

**John 11:20-27 + Jesus Is Life + Cross of Christ Ev. Lutheran Church – Liverpool, NY**  
**Christian Victory Service of Dick Bassett + 10 March 2018**

*From Him who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.*

Dear Family and Friends of Dick Bassett, especially you dear Maruta, Michael, and Peter,

Someone once said that life is lived in the little moments. This past week since the Lord called Dick Bassett home, family and friends have said much about those little moments—the encouraging comment, the warm handshake or hug, the gentle reminder, the dry humor, the fatherly advice, the loving care, the visit when things weren't going well, the well-read Catechism next to his chair at home, the final treasurer's report ready for the meeting.

Memories and stories fondly shared. Much has been said and I'm sure more will be said about the life of this child of God now asleep in Jesus. In time, though, memories fade and stories are no longer told. Their comfort only lasts so long. So where can we turn for lasting comfort as we mourn the loss of this husband, this father, this friend, this brother in Christ? Where can we turn when death makes an unwelcome and unexpected visit? Where can we turn when the Lord decides that a believer's time of grace is complete? We turn to the Lord who cares even about the little moments in life, the Lord who knew exactly what a believer named Martha needed to hear as she grieved the loss of her brother and who also knows what we need to hear today.

Centuries ago, two sisters, Martha and Mary, were where you are. Their brother Lazarus had died unexpectedly after a brief illness and they mourned his loss. While he was still sick, they had sent a messenger to Jesus urging him, pleading with him to come and heal their brother, but he did not—and Lazarus departed this life. By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days, and Martha and Mary were grieving. Family and friends from all over tried to comfort them. They fondly shared memories and stories. They recalled the little moments, but they could only comfort so much.

When Jesus arrived, Martha ran out to meet him while Mary stayed back at the house. Martha's grief came tumbling out. ***"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."*** She really wasn't angry at Jesus for delaying, but she couldn't hold back her grief any longer. If only Jesus had been there! Yet even then, her hope and trust in Jesus kept shining through the grief.

Being the compassionate and all-knowing God, Jesus knew exactly what Martha needed to hear in that moment. He didn't share a memory or a story, although I'm sure he probably could have. No, Jesus gave Martha what she really needed in that moment—the comfort of the resurrection. ***"Your brother will rise again."*** Now Jesus was planning to actually raise Lazarus from the dead that day, but naturally Martha wasn't thinking of that. No, like us today, she looked forward with faith-filled confidence to the Last Day when God would raise her brother back to life. ***"I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*** Yet Jesus had even greater comfort for her in that moment, comfort that you and I would do well to listen to today.

Jesus said, ***"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*** Rather than point Martha anywhere else, Jesus pointed her to himself. Jesus pointed Martha to the comfort that only he as the living God could give, the comfort that Jesus is life.

In this moment, Jesus gives us that same comfort. You see, Jesus was Dick's life in so many ways. Yes, in his own way, Dick did all those things that I mentioned earlier in the sermon, yet like every one of us, Dick was also a sinful human being. He knew what he was by nature. He knew how he had disobeyed God's holy will in his thoughts, in his words, in his actions. He knew his guilt, and he knew all too well that ***"the wages of sin is death."*** (Romans 6:23a)

...But Dick also knew the rest of that verse, that ***"the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** (Romans 6:23b) He knew that he had a Savior from guilt, a Savior from sin, even a Savior from death. He knew that because that's what God's Word says. He knew from God's Word that God in his undeserved love sent his one and only Son to be his Savior. He knew from God's Word that Jesus had come to live the holy life that he could not, even in the little moments of life. He knew from God's Word that Jesus went to the cross for all of his sins and that Jesus rose again to give him eternal life. By faith in Jesus, Dick knew that.

Dick knew that because that's what God's Word says. So he kept studying that Word of God. He kept going back and spending time with his Savior in the Word. For that reason, he knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that he

would someday see his Savior in heaven because Jesus was his life here on earth. By faith in Jesus, Dick truly looked forward to the joys of heaven.

That faith-filled knowledge that Jesus was his life also impacted Dick's earthly life in so many ways. Jesus was his life in his love as a husband to you, Maruta. Jesus was his life in his love for his family and friends. Jesus was his life in his care as a leader of our congregation for so many years making sure that we could fund the mission and ministry work God has entrusted to us. Jesus was his life in the humble way he served often behind the scenes, in how he cared for others, and in how he quietly welcomed everyone who came through our doors. Jesus was his life in his steady and dependable work. Jesus was Dick's life, so when the Lord in his grace called Dick Bassett home, he did not do so because Dick was so great or so kind or so caring, but because Jesus was his everything.

Now Dick enjoys eternity with our Savior, but we're still here in this vale of tears. In grief, we might even be tempted to think a little like Martha. "Lord, if you had been here, my husband, my loved one, my friend would not have died." Yet Jesus has been here the whole time. When the Lord called Dick home, he wasn't alone. Jesus was there with him. As you rushed around this past week visiting funeral directors and lawyers and making plans and talking with people, Jesus was there with you. Now we're here and even when all is said and done, Jesus is still with you, even in the little moments of life.

Through his Word, Jesus comes to you. He puts his almighty arms around you and dries your tears with his nail-scarred hands. He knows your pain. He knows your grief. He knows your loss, yet Jesus also comforts you with life. ***"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."***

With that promise, Jesus wipes away your tears and gives you life that will never end, life that Dick now enjoys. With that promise, Jesus fills your emptiness from his fullness and heals your grief. When he says, ***"He who believes in me will live, even though he dies,"*** the Lord gets personal. Since Jesus is your life here on earth, eternal life with him awaits on the other side, even though you and I will someday face death.

When he says, ***"Whoever lives and believes in me will never die,"*** Jesus speaks to all of us believers. That promise of eternal life is for each and every one of us who believes in him, even for loved ones who die in the Lord. That's the greatest comfort you can hear today, because Jesus himself is your comfort, your help, your hope, and your only path to heaven. Jesus is your life.

...And Jesus is also your resurrection. When Jesus comforted Martha and then raised her brother back to life, he was offering a preview of his resurrection victory to come. You see, a couple weeks later Christ's resurrection victory would come on Easter morning. Jesus would conquer death once and for all for all of us. For that reason, a time is still coming when Jesus will raise us from the dead and bring us body and soul to be with him in the glories of heaven forever.

Dick looked forward to that resurrection, and so do we. He rejoiced that Jesus had already called him from death to life through the water and Word of Holy Baptism. Jesus raised Dick to spiritual life, so he could honestly confess with Martha, ***"Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."*** Jesus has given us that same new life. He made us holy in God's sight through Baptism. With faith-filled hearts, then, we can be sure that Jesus will raise Dick and all believers back to life on the Last Day. Why? Our living Savior is our sure and certain hope. He is our resurrection.

On March 3, in a quiet moment, the Lord in his grace called Dick Bassett home. He fell asleep in Jesus when none of us, except Jesus, expected it. Dick lives with Jesus now because Jesus was his life, and the Lord is here for you too. He is your comfort in grief, your power over death, your Savior in the little moments of this life, and your hope of eternal life. Jesus is your resurrection and will always be your life. Amen.