

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: Life or Death

Lesson: John 11:17-44, Romans 8:6-11

⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Everyone has a favorite Bible verse or chapter. For me, Romans chapter 8 is one of my favorites. It's important because it explains the gospel without needing more explanation. Whenever I have concerns or worries, reading Romans 8 makes me feel better.

Romans chapter 8 begins like this: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (1)

Before Jesus came to this earth, there was the law in this world. God gave the law to humans to save them and to rescue them, but the essence of the law was distorted, and people started using the law to judge and criticize others. They bragged in front of others about how well they obeyed the law, citing their prayer and fasting duration as well as the amount of money they donated. However, they looked down on and judged those who were poor, disabled, sick, or tax collectors. The blind man who appeared in the last Sunday's sermon was one of those who were judged by the law.

God sent his son Jesus to give us life because there was no salvation in the law. That's why we believe in Jesus – not to judge others or show off our faith, but because he is the source of our life.

(Slide 1) Now, let's read together Romans 8:6, 10-11: "The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace." "But if Christ

is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.”

Romans 8 uses the words "life" and "death" repeatedly. Today, we will look at Romans 8:6-11 and the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11 to understand what those words mean.

Martha and Mary were there, and they had a brother named Lazarus who was very sick. They were very close to Jesus, so Martha and Mary sent a messenger to ask Jesus to come and heal their brother. Their request was understandable, and we can easily understand how they felt.

However, Jesus' reaction and attitude to their request is somewhat difficult for us to understand. It's hard for us to know exactly where Jesus was when he heard the news that Lazarus was dying. But in verse 6, it says that he stayed where he was for two more days after hearing the news.

When someone we're very close to like a friend or family member is very sick and may die soon, we usually stop what we're doing and go visit them. But Jesus didn't hurry even though he heard his friend was dying. He even knew Lazarus had already died and when he finally arrived at his tomb, it had been four days since he had died.

Friends, can someone who has been dead for four days come back to life? Even though medical science and technology have advanced a lot since the time of Jesus, it is still not possible to revive someone who has been dead for four days. Lazarus' body was cold, lifeless, and emitting a foul odor. It was obvious to everyone that he was dead, and his body was decomposing.

(Slide 2) Martha and Mary said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." (21, 32) Their tone would have been mixed with resentment and sadness towards Jesus. This is a natural and honest reaction of those who face difficult situations in life. If I were in Martha and Mary's situation, I wouldn't have been much different from them. However, Martha never lost hope in Jesus, even in her sorrow, and said, "But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." (22)

We don't know exactly why Jesus didn't hurry to go to Lazarus when he was dying, or whether there were circumstances that prevented him. But what we can

know from the scripture is that Lazarus was suffering from a very serious illness that eventually led to his death. His cold body, and the foul odor emanating from his decomposing body all attested to his death. His body had already been moved to a tomb. It was evident to everyone that Lazarus was dead, and no doctor could revive him, as he had been dead for four days. Nevertheless, Lazarus' sisters had hope in Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life, and the Son of God.

(Slide 3) Jesus then told the people to move the stone that covered Lazarus' tomb and called out to him in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" (43) And at that moment, Lazarus, who had been dead, walked out of his tomb wrapped in burial clothes.

In fact, the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is a difficult event to believe, not only for the people of that time, but also for us today. It may not be easy to believe this story, but I have no doubt that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. I believe that Jesus not only raised Lazarus' body, but also his soul. And I think that Lazarus, who came back to life, was no longer governed by his flesh, but by the Holy Spirit.

Before we question whether this story is scientifically or medically possible, we should focus on the message it gives us. The message that this story gives us is very clear. It is that God is life, that Jesus Christ is life, and that the Holy Spirit is life.

(Slide 4) There are many paradoxes in the Bible. Jesus teaches us through paradoxes and contrasts. In the last Sunday's message, there was a blind man. However, when Jesus intervened in his life and the blind man accepted Jesus as the Christ, he opened his eyes and began to live a completely transformed new life. On the other hand, many people witnessed this miracle but did not know who Jesus was and doubted him. The story of Jesus healing the blind man contrasts the blind man and the many people who didn't believe in Jesus. It asks us where we stand.

The story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead raises a similar question for us. Despite Lazarus being completely dead, with a decaying body and having been dead for four days, Jesus intervened and called him back to life. Not only did Lazarus come back to life physically, but his soul also came back to life through Christ, who is the source of life. In contrast, there are many people in the world who may be physically healthy but are spiritually unhealthy, living according to the flesh and headed towards death.

Friends, which side are you on? Are you on the side of life or the side of death?

We all face many problems in life, and when we do, most of us pray. Sometimes our prayers are answered, but other times it may feel like God isn't listening.

However, when Mary cried over her brother's death, Jesus cried with her.

Likewise, God cares about our problems and doesn't ignore them. He loves us and gives us strength and courage to keep going. So, like Martha and Mary, I hope you'll trust in Jesus, who is the source of life, and have hope no matter what you're going through.

I hope that you always choose life.

(Slide 5) Finally, let us read together Romans 8:6, 10-11, which we read at the beginning, to conclude today's message:

“The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.” “But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.” Amen.