

Harden Soil/Heart

Jn 11: 17-27

An elderly man who lived alone in Idaho.....wanted to till his sizable potato garden,but it was backbreaking work,and his son,who used to help him,was recently sent to jail. The old man mentioned thisin a letter he sent to his son,.....He wrote:... "I'm not sure exactly what to do..... I'm just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot.....It looks like I won't be able to plant that garden this year after all."

A few days later, he received a short note from his son, "Dad, For heaven's sake, don't dig up that gardenthat's where We buried the lootfrom the heist!"

At 4 a.m. the next morning, a crew of police officers, arrived to find the stolen property. After digging for hours,they gave upapologized to the old man and left.

A few days later the elderly gentleman received another letter from his son..... "Dear Dad, under these circumstances, that's the best I can do, You should be able to plant your potatoes now."

Sometimes we are like the stubborn earth.... Stubbornness stands in the way of experiencing a fully **transformed life**in Christ Jesus.

Instead of trusting God Instead of taking his commandments and promises to heart ... we take control of our life. We let hearts become hardened.

When we do not allow the garden of our soul ...to be **tilled**. We remain a potential garden... a potential garden in need of being tilled Tilled by the one who is..... the Way, the Truth, and the Life... by Jesus ... An un-tilled gardenwill become **hardened**over time.

Martha apparently bolder than Mary,goes out to meet Jesus, perhaps to have a private conversation. Immediately She affirms her faith by saying Jesus if you had been there,my brother would have been saved.

Jesus said, Martha your brother will rise again. She responded.... I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. Jesus said these well-known words, ***"I am the Resurrection and the life, Those who believes in Me, even though they die, will live. And everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die."***

Jesus proclaims I am the Resurrection and the life. What did he mean when he said these words?... Are they the same thing or are they different? When Jesus said, ***"I am the resurrection and the life,"*** ..He was clearly claiming ... that He was the **source of both**.

He is the Resurrection which means that those who believe in himwill liveeven if they die. This is the final resurrection the one that Martha spoke about.

Jesus was also making a statement concerning His nature. His divine nature. He does more than give life;Jesus is life, and therefore death has no ultimate power over Him. And Jesus confers this spiritual life on those who believe in Him,so that they toowill share in His triumphover death (1 Jn 5: 11-12)

Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life ... He offers life to everyone who believes in him.... And they will never die. For all eternity ... They will Never die.

There is no resurrectionapart from Christ,and there is no eternal lifeapart from Christ. For He is both... He is the Resurrection and the Life.

And After Jesus makes this statement ... he asks Martha this simple question, **"Do you believe this?"** And her response was that of well tilled soul, **"Lord I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."** And within a mere number of verses, Jesus commanded those present at the Tomb of Lazarus To:**"take away the stone"**.

And with a loud voice he proclaimed those infamous words..... **"Lazarus come out!"** This eventis truly....a forerunner of the last day,when the dead shall hear the voice of Jesusand all will rise.

Some theologians believe that if Jesus did not specify the name of Lazarus that all the tombs would have been emptied.

Jesus is the Word ... the Word made flesh....The Word spoken of in the Scriptures.

The Word... that brought creation into being, and he is the same Word that heals the sick and raises the dead.

He speaks these words outside the tomb and Lazarus who had begun to decay from 4 days in the tombcomes forth. (Pause) Now....Jewish tradition at the timewas that the corpse was laid on a linen sheet that was twice the length of the body, half the sheet was underneath and the other halfon top.

The feet were bound at the ankles. The arms were tied to the body with linen strips ... and the face was bound with separate cloth. Lazarus could hop and shuffle at best as he left the tomb he could hardly walk.

This story of Lazarus obviously foreshadowsthe resurrection of Jesus,but they are different. For.....Lazarus was called to a **restoration**of a mortal life. Lazarus.... would face death again. Jesus was **resurrected**..... He conquered death ... He would rise to never face death again.

How many of us need a restoration? How many of us need the harden soil of heartstilled by God.

Jesus shares with us these words of comfort **"Let not your heart be troubled, Trust in God, trust also in me."** We often only trust that which we can hear, ... that we can see, and that we can touch it... Yet nothing here on this earth will last.

In fact, all things earthly are temporary.... Nothing on this earth is eternal. (Touch Chest) This physical body is temporary. Your physical bodies... are temporary. Do not seek that which is materialdo not put your trustin thatwhich is earthly.

Jesus also shared this beautiful promise....**"I will never leave younor forsake you..."** These are words of trust.

And he has assured us with this future promise.... **"I am going to prepare a place for you..."** Earth is not are eternal Home. When we leave this side of eternity ... when we leave this earthThis island in the universe.....then we will reach home

Our name is written there. Our citizenship is there. Our Savior is there. Our inheritance is there. And our Lord is clear ... on how we obtain this eternal life:

"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me , even though they die will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

Beloved do you believe this Do you believe that he is the resurrection and the life? Are you experiencing the fullness of this life?

If you desire this fullness Then remove the stone that lies in front of the tomb ... that holds in those things that are squelching your spirit those things that are keeping youfrom a full life in Christ Jesus.

In our gospel story the people obeyed Jesus and removed the stone ...from the tomb of death. And that is what faith is all about..... **Removing** ... yielding every aspect of our life ... to allow Jesus to be Lord... Lord of all.

For In the midst of tears and weeping, with faith... a disciple of Christstill trusts.... Still follows. Faith does not mean That we will not feel pain,that we will not feel weakness... that we will not feel brokenness Faith does not even mean that we must fully understand.

Faith means that in spite of **death**... in spite of **adversity** In spite of **tears**that our **trust** remains in God. For he is the resurrection and the life.....

Do You want a deeper relationship with God.... Do you believe in him..... Do you truly trust him?

God wants to release each of usfrom all bondage. Christ came to set us free from the power of sin and death. He wants to set you freefrom every tomb that enslaves you.

Do not let your heart be harden as clay...allow the Holy Spirit ... to till the soil of your heart. Roll away the stonethat is keeping you bond.

Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the life...And then Jesus asked Martha this simple question **Do you believe this?**

Do You Believe..... Do you truly believe?