

“What God Sees.”

John 11:1-45

April 2, 2017

5th SUNDAY of LENT

THE BIG IDEA: “There IS Life After Death!”

“[God] is the one who will redeem Israel from all its sins.” Psalm 130:8

INTRODUCTION “His Eye Is On The Sparrow.”

Serious bird-watchers identify a species of bird by shape, size, coloring, and song. Once the species is identified the task of determining a particular bird within the general species requires attention to details. There are over 40 types of sparrows from a white-throated sparrow to a chipping sparrow. In order to distinguish between sparrows the watcher must patiently “see” that sparrow’s uniqueness.

Isn’t that the way God sees birds? Isn’t that the way God sees us? Where others see our dying, God sees our living. Ezekiel sees dry bones and death, God sees a living, breathing nation. Lazarus’ sisters and friends see his death, Jesus sees Lazarus’ resurrection. Paul contrasts the “attitude that comes from selfishness” that leads to death with the “attitude that comes from the Holy Spirit” that leads to life and peace.

I. God Sees Life! (Ezekiel 37:1-14)

“I will put my breath in you, and you will live!” vs. 14

- The nation of Israel’s commitment to covenant with God is gone.
- The strength and unity of God’s people has “dried up.”
- From a human perspective Israel is “dead.”
- God sees the possibilities of LIFE.

II. Jesus Sees Life! (John 11:1-45)

“Whoever believes in me will live!” vs. 25

- Lazarus’ death is devastating to his sisters and friends.
- Jesus’ needless delay confuses those who expect His prompt action.
- Jesus sees the eternal life available to Lazarus through God’s love.

III. The Holy Spirit Sees Life! (Romans 8:6-11)

“The attitude that comes from the Spirit leads to life and peace.” vs. 6

- Paul speaks about differences in fundamental attitudes.
- Human selfishness will ALWAYS lead to fear and death.
- The Holy Spirit “sees” with an attitude that reveals life.

CONCLUSION

“The Master’s Plan”

Jesus acts in the knowledge that Lazarus though dead, is NOT dead: “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him” (John 11:11), and that is the will of the Father. Jesus knows what Lazarus undergoes just as Jesus knows what will happen in His arrest and death at the end of His life. Death is part of a larger plan.

All deaths, while real, are not the end. Death’s power is LIMITED. God is glorified in transformation of death. The Master’s plan opens up the possibility of trust in and unity with God on the part of believers for the world’s salvation. It is Lazarus’ death that makes real what is possible, even as it confounds human expectation of love and grief.