

## A Hope for Two Worlds.

Text: John 11:17-27

Suggested Hymns:

175, 184, 179, 285, 105

1) Hope for this world

2) Hope for the next world

3) The foundation of hope

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 11:17-27, <sup>17</sup> *So when Jesus came, He found that [Lazarus] had already been in the tomb four days.* <sup>18</sup> *Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away.* <sup>19</sup> *And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.*

<sup>20</sup> *Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.* <sup>21</sup> *Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."* <sup>22</sup> *"But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."* <sup>23</sup> *Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."* <sup>24</sup> *Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*

<sup>25</sup> *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."* <sup>26</sup> *"And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"* <sup>27</sup> *She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Sometimes we hear the accusation, *"The Church is falling down on its job."* Similar accusations come from both inside and outside the Church. To properly evaluate such accusations it is essential to ask, *What is the job of the Church?* We usually find that the accusation is based on one of two lines of reasoning.

There are those who will tell you, “The Church is falling down on its job because church members, especially church leaders, isolate themselves from everyday living. They seem to seclude themselves in an ivory tower with no concern about the world in which they live. The Church is concerned only with preaching and lets poor mankind get along as best it can. It forgets that people cannot eat Bible passages.”

From the other side comes this type of reasoning. “The Church is entirely too much interested in earthly things: administration, erecting church buildings, and charitable endeavours. To such matters the Church is converting almost all of its energy. It overlooks the fact that it must be a spiritualising influence. It must direct people to the life hereafter.”

Now, there may be some truth in both accusations. But neither of these accusations could ever be legitimately made if the Church of God fully used Jesus Christ as its example. The Saviour was always conscious of the fact that people need hope while living in this world. He was equally conscious that people will live hereafter and need hope for that life also.

From our text we can see that Jesus devoted himself thoroughly to the presentation of *A Hope for Two Worlds*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Hope For This World**

About three km south-east of Jerusalem was the little village of Bethany. Here lived three close, loved friends of Jesus — two sisters and a brother, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

When Lazarus lay dying, an emergency call was sent to Jesus. But Jesus remained where He was and did not go at once. He explains later why. In order that the glory of God might be manifested. When He did go, Martha, one of the sisters, met Him on the road outside Bethany. Our text presents to us the dialogue between Martha and Jesus as they met after Lazarus’ death. Martha says, “*Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.*”<sup>22</sup> “*But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.*”

It is of extreme interest and comfort to note Jesus’ reaction. Did Jesus tell Martha, “*Martha, your brother is dead. We know that he has gone to heaven. There my interest ends*”? No, not at all! Rather Jesus was deeply interested in sorrowing Martha, and in the fact that His friends had burdens to bear.

What do we find our text? Let us see. When the messenger came to Jesus to tell Him that Lazarus was dead, Jesus told His disciples, *“Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.”* <sup>12</sup> *Then His disciples said, “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.”* <sup>13</sup> *However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.* <sup>14</sup> *Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.* <sup>15</sup> *“And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.”*<sup>1</sup>

Take note that this was two days before Jesus spoke to Martha. Was Jesus interested in the sorrow of Mary and Martha? Two days before He spoke with them, He showed His interest. His words to His disciples surely mean, *“Mary and Martha will be asked to carry a heavy burden. In addition to their sorrow at the death of a loved brother, the family wage earner is gone. I am interested in that too. I shall do something about it.”*

Here we see the compassion of Jesus. As we study the life of our Saviour, we see that wherever He came in contact with his fellow men He was interested in their daily sorrows, sufferings and cares.

Read your New Testament. The next time you do so, note how often you come to the word, “compassion” referring to Jesus. It may be phrases like, *“He was moved with compassion,” “I have compassion,” or “Jesus had compassion.”* Then check back, and see how many times these words are related to those who were hungry; those who were in sorrow; to the crippled, the lame, the demon possessed, and the blind.

To those who had earthly sorrows, earthly troubles, Jesus came in compassion and showed them His divine strength, power, and love. By word and act He said, *“I am interested in you. I am interested in this present life. I shall give you hope for it.”*

But is it enough for real hope in this world if we have the assurance from Jesus that He is interested and compassionate when our earthly needs are pressing?

Just imagine a child being told, “We have arranged it so that during all your lifetime you will never be hungry. You will always have a roof over your head. You will be clothed. You will always have good friends. You will never have

any pain. You will be spared all sorrows. All these things we have arranged for you. But you must still die!”

How much happiness would there be in the midst of all earthly blessings if we were not assured that Christ, our Lord, also gives us hope for the world to come? Death itself is not such a terrible thing. In many instances it is a welcome relief. There is a fear of death because of what comes after death.

When we think about the world to come people know, feel, and recognise that life does not end with death. They know that life will go on and that there will be another world coming after this one. What joy, what happiness, what peace can there be in the lives of people whose every consideration of earthly things is tinged with the thought, *“Sometime I must give up all this. And after I give it up, what will take its place? What is coming hereafter?”*

When a person is faced with that uncertainty, even the joys and pleasures of this life will be tinged with fear. Many, many people would lead a much happier life if they were not afraid of what comes after death. Directly connected and integrated with the hope for this world there must be, and there is, a hope for the next world. Jesus presents a hope for two worlds. In our text we find the basis for that hope.

## 2. Hope For The Next World

Jesus says to Martha, ***“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. <sup>26</sup> “And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*** If you are in sorrow now, Martha, I can and will help you. But remember, I will also help hereafter. Jesus promises her life, life indeed. Death, in its physical aspect, is merely a passing over from one phase of life to the next.

Some years ago a family was driving through the mountains late at night. They reached the peak of a high mountain. It was dark. Suddenly a terrific storm broke out. No house lay within miles. After the storm came the fog. The driver could not see the road with its hair-pin turns everywhere. He was truly afraid and pulled to the side of the road to wait it out.

As the morning broke, God’s glorious sun shone out over the valley revealing all the beauties that had been hidden by the darkness of the night. No longer any storm! No longer any fog! No longer any darkness! Only beauty and

light, security and happiness! That is what Jesus means when He says, “*I will give you life.*”

There will be the darkness of death. There will be a stormy moment. But when, in the resurrection morn God’s eternal sun breaks, all the glory of His blessings will be ours. We have that promise because Jesus says, “I will give you life.” ***I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, ... he shall live.***

Then Jesus adds, “Once that life has begun, it will never end again. ***Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.*** That is a divine promise. The Christ-given life shall not be for a moment, not for a few days, but for all eternity.

“But,” someone might say, “*what assurance do we have that this eternal life will be as good as you say?*” Jesus says, “***I am the Resurrection and the Life.*** I, the Son of God, who am perfect, promise you this life.” Eternal life can be nothing else but that perfection which the perfect Christ won for us. He says, “***I am the Resurrection and the Life.***” Truly Jesus gives us hope for tomorrow, Perfect life eternal. Christ indeed gives a hope for two worlds.

### 3. The Foundation Of Hope

“Hope?” someone says. “We hope for many things we never get!” That is not hope, it is dreaming. A boy may dream of being the Prime Minister of Australia. As things stand now, he has one chance in twenty-two million to be Prime Minister. Is that the kind of comfortless hope we have? One chance in twenty-two million? No! Our hope rests on a sure foundation. Our hope is not merely a one-in-a million chance. Our hope is sure! When Jesus had finished His promises to Martha for this world and the next, He asked, ***Do you believe this?*** <sup>27</sup> ***She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”***

***You are the Christ!*** What does that mean? The name Christ designates one who has been anointed. In the Old Testament the ceremony of anointing was performed when certain men were inducted into office. These were, first, the prophets who brought God’s truth and messages to man. Jesus says, “*I bring you all truth. You have every reason to believe it because I am the Son of God. I bring you this truth from God. You have no reason to doubt. I do not lie to you.*

*What I tell you is God's eternal truth." Martha says, "You are the Christ, the true Prophet of God."*

Furthermore, the high priests of Israel were anointed. It was the high priest's duty to offer up a sacrifice for the people once a year and to forgive their sins in God's name. Jesus says, *"I am your true High Priest. I not only officiate at the altar, I am the Sacrifice itself. I give Myself that your sins may be removed. I die that your sins may be paid for. I rise from the dead to prove to you that God has accepted this sacrifice. Now you can stand before the all-seeing eyes of a just God and know that your sins are forgiven. I am your true High Priest."*

In the third place, kings were anointed in the Old Testament. We conclude the Lord's Prayer like this, ***"For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory."*** What glory is it to a king if his 'store houses' are full but he lets his people starve? He has the power to help. If he does not use that power, he has little glory. Christ is our great King. He uses His power in our behalf. He gives us hope here and hereafter, for today and for tomorrow, for the life that is and for the life that shall be. He, our Christ! Ours is not a million-to-one hope! The foundation of our hope is the eternal love of God in Jesus, the Christ.

So the church presents hope for two worlds. If the Church of God presents that Christ to all people, it can never be accused of giving a hope for only one world. God grant that the Church everywhere may always present the hope for two worlds in Jesus Christ the Lord.

Pastors must preach that Christ. Members have the duty to see that that Christ is preached. It is the duty of pulpit and pew to see to it that the Church's job be really done, that the Christ with the hope for two worlds be given to mankind.

If we have that hope, let us prove it. Let us not lead a murmuring, grumbling, and complaining life. Let the light of hope in the heart shine out through the window of life. Let us show that Christ is with us here, and that He will be with us forevermore. And if anyone still asks, "Is that hope available to me?" The answer is a simple, unreserved, straightforward "Yes!"

In today's text there were two sisters, yet they were so different from each other. Martha was practical, demonstrative and outgoing. Mary on the other

hand was quiet, contemplative, and reserved. Pictured here is all mankind. This means that whatever type of person, whatever kind of person you may be, your Saviour comes to you and says, *“Build your hope on Me. I am the Resurrection and the Life — the Hope for the life that is here, and for that which is to come.”*

So let us now go forth and help the Church do its job. Hold the flaming torch of hope aloft for a sin-sick, suffering world by presenting the Christ who does give hope for both worlds. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup> John 11:11-15