

Pastor Geoff Boyle
Memorial Service for Maynard Nelson
3 February 2011
John 11:17-27, 38-44

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

Lazarus was a friend of Jesus.

They loved each other as brothers.

They shared jokes and stories over a glass of wine, while Martha got the dinner ready,
and all was well (Jn 12:2).

But then Lazarus fell ill.

He came down with something nasty that struck hard and fast –
there wasn't much warning –
and his sisters panicked and called for Jesus—

Because He loved Him.

Jesus, who's truly God in human flesh, loves Lazarus.

And it's purely out of His love for Lazarus that He came at all.

But He didn't get there in time.

And so Martha, probably from deep sadness with a bit of anger, cries out,
“Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died” (Jn 11:21).

And she's right.

But Jesus didn't come to *heal* Lazarus—He *wanted* to be late!

In fact, He kicked His heals around and stalled before coming,
in order to make sure Lazarus would be good and dead when He got there.

No, Jesus didn't come to *heal* Lazarus—

He came to be the *Resurrection* for Lazarus.

He came to be Life where there was only death.

But this doesn't make Martha happy—

this doesn't ease her pain and sorrow;

this doesn't make up for her brother dying—

all because Jesus didn't show up when they called.

Yes, Martha believed in the resurrection:

“I know that he'll rise again in the resurrection on the last day,” she says.

But the resurrection, for Martha, was abstract.

She knew it existed, but didn't think it was of much comfort.

For her, the resurrection was some future rising again—

it had little to do with the real pain and sorrow she felt right now.

But that's not a resurrection that Jesus knows—

in fact, He's a walking resurrection:

“I *AM* the resurrection and the life,” He says,

“Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live,

and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall *never* die” (Jn 11:25-26).

But do you believe this?

Is the resurrection for you a long way off?

Is it some future event, remote, and disconnected from the person of Jesus?

Martha realized what Jesus was saying.

She saw where she went wrong and confessed her faith in this Jesus, who stood before her:

“Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who’s coming into the world” (11:27).

Can you say the same thing about this Jesus as Martha?

Do you believe that wherever Jesus is, there’s Life and Resurrection, too?

Maynard could; and he did.

Maynard, like Lazarus, was a friend of Jesus.

They loved each other as brothers.

They shared jokes and stories over a meal which the Pastor prepared –
the very body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins –
and all was well.

But then Maynard fell ill.

His Alzheimer’s got the best of him—

wore out his body and mind—

and so his family called for Jesus—

Because He loved him.

Jesus, who’s truly God in human flesh, loves Maynard.

And it was purely out of His love for Maynard that He came.

He came first through a Word spoken with water at his Baptism, almost 90 years ago.

It was here at his Baptism that the Lord gave him a name: Maynard,
by which He would always know him—

a name that, if the Lord ever needed to call on him,
he’d hear and recognize His voice.

This name was much like Lazarus’s,

that when shouted,

even through rock and stone and earth, into a dark and deep cave,

Maynard would gladly hear, and come, and follow, and live.

Jesus came to be the Resurrection for Maynard.

He came to be life where there was only death.

As you remember from Lazarus’ story, Jesus called with a loud voice into a dark cave,

“Lazarus, come out!” (11:43)

And because Jesus’ words do what they say,

even though Lazarus was four days dead and carried a slight odor (11:39),

Lazarus came hobbling out of the cave still wrapped in his burial cloths.

The Lord called; Lazarus rose; and all was well.

And so it is with Maynard!

He was named in Holy Baptism.

He was called out of the cave of death first as a very young boy by Christ to be Christ's own.

In Baptism his sins were forgiven,

his death was paid for,

Christ spoke into those waters,

"Maynard, come out!"

At that moment Maynard's life was no longer his own—

and now neither is his death.

When our Lord called, Maynard answered—

that's just the way faith works.

He knows his Lord's voice.

He trusts His promises,

believes Him to be who He says He is,

and knows that when He speaks things actually happen—

things like life and resurrection.

All of this is because Jesus loves Maynard.

He loves Maynard and He loves you, too.

And when Jesus loves you,

He wants nothing other than to call you into His life by merely shouting your name—

by putting *His* name upon you,

by baptizing you into His own life!

He loves Lazarus; He loves Maynard; He loves you.

Jesus, almighty God in human flesh, loves you.

And in His love He calls you.

He named you in Holy Baptism so that He could call you back from the dead.

He invites you now to share jokes and stories—true fellowship—

over the same chalice that Maynard now shares,

at the same meal that Maynard now feasts upon,

in the same Church in which Maynard now has as his eternal home.

Jesus came and called Maynard to be His own—

to be the resurrection and life for Maynard.

And He wants the same for you, too.

With Jesus all is well,

for Lazarus

for Maynard

and *for you!*

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit