

John 11:32-44
Creekside COB
November 1, 2009

“Stop It”

Hey, Buddy," said the taxicab passenger, as he tapped the driver on the shoulder. The driver screamed and lost control of the cab, nearly hit a bus, jumped the curb and stopped just inches from a huge plate-glass window. For a few minutes, everything was dead still and silent. Then the driver said, "Man, you scared the living daylights out of me"" "I'm sorry," said the passenger. "I didn't realize a tap on the shoulder would scare you so badly." "It isn't your fault," said the driver. "Today is the first day I've driven a cab. I've been driving a hearse for the past 25 years." (1)

Jesus is the conquerer of death. We know that. We know that our loved ones are with Him now. They are enjoying eternal glory as Christ says there will be no more sorrow or tears. Our faith is grounded in God's promise of eternal life. Today Christ shows us his power. He is clearly the divine Son of God. He has resurrected Lazarus from the dead.

And for all of us the Good News today is that He still does. He resurrects us from the dead with His sanctifying grace. Transforming us into the people He has called us to be. We experience His resurrection power.

Christ says in John 10:10
I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

What does this mean to us? To have life abundantly.

Christ is speaking about our spiritual abundance. Not physical abundance but an abundance in our souls and spirits. An abundance that pours over our circumstances. An abundance that our faith dwells in - where we find courage.

That is part of Christ's sanctifying grace. We are all striving to reach that place. To reach a place of complete trust and assurance. To be in a place that we know that we can get through anything and we rely on

Christ to help us.

Sometimes we can't get to that place of grace. There are many things that keep us from experiencing that spiritual abundance.

I want to show you one women's problem with spiritual abundance and how she tries to heal it.

[YOUTUBE CLIP - Bob Newhart counseling]

I learned how to swim when I was 40. I was always afraid of the water. My mom was afraid so I imagine that is where the fear came from. You might want to say I had drownaphobia. I was so afraid that I was fearful of my children drowning and I wouldn't be able to save them. I made sure they learned how to swim.

Fear kept me from realizing my abundant living. I was afraid of the water. I always wanted to swim because I knew the water was calming. I knew it was a good thing to learn. But my fear held me back. It was keeping me entombed.

I am asking you this morning is there anything that is keeping you entombed? Are there things in your life that are keeping you from experiencing the abundant life?

Sunday School Teacher: Has anyone had someone do something that hurt their feelings?

Girl: Yes, my sister broke my Barbie this morning.

Teacher: Do you think you should forgive her? What do you think Jesus would do if she had broken his Barbie?

Girl: Find a really big stick and beat her until she bled!

How about unforgiveness in your heart? Do you have fears? Are there regrets in your life? Is there guilt and shame that you can't release? Are there things keeping you from tasting a piece of our eternal glory?

Christ says, "Take away the stone" Remove those things that encumber you. Remove those stones of fear and regret. Remove those stones that keep us from the life Jesus has called us to. Those things aren't intended for you. You belong to me.

My fear of the water kept me from enjoying my life. I was anxious anytime I came near water. If I was asked to go boating I would cringe and go but would be so fearful that I did not enjoy myself. I was petrified. I didn't want anyone to know how afraid I was. I kept it hidden and it robbed my spirit of joy. It was my secret. My fear kept me bound up.

I was bound up. My anxiety gripped me. My worry stressed me out, especially in the summer. I would do things to avoid any contact with water. My fear guided my decisions and kept me bound up. Summer wasn't fun.

Jesus says, "*Take away that stone and take off those grave clothes and let him go.*" My worry and anxiety were my graveclothes. I lacked the self-confidence to do anything about it. Jesus wanted me to have a fuller life but my graveclothes stunk. Jesus says "*Take off those graveclothes.*"

But Jesus, Martha says, "This is going to be a stench" I believe the King James Version says, "He stinketh." Things may stinketh if they have been entombed for a long time. The longer they have been entombed the more they are going to stink.

Is your unforgiveness keeping you bound up? Are you harboring bitterness over your regrets? Is guilt causing you depression? Are you grieving and can't seem to get past it? Do you feel unworthy of receiving anything good? These are the things that are keeping us bound up in those old graveclothes. These are the things that in all that time of being entombed they are causing part of our life to stink. They cause our decisions to stinketh, our relationships to stinketh, our own self-esteem to stinketh. We are bound up. When the graveclothes are removed, we experience a wonderful freedom. It is like a huge boulder being removed from our soul and our spirit and we are open to receive abundantly more. There is nothing blocking the way. There are no stones or graveclothes keeping us from it.

I want you to notice something about Jesus and how He goes about our healing today. I want you to notice that He uses Lazarus' family and friends in the resurrection. He calls for them to remove the stone, he calls to them to remove the graveclothes. He calls to us for help. Jesus puts people in our lives to help in the situation.

You see, learning how to swim just didn't come to me. I was working at a Y in Pittsburgh and was running with a group of women who were swimmers too. They encouraged me to learn. God had already placed it in my heart but it was through them that I began to remove the barrier of fear.

God calls us into community together. We are the body of believers - believers. We believe in the saving power of Christ. We believe that through Jesus we can be resurrected into a life abundant. We are here to help each other, to trust each other and to give and receive love from each other. We are a family. These women were my extended family.

I was encouraged through a woman at the Y who was a swim instructor for 40 years. She had taught so many of my friends how to swim and their children had learned and now their grandchildren were coming of age. This woman took me and gently brought me to a place of comfort in the water. She would place herself in the deep water and I would stand on the edge and she would hold my hand and encourage me to jump in. It was probably one of the hardest things that I have ever done. And she was so patient and loving about it. She wasn't at all like Bob Newhart. She understood. That is what I needed.

Jesus does that. Jesus stands and holds our hand in the process. He is patient and understanding. He knows us. He weeps for us. Christ weeps for you and me. Now the scholars differ in their opinions of why Jesus weeps. Verse 33, says he was deeply moved in the spirit and troubled. Some believe that He was disturbed because the family that knew Him didn't believe that He would do something. There wasn't trust and their faith was weak. He is saying, You know me, you know who I am. Martha even attests to it in a few of the verses earlier in this story. But when he comes upon where they have laid Lazarus. In His compassion, He weeps. He experiences both - sadness for their faith and compassion for their sorrow.

He weeps for all of us because He knows all about us. He calls us by name. "Lazarus come out of there." Janet come out of there I want to help you. You know me. I don't want you entombed in fear any longer. Don't be afraid. You know I love YOU.

Lazarus came out. I was afraid. I had to walk through my fear to get to

the other side. Jesus called my name and I walked out. Jesus calls your name today. Are you willing? Are you willing to just stop what you are doing? Are you willing to top the things that entomb you, the things that are keeping you bound up?

Jesus is the conquerer of death. Death is imminent. Our end times can be any day when Jesus calls us home. Our saints attest to that. But in this time that we are waiting, Christ says, "I can resurrect you now out of those dark places and into the light," where you can have life abundant.

Are You willing?

Let Christ help YOU Stop It.