

**“Sorry To Break Up The Funeral”**  
**John 11:1-45**  
**Mar. 9, 2008**  
**Rev. Steve McCoy**  
**First United Methodist Church**  
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We have all seen the parody of the funeral. It is a tired act used in many plays, sitcoms and movies. The mistake gets made somehow that a person has died and everyone comes to mourn the one who is lost. Low and behold they come to find out that the person is not dead but alive. Usual in this comedic sort of way, they people get mad at the deception and the story line ends, with relief and some indignation of the stress they have put through.

Well as we know the Bible has the corner on the original story of mistaken death. From Ezekiel in the Valley of the dry bones, to this story here, the raising of Lazarus. Typically we here about this story and the humanity of Jesus, who was too late to save his poor friend, breaks down and cries, and finally summons up his power to raise him from the dead. However, when we here the full text of the story we find it is not only about the Humanity of Jesus. In John’s Gospel, Jesus humanity is never in question. What is in question, and what is revealed here ultimately is the divinity of Jesus. That he has the power from God to raise the dead not so he can have his friend around more, but to glorify God and to reveal something profound we are about to experience in just a few short weeks: “I am the resurrection and the life.”

As a young man, D.L. Moody was called upon suddenly to preach a funeral sermon. He hunted all throughout the four gospels trying to find one of Christ’s funeral sermons, but searched in vain.

He found that Christ broke up every funeral he ever attended. Death could not exist where he was. When the dead heard his voice they sprang to life. Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection, and the life.*” ?

A few years ago, a letter appeared in the national news that was sent to a deceased person by the Indiana Department of Social Services. It read as follows:

"Your food stamps will be stopped in March because we received notice that you passed away. May God bless you. You may reapply if there is a change in your circumstances."

Unless your name is Lazarus, there haven't been too many who have seen a change in those circumstances!

Sounds like whoever wrote that letter would have understood what Jesus was talking about. But for Martha, she could not quite grasp what was happening. She with all urgency sent messengers to Jesus using all the modernity of the time to get Jesus there now! Today she might have emailed, blogged, called his cell phone, left a voice mail, and sent him a text message to say to Jesus whatever you are doing stop! Get yourself here! Lazarus is dying! He is drifting into darkness and he needs your light. We can use these funny stories to illustrate the point, but Martha isn't laughing. Then again neither is Jesus. One can imagine the pain that he felt at waiting to go to Lazarus. One experiences the pain he felt as he wept. That is what makes him the resurrection and the life, not just in the spiritual sense but also in the reality of our human condition. After enough mourning, this funeral needs to be broken up.

Tom Long writes about a couple in Arkansas who have given their six-year-old son strict instructions to come home from playing every afternoon no later than 5 p.m. He is allowed to play with his friends, but his parents are quite serious about his curfew. If he is not home by 5 p.m., they begin to worry and call around the neighborhood to find out where he is. The boy knows this, though, and is careful to arrive every day on time.

One April Monday, however, the day after Daylight Saving Time went into effect, the boy was late coming home. When he finally arrived, a few minutes before 6 p.m., his mother scolded him for being late. "You know you are to be home by five," she said, "and here it is nearly six."

Puzzled, the little boy pointed out the window. "But the light," he protested, "the light; it's the light that tells me when to come home."

Realizing what had happened, his mother smiled and gently explained that the day before the time had been changed, that everyone had reset their clocks and, now, the daylight lasted longer. The boy's eyes narrowed. "Does God know about this?" he asked suspiciously.

In a childlike way, this little boy shared John's theological vision. Martha Jesus wants you to know that with God daylight last longer than death.<sup>1</sup>

This is a precursor to what is about to happen. Just when we think it is over, and we weep at the foot of the cross, we go to the tomb only to find it empty. One even wonders why it must be this way, but just as Jesus broke up the funeral of Lazarus, God breaks up his. Death however, is a part of life, and in the new life we must die to ourselves so that we might live for him. If Christ light is in us, then not even death can conquer because Christ brings us life. "I am the resurrection and the life." The Funeral Is Broken Up!

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Thomas G. Long, "When Jesus Arrives Late," Whispering the Lyrics, CSS Publishing Company