

## THE MESSAGE for April 10, 2011

John 11:1-45

*Lead Us ... Believing the Unbelievable*

The Rev. Dr. R. K. Miller

Consider this – a four-year-old noticed an elderly neighbor sitting on the front porch crying one day. He wife of nearly 60 years had died recently and the older gentleman was having a hard time of it. So the four-year-old asked his mother if he could go over and visit with the elderly man. His mother watched from the driveway. The boy walked over, climbed up into the man’s lap, and sat there. Upon returning home his mother asked, “What did you say to him?” The four-year-old replied, “I didn’t say anything – I just helped him cry.”

Sometimes saying nothing is the best thing to say. Sometimes just being there says it all.

We average around 12 funerals a year here at Friedens. That’s one a month. That means I have officiated or attended over 70 funerals in the last 6 years. That’s a lot of funerals. And during that time I have found that sometimes just being with the family says it all.

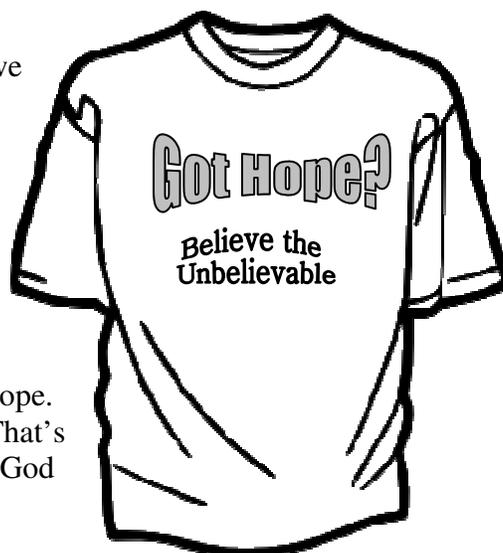
There probably isn’t anyone here this morning who hasn’t been touched by death in one way or another. Death is part of life in this world. We read about it, hear about it, or experience it first hand. The mortality rate continues to be the same – one per person. Nobody is getting out of this world alive.

So what are we to do with *death*? I hope and pray that we will believe the unbelievable. That we will believe Jesus has power over death and because he lives we too will live when our time in this world is finished. That is the basis of our faith. We are resurrection people.

I had this wild thought this past week - maybe we should hand-out white T-Shirts at funerals. A white T-shirts that reads – *Got Hope? Believing the Unbelievable*. Here’s my design. I’ll put it up on the screen.

Sometimes hope is all we have when we enter the dark valley of the shadow of death... Got Hope?

We are people of hope. We worship a God of hope. The Bible tells us that God is a God of life not death. That’s why God raised Jesus from the dead. That means with God anything and everything is possible. Got hope?



Our reading this morning, from John's Gospel, cuts through the darkness of death with the light of hope. This story offers hope -- reminding us that God is faithful.

And since God is faithful there is nothing too great, too overwhelming, too messed up, too broken, too impossibly dead for God to deal with. Over and over, time and time again, throughout the Bible, we are reminded that God is faithful, that God continues to speak life into death. We have hope.

*(Read John 11:1-45)*

Jesus stands at the entrance of the tomb – Lazarus' tomb – disturbed and weeping we are told. I don't believe Jesus is disturbed and weeping because Lazarus has died. Everyone is going to die. I believe Jesus is disturbed and weeping because no one is speaking a word of hope into that moment! Jesus weeps not because of grief but because of the lack of hope. Jesus brings hope and new life into every situation.

Jesus sees an opportunity to reveal God's glory in this moment. Jesus speaks... and death obeys. He calls Lazarus out of death into life. And Lazarus comes out and Jesus says unbind him and let him go. Now picture Lazarus bound from head to toe wrapped like a mummy. He comes hopping out of the tomb. And they grab hold of the end of the linen that's wrapped around him and then pull – and Lazarus spins in place like this (spin around two or three times).

I'm sure it probably didn't happen like that but Jesus does send Lazarus spinning with a new life. Jesus does that for each one of us. Jesus sets us free from death forever. Jesus turns hopelessness into hope, fear into courage, worry into assurance, anxiety into serenity, anger into calm, denial into acceptance, shame into respect, and death into life.

This story invites us to be like Mary and Martha to place our hope in Jesus - fully. They sent for him and he comes bringing life. Someday Lazarus would die again but until then he would live a new life forever changed by the one who has power over death.

Someday death will come for each one of us. We know that. We also know that death does not have the final say. Jesus does, so... we need not be discouraged. We were born to die. We can live everyday then with the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Did you know that the devil loves it when we get discouraged?

Consider this: one day the Devil was having a yard sale. All of his tools were marked with different prices. They were a fiendish lot. There was hatred, jealousy, deceit, lying, gossip, and pride -- all at various prices. Off by itself - there was a tool more worn than any of the others. It was also the most costly. The tool was labeled DISCOURAGEMENT.

When questioned, the Devil said, “It is more useful to me than any other tool. When I can’t bring down my victims with any of these other tools, I use discouragement, because so few people realize that it belongs to me. And it works every time.”

The Devil is never happier than when he sees people giving in to despair and discouragement becoming lost in hopelessness.

Jesus is never happier than when people are found placing their hope and trust in him.

Question: do you know someone who is lost in hopelessness, someone who is hurting or grieving? Maybe it’s your son or daughter, your husband or wife; perhaps it’s a friend or colleague, a coworker or neighbor who’s lost into the abyss of hopelessness.

How might you offer them the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord? How might we help them experience the new life we have in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Got hope? Let’s share it – using words only if we have to! Amen.