



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Deacon Terry Ellerman
March 18, 2018 Fifth Sunday of Lent

Reading I Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalm 51:3-15

Reading II Hebrews 5:7-9

Gospel John 12:20-33

Homily

"I am the resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me, even if he dies will live. And everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." How many of you believe that? How many of you believe that Jesus is the Messiah? That he is the Son of God? And that he died on the cross for us so we will be saved? We are using Cycle A because we have a catechumen, Ron Seecrest, who is with us here this morning. If we look at the readings over the last three weeks, these scriptures are especially picked because it tells what Ron is going through in his journey. And if you look at the last three readings, we see what Jesus is going through, and that what Jesus is doing is making himself known as God.

Not everybody up to that time knew that Jesus was God. So we can see the miracles continuing to increase. If you remember a couple of weeks ago we saw the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus chose her and talked with her. And even though she didn't want anything to do with him, she talked with him. And what happened? She was changed. He told her about her sins, he forgave her sins, she became free. She was a woman who was depressed and not liked by a lot of people. He freed her. And because of that freedom, what did she do? She went back to the village where a lot of people didn't like her and said, "Come, see this Jesus. He knows everything. He is the Messiah."

Then last week we saw Jesus come to a man born blind and said, "Do you want to see?" And the man answered, "Yes." So he put mud on his eyes, then told him to go to a pool and wash off his face and he would be healed. And he did. Then we heard the bantering between the Pharisees who did not want to admit that Jesus was God, who wanted him to say that he was not born blind, and tried to discredit Jesus to the point where they kicked the former blind man out of the temple. And what did Jesus do? He went to the man and asked, "Do you believe in the Messiah?" And the man said, "Tell me who he is and I will believe you." And Jesus said, "It is me." I believe he then became a disciple and followed Jesus.

And finally today we see the raising of Lazarus. As you heard in the Gospel, Jesus had lots of friends. Some of his closest friends were Martha, Mary and Lazarus. And as friends, when we have a problem what do we do? We go to our friends and yell, "Help."

So they sent word to Jesus and said, "Lazarus is ill, please come." And what did Jesus do? He waited two days. Boy. That doesn't sound like much of a friend. If I had a friend who was ill I would go right away.

Yet Jesus waited two days, and why? The Gospel tells us. Because he wants the glory of God to be known. He wants it known that when he goes to Bethany that there is no doubt about it, Lazarus is dead. So finally he goes on his way to Bethany, but before he gets there Martha comes to meet him and says, "If you were here he would not have died. But even now I know that God listens to you." And Jesus says, "He will rise." And she says, "I know he is going to rise at the end of time, but he is dead."

Then Mary comes and says the same thing. So what does Jesus do? He asks her, "Where is the tomb?" And he goes to the tomb and he says, "Take away the stone." Mary says, "There will be a stench. He has been dead for four days." Jesus then asks her, "Don't you believe in me? They pulled away the stone and Jesus says, "Lazarus rise." And what happened? Lazarus came out of the tomb like a mummy all in bandages. Jesus said, "Untie him. Let him breath." And they did. But before that he prayed, "Thank you, heavenly Father for making me known."

What Jesus is saying here is, "There is no doubt about it. I am the Son of God." And remember what he said to Martha and Mary, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will not die but will have eternal life." In each case — people are called — and they respond. And through their responding they are free — physically and emotionally. And because of that, not only do they believe in him, but they become his disciples and go out. We see the promises of them becoming free, and then going out.

Ron and his journey of a year plus has been doing a lot of thinking and a lot of studying and has come to the point where he says, "I want to be baptized. I want that living bond, and receive that living water, and be transformed into change. And that transformation is already taking place. In less than two weeks he will be in that font and will be baptized to receive the Spirit. Then the candidates will be confirmed and receive the Eucharist where the transformation they received in baptism can be nourished and fed.

When we say "I am the resurrection and the life" we are not only saying that Jesus is going to raise us at the end of time, which he will, but if we make him a part of our life now we are living his grace to live the life we need to right now. Now, are there going to be sad times? Yes. Is there going to be sickness? Yes. Is there going to be death? Yes. But if we make Christ the center of our life, we will always be living in his light and grace. And when we slip into darkness and sin, which we all do, we have the opportunity to go to reconciliation to make our soul clean again and have the fullness of life.

A week from today is Palm Sunday when we begin Holy Week. Now we continue to look at ourselves and say, "We do have an awesome God who loves us, who has told us he will always be with us." Remember, Ron did not call God. God called Ron, and Ron

responded. And that is true for each and every one of us. God calls us each and every one of us to be a part of him. So as we get ready to finish our forty days of Lent, let us ask ourselves, "Are we in the light? Or are we in the dark?" If we are in the dark we need to go to reconciliation and get those sins resolved and taken from our souls. How many of you want to be happy? Happiness is within our grasp if we make Christ the center of our life. Because there is no doubt about it, Jesus is the Son of God. And there is no doubt about it; he is the resurrection and the life. And whoever believes in Him, even if he dies will live and whoever lives in Him and believes in Him, will never die.

* * *

Terry Ellerman is a retired educator and serves as a deacon at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Quincy, Illinois. (TASCAM DR40 file 76)