



February 18, 2018

## **WE FIND LIFE WHEN JESUS FINDS US**

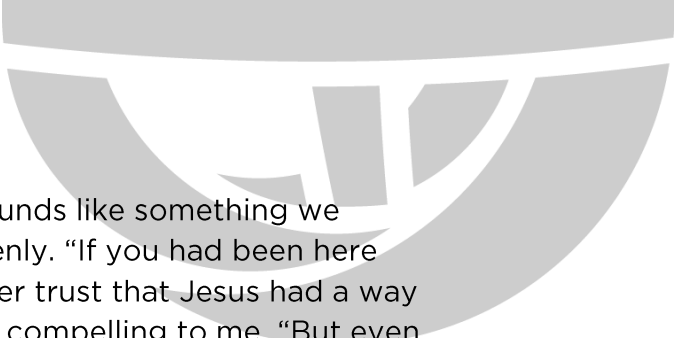
Pastor Jason Bryan-Wegner

### **JOHN 11:17-27 NRSV**

<sup>17</sup>When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup>Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup>and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup>When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup>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 God will give you whatever you ask of him." <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 on the last day." <sup>25</sup>Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup>and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup>She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

So many things go through one's mind when someone unexpectedly dies. We wonder why. We wonder what could've been done to prevent it. Sometimes we even wonder how we might've played a role in changing the outcome. These are all nature wonderings in the midst of grief.

In the reading today Martha is in the throes of grief. Her brother Lazarus unexpectedly got sick and died. She and her sister Mary sent a message to their friend Jesus about what happened. They hoped he would come, and come quickly. Jesus had always been a source of light for their family in the past - like he always knew the right things to do and say. It didn't hurt either, that many of the things he'd done recently - things he called signs - had given Martha and many others reason to believe that he was no ordinary person. In the midst of her brother's death, she seemed to trust that she would find life when Jesus was near.



Martha's grief is familiar. Her indictment of Jesus sounds like something we might've said if we lost someone we loved so suddenly. "If you had been here Lord my brother would not have died." But it was her trust that Jesus had a way to bring life out of this deadly situation that is more compelling to me. "But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him."

This week we are asking as a country why 17 young people and teachers have been killed senselessly in school shooting. The backstory of the shooter is tragic; the events of last Wednesday even more tragic. It seems as though death is all around.

As people of faith I can't help but wonder how does resurrection and the life come in this situation? How might we lean into this experience with a willingness to say and believe that even now we know that God is able to take this tragedy of death and bring new life?

My dear friends, I am not sure how we will move beyond the stalemate in the debate about guns and violence in our country or how we will better protect children from the fear of active shooters in our schools, but I trust that as people of faith, it starts with asking what kind of relationship we have with God, the one who sent his only Son into the world not to condemn it, but to save it. And what kind of relationship we have with one another because of who this God is.

I wonder how seeing Jesus as the resurrection and the life for the world might move us to seek life for others. I want to trust, especially today that Jesus brings us resurrection and life especially in the face of death; and that we will find life for all when Jesus meets us where we are. Amen.

