

Sermon Title: **“The Resurrection and the Life”**

Bible: **Ezekiel 37:1-3, 7-10 & John 11:20-27, 34-44**

When: on the Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 26, 2023

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

### **Opening Prayer**

O Lord, we come to you, because you are the resurrection and the life. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **1. The Resurrection and the Life**

In the Gospel of John, there are the seven “I am” statements by Jesus Christ. “I am the bread of life.” “I am the light of the world.” “I am the door.” “I am the good shepherd.” “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” “I am the true vine.” And from the story of Lazarus, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

Do you believe in the resurrection? What does it look like to you? At that time, while some Jews denied the resurrection, many Jews believed that there would be a final resurrection on the last day. When Jesus told Martha that her brother Lazarus would rise again, Martha knew that he would rise again in the resurrection on the last day. When Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life,” Jesus added, “Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” And Jesus asked Martha, “Do you believe this?” And Martha’s answer was very interesting. She said, “Yes, Lord, I

believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.” Martha’s answer was not the direct answer to Jesus’ statement, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Her answer was to Jesus himself.

There are many descriptions of the afterlife. I have heard and read some stories from those who have been to the afterlife. And I have never been to the afterlife. But I believe in the resurrection, not because it makes sense to me, but because I believe in Jesus. Even though I cannot understand, even though I cannot explain it clearly, I accept the mystery of our faith, the mystery of our resurrection. That’s because Jesus’ resurrection is our resurrection. That’s because Jesus’ victory is our victory.

## **2. The Life**

In this story of Lazarus, my focus is on life! I believe that Jesus Christ will take care of the resurrection and the afterlife. So, I do not have any worries. But when it comes to life, this story of Lazarus can teach us some lessons. Lazarus was raised from death to life. But it was temporary. We all know that Lazarus has passed away on the earth, right? Like his sisters, Mary and Martha, Lazarus eventually died for good. That’s why we cannot see him on the earth. If he had lived eternally on the earth, we would have seen him somewhere. Lazarus had died at first, and Jesus raised him up, but Lazarus died again later. As I shared, God will take care of the ultimate resurrection of Lazarus! And my focus is upon the life of Lazarus. What did his life look like?

## **3. The Life through the Community**

First of all, Lazarus was not alone. He had his sisters, Mary and Martha. Mary and Martha were not alone. Many people came to Mary and Martha to console them about their brother Lazarus. The family had friends, neighbors, and the community. And they had Jesus. When Mary and Martha shared their sadness, not only the people but also Jesus was there. They all wept together with Mary and Martha.

Jesus raised Lazarus to life. But Jesus did not give life to Lazarus by himself. Jesus asked people to take away the stone from the entrance of the tomb. There was a bad and unpleasant smell. The stone itself was not easy to move. Moreover, to remove the stone, the people would need to endure the smell of death. How could they stand the smell while removing the stone? They had the faith that God would work through them. They did what they could do. So, they took away the stone! Even when Lazarus came out of the tomb, he was bound and wrapped. Lazarus could not unbind himself. The people needed to come up close to him and unbind him. Then, Lazarus' new life began with the help of all the people around him.

#### **4. The Life through the Church**

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Jesus said, "I am the life." What Jesus showed us through the story of Lazarus is that there would be a life through the faith community, through the church. If you were like Mary and Martha, I hope that you would find a faith community and Jesus through our church. We are ready to be with you. We are ready to listen to your sadness. We are ready to have you in our prayers and thoughts.

If our Lord asks you to take away the stone, and to unbind someone, I hope for us to have faith. When we do what we can do, God will do what God can do. It might mean taking away the obstacles. It might mean having to endure an unpleasant smell or situation. It might mean helping someone with whom you are not familiar. As in today's reading of Ezekiel, the situation might require more time than we thought. It might require more steps than we thought. But are we the people of the resurrection? Are we the people of the life? As God leads us, let us do what we can do. As we believe in the resurrection, there will be a life and there will be the glory of God through this church, through all of us.

### **Closing Prayer**

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, as you are the resurrection and the life, we believe in you and we follow you. When we follow you, please show us your way of the life. In Jesus' name. Amen.