

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
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Victory Over Death

John 11:32-44

11:32 Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

11:33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

11:34 And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."

11:35 Jesus wept.

11:36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

11:37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

11:38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

11:39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days."

11:40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"

11:41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

11:42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."

11:43 When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."

11:44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them,

"Unbind him, and let him go."

## **1. Christ Knows Our Sorrow**

Today's gospel tells us the story that Jesus raised Lazarus. It already passed four days after Lazarus died when Jesus arrived his home. Mary and Martha, two sisters of late Lazarus, were in deep sorrow. Mary cried out at Jesus' feet when she saw him. She couldn't bear her tear any longer. Those who were with Mary also wept. And, Jesus wept, too. John 11:35, "Jesus wept.", is the shortest verse in the Bible. It has only two words.

However, these two words tell us a lot. This verse tells that Jesus, the Son of God, became human and experienced all of the pains and sorrows of us, and knows our pains and sorrows by experience. It may be the deepest sorrow for us to see the death of the beloved. Jesus knows the sorrow. He mourns with those who are mourning, and weeps with those who are weeping.

All of us expects that others understand us. But, it's very difficult to find a person who can understand us. Most of people want to talk about themselves, and only few try to listen to others. It's reality. Some people interrupt other's conversation and talk about themselves very long.

There was a counselor. A little boy came to see him accompanied by his mother. A comment was written in his client card. It was that he didn't like go to kindergarten. The counselor asked the boy, "What's your name?" His mother replied to the counselor, "His name is Joney." before the boy open his mouth. The counselor asked the boy, "How old?" Joney tried to open his mouth, but his mother answered to the counselor, "Five years old." She replied before Joney open his

mouth again. The counselor found what was the true problem. The mother never listened to Joney. It was one of the reasons that Joney didn't like go to kindergarten. And the counselor found that the mother also had a husband who never listened to his wife through the following counseling sessions.

We can find the peace of mind when someone listen to, understand, and accept us. Then, we can find the support in our life. Especially when we are in deep sorrow or thirsty of heart, we need to be listened to. It is said that the greatest support for the victims of disaster should be to “stand close to someone” every time we experience big disasters. However, it is very difficult to find a person who stands close to our life in any cases. Jesus Christ is the only person who can truly stand close to us to the eternity. In Revelation 7:17 the Bible says, “For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Only the Person who can weep the deepest sorrow of our souls together can wipe away our tear from our eyes.

## **2. Christ Fights Against Death**

The Bible said, “Jesus was deeply moved” twice in verses 33 and 38 for describing Jesus when he walked to the tomb of Lazarus. The Greek word (εμβριμιασμα) is translated into “to feel anger” in other translations. This word is used when we criticize and speak harshly to someone. It is very harsh word. Jesus got angry against death. Jesus not only stood close together with those who lost their beloved one and were weeping with them, but also stood against death itself which

took the beloved away with His holy anger.

There are various kinds of opinions on life and death among Japanese people. However many of us have been holding the opinion that death is natural for every living creature. Therefore we should not resist it. The best attitude is to accept it in peace. But, the Bible teaches us that death never be “natural”, It is the result of sin. Death should be overcome as sin should be forgiven and cleansed. Jesus got angry against sin which separated us from God, and against death which took away the beloved ones from us. He expressed his anger and was fighting against death. A Biblical scholar said that the “deeply moved” feeling of Jesus is like an trembling of the warrior exciting for the battle. I agree with him.

When Jesus arrived the tomb, he ordered to take away the stone. Then Martha, a sister of late Lazarus, told to Jesus, saying, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” Mather said this immediately after she heard Jesus told, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.” (John 11:25) She didn’t understand that Jesus was raising Lazarus, now and here. When Jesus cried out, “Lazarus, come out!”, Lazarus was raised up and came out of tomb. The people were surprised and believed in Jesus by seeing this great miracle.

Miracles are called “signs” in the Bible. They are signs to point to the real one. The miracle that Lazarus was raised was a sign and prophecy of the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The real one is always greater than the sign. Therefore, the death and the resurrection of Jesus was greater than Lazarus’ death and coming back

to life. Lazarus died as a human who is mortal. However, Jesus was the Son of God and the Lord of life. He was immortal, but He died. His death was very special. Jesus died substitutionary for our sins. Jesus opened the way of the forgiveness of sins for the believers.

Moreover, Jesus' Resurrection was greater than the coming back to life. Lazarus came back to life, but he died again after several decades. The Resurrection of Jesus is totally different from a resuscitation or just coming around. Jesus had the glorious body which never die and get sicknesses and live eternally. Therefore, He can be with us in any places and at any times. Jesus fought against death, overcame it, and is alive now.

### **3. Christ Wins Victory Over Death**

Easter is the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The believers receive the resurrected and eternal life from Jesus, and are born again as children of God, and live the life by the new life Jesus gives. The believers will live with God in eternal heaven even after finishing the life on earth.

Easter is "the Celebration of Life." But it is more than that we enjoy the spring and revival of trees, flowers, and the tweets of birds. We celebrate and enjoy the greater life; the eternal life which is given to us through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Easter is "the Celebration of the Eternal Life."

I lost my mother when I was a child. I still remember that I wept a lot and washed my face in several times. Though I don't know the loss of mother had triggered my sickness or not, I got sick immediately after my mother passed away. I was absent from school full one year. I

couldn't participate PE after I came back school until 10th grade. Sometimes I got high fever and had to stay in bed. I had to excuse from afternoon classes and went to the hospital for regular check up. My oldest sister and her husband gave me a special care, but my sister lost her husband after two year marriage life. I became to think about death by experiencing death of close family member and my sickness. I had these questions. "Where we go to after death?" "If all of us have to die sooner or later, then why we have to live?" "Is there any meanings or purposes in our life?" "Even family and friends love me, they cannot stay with me forever. They also passed away someday. Is there someone who loves me forever?" Though my thought was not mature, but I was always asking such questions in my heart.

In such days, I became to learn the Bible and went to a church. I got to know Jesus Christ. When I believe in Jesus Christ, I experienced the salvation from the fear of death. My health came back. I could enjoy cycling and mountain climbing during my high school years. The Bible says in Hebrew 2:14-15, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." This realized in my life.

Jesus Christ fought against death, and won. When we believe and trust in Him, we'll have the new life that will not end by death, but will continue in the eternal God's Kingdom. The eternal life, which Jesus Christ won by His death, is the gift of God. Let's receive this precious gift this Easter season.

## **(Prayer)**

Dear Father God, Jesus followed Your will and came in Jerusalem, and accomplished all of Your wills. You gave us this Lord Jesus as our King. There is no greater grace than this; Our King is the merciful Redeemer. We truly thank You, and let us be the ones who welcome Lord Jesus as the King in every worship service, and daily devotions. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.