" **No, not the** struggles of a life afflicted with cancer. **Nor the suffering** and pains which afflict the body because of that cancer. **Not even the** loss of a beloved son, who died many years ago! **As hard as** these things were for Marv and Ruth to endure...**in eternity these were** momentary afflictions which served to always point them back to Christ.

All our griefs, afflictions, and troubles serve this way. **As life comes** at us with all manner of loss...**as we** face the ongoing onslaught of difficult times...**as we** even face the aging and failing of our own flesh... **We are continually** being pointed to our Savior who has borne our grief and carried our sorrows. **We are continually** pointed to what Marv learned and knew so well...**that in** our weakness...**in our** sickness...**in our** helplessness **in our** powerlessness...**and even** in our death...**Christ's Power** in made manifest!

"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." These confident words of Martha's are our confident words today too. **We look forward** to the Last Day when Jesus will return with all His angels and the sound of the trumpet. **With His living** voice... **He will** wake His

Christians from their slumber by calling each one of us by name. **Then we will live** before the throne of the Lamb and the Lamb will visibly dwell in our midst there in the Kingdom He now prepares for us. **Then, the days** of sorrow and grief will be past.. **The tears will** finally be dried.

"Lazarus, come forth." What miraculous day it was when Lazarus came out of that tomb. **With a Word... the Lord** healed Lazarus of His disease... **and even** death itself. **Truly, the Word** of Jesus gives life. **Just as He** spoke the world into being ...**so He** will raise all the dead. **By simply speaking** His all powerful Word and His irresistible Command we will hear and respond...**and death** will be gone forever.

And so, some day soon, Jesus will return and breathe out Words like He did that day before Lazarus' tomb. **"Marv...and all of you who believe, come forth."** **All the dead will rise.** Those **who believed** on Christ for all their good will inherit the mansions prepared for them in heaven.

Until then, we say, "Together with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name." We await the day of resurrection with hope and joy. **The heavenly vision** fills our imaginations and captures our hearts. **There will be** Jesus in all His glory just as He was on the Mount of Transfiguration. **The angels will** fall on their faces before His throne and worship Him. **All the saints** of God will surround the throne and shout, **"Glory! Glory to God in the Highest. Praise be to our God and His Lamb who has died to forgive our sins and to defeat all our enemies. The Lord's right hand has done it. Glory to God!"**

Dear Holy Ones of God... today... rejoice in Marv's life. **Give God thanks** for all he was and had. **Give thanks for** Marv's faithful example of living the Christian life, according to God's Will and Promise. **We will all** miss Marv... **and there are** tears yet to come. **In the midst** of our sorrow is the comfort and joy belonging to Christ. **Jesus Christ the** Very Son of God who has done marvelous things for us. **Praise be to** His Holy Name for His blessed death and resurrection. **We pray continually, "Come, Lord Jesus, swiftly come. Breathe out those life-giving words and take us home."** In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit...Amen.

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