

Unbind Your Faith Today!

John 11:38-44 New American Standard Bible

³⁸ So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, *came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus *said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, *said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus *said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ So they removed the stone. And Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. ⁴² But I knew that You always hear Me; nevertheless, because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." ⁴³ And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ Out came the man who had died, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus *said to them, "**Unbind him, and let him go.**"

Introduction

Let me tell you a story of a man, I will call him Frank. Frank was a family man. He went on vacation somewhere in the Middle East around Easter time with his family including his mother-in-law. During their vacation, while they were in Jerusalem, Frank's mother-in-law fell ill. Her condition rapidly got worse, and she died quickly and unexpectedly.

As a sensible man, Frank with the death certificate in his hand went to the American Consulate in order to make some arrangements to send the body back to the States for a proper burial. The Consul, after hearing the story of the death of Frank's mother-in-law, told Frank that sending the body back to the States is very expensive. It could cost him as much as \$5,000. The Consul continues, "In most cases, the person responsible for the remains normally decides to bury the body in Jerusalem." That would cost him only \$500.

Frank thought about it a few seconds and answered, "I don't care how much it would cost to send the body back. That's what I want to do." The Consul, after hearing this, was impressed. "You must have loved your mother-in-law dearly considering the difference in the cost." Scratching his head, Frank said, "Not exactly. You see, I know of a case of a person, many years ago, who was buried in Jerusalem. On the third day, he rose from the dead. I just can't take that chance." (Illustration: Resurrection Funny).

Content

This morning I invite you to think with me about the faith we have in the context of resurrection.

Everyone seems to go through different stages of faith. In other words, not everyone's faith is the same. Some people's faith is very strong. Others' faith is not that great. Some of us started from mother's womb before we were born and have been a Christian ever since. Others like me: I never heard of the name Jesus until I was in high school. More others don't hear about the Gospel at all until their deathbed. Everyone goes through different stages in faith.

I can identify three faith stages we go through when it comes to believing in Jesus:

First stage is this: we believe in Him as a teacher and communicator. I have never met anyone who denies that Jesus was a great moral teacher. Let me tell you a story of a woman who was caught in the middle of her adultery. She was brought into Jesus' presence in the Temple by the religious leaders who were ready to stone her to death. They pressed Jesus what to do with the woman. Jesus replied, "*Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.*" (John 8:7). You know the rest of the story. No one stoned her to death. Another story of the Good Samaritan. There are so many great lessons Jesus taught us.

If you compile all the great moral teachers in history, such as Socrates, Plato, Confucius, and Buddha, I believe Christ would come on top above anyone else in terms of principles. Please consider Gandhi. He was a pioneer in the independence movement in India, also was an epitome of non-violence movement. From whom do you think he learned that principle? From Jesus. He dearly admired Jesus and His teaching.

So, some of us, if not most of us, got to know Jesus as a great moral teacher and communicator.

Then we move onto the second stage where we get to know Jesus as a miracle maker who has done all the wonders and signs you can imagine, including healing the sick, casting out evil spirits, making the lame walk, and opening the eyes of the blind. For instance, did you know that He walked on the waters? Did you know that He turned water into wine? Did you know that He fed more than 5000 people with five loaves and two fish? He did it all. He cleansed the lepers. He healed the paralyzed. He opened the ears of the deaf. The list goes on. So, many of us got to know Him as the Healer.

The healing continues even today. A few years ago, a friend of mine sent me his testimony of healing. For years, he had been suffering from bone spurs in his heel. He went to the doctors and took medicines to no avail. He was told by his wife that if he wanted to have a relationship with God, this would be a great time to do it. So, he went to the Lord in prayer, "Lord, I am not a great church goer. I am not a great person of faith, either. But, if you are so real, help me with the bone spur in my heel."

This is what he wrote to me: *Next morning, the healing took place. For the next 34 years, I have been free from the bone spur in my heel.* Some of us get to know Jesus as a miracle maker and healer.

The third stage we go through in faith is this: we get to know Jesus as resurrection. We know and believe in Jesus as the person who resurrects the dead. Do you know how many times Jesus raised the dead besides Himself? At least three times in the New Testament.

The first one recorded is this: He raised a twelve-year-old girl. We don't know the name of the girl. But we do know the name of the father. His name was Jairus. His daughter was dying. It happened to be the day when Jesus was passing through the town. So, if you were a loving father, what would you do? I would go to Jesus, the Great Physician, and ask Him to heal my daughter. Wouldn't you? So, that's what he did: *Jesus, please have mercy on my daughter, she is dying.* Jesus said, I will help.

On their way to Jairus's home, a servant from Jairus's house came to them saying not to bother the teacher because the daughter just died. If you put yourself in Jairus's shoes, how would you feel? Your heart would sink down, right? To this confused and shocked father, Jesus said, "Don't be afraid. Just believe."

They finally arrived at Jairus's house. Guess what was happening. Commotion and noise all over. Did you know that in those days when a person dies, the head of the family would call in the professional wailer(s) who would sing a dirge for the dead? That's what was going on. To the crowd, Jesus said, the girl wasn't dead. She was just asleep. They thought Jesus was crazy. Entering the room where the girl was laid, Jesus said to the girl, Talitha Kum, meaning, 'Little girl, arise.' And the girl came back to life.

Once a friend of mine, a firm believer in science, confided in me that she struggled with the resurrection of the dead. "Pastor Choi, I can believe all these things what Jesus had done, except resurrection. Science doesn't say that anyone can come back to life, so I believe science rather than what the Bible says about resurrection." I am sure some of you agree with this lady. So, please allow me to tell you one more story of Jesus.

This time, Jesus was passing by a town called Nain. A funeral procession was going through the town. The wailers were leading the procession. Followed by the dead wrapped in cloth. The mother behind the dead. And friends and family. No one had to remind Jesus of what this procession was about. He immediately knew that the dead was the only son of this widow. Jesus touched the dead body and the procession stopped. Jesus commanded the dead man to rise up. And the young man rose. Now, think of the timeline. The twelve-old-girl, for instance, from the time she died and to the time she became alive. An hour or two maybe. You may argue

that it is possible. What about the young man? Perhaps, a several hours gap. For your information, Jewish law doesn't allow any dead body to stay in the house more than a day. You must take the corpse out of the house before the sunset. On the same day. So, perhaps a several hours passed after his death, then Jesus resurrected him. Some of you are still not convinced.

So, I have to tell one more story of Jesus raising the dead. This time, the person's name was Lazarus. The main character in today's text. I have to explain the background a bit. Jesus loved Lazarus and his two sisters. He frequented there. When Jesus was some place else, Lazarus fell ill suddenly and died. Jesus was away a two-day trip from Lazarus's town. The family sent Jesus an emergency message. "Lord, please come and make Lazarus whole again." Jesus didn't go right away. In fact, He stayed two more days where He was. By the time He got to Lazarus's town, four days already passed since Lazarus's death.

So, when Jesus asked Martha, the sister of Lazarus, to open the tomb, blocked by a boulder, Martha said, Lord, you don't want to do that, because if you do, there will be a stench. He's been dead four days. "Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" Open! So, the people rolled the stone and Jesus called out, "Lazarus! Come out!" You can imagine, Lazarus all wrapped in cloth walked out of the tomb.

Think of the timeline. Four days passed and Jesus still raised the dead. Of course, much later on, He Himself rose from the dead.

Now, you may say to me, "Pastor, we all know those stories." But I am speaking to those folks who struggle with believing in the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus and their own.

Consider this. Jesus raised the dead three times and rose Himself after three days in the tomb. The same Christ will resurrect all of us. In the last days. He will call forth your name and mine and everyone will come back to life. We call it resurrection.

Conclusion

As for closing, did you feel in today's story that Jesus is calling forth your name? As He did with Lazarus. Did you feel that your faith has been kept dead in your heart so long that when Jesus commands you to open your heart, you say to Him, "No, Lord, don't open that. I would feel embarrassed. My faith has been dead so long, and it may stink." Some of us feel that way. I pray that you hear Jesus' calling your name this morning: *Come out. Unbind your faith and let it go free!* Believe in Jesus' resurrection and experience the living God. Amen.