

Trinity Lutheran Church Lenten Service 2

John 11:33-37 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

We all boarded the plane at the same time. The flight attendant scanned all the boarding passes, and everyone made their way to their seats. If you looked at the people, they all looked normal, nothing unusual. But, of course, they were different: men, women, children, old, young, and from different ethnic backgrounds. When we all were comfortable in our seats, the attendant welcomed us all on board and welcomed one special passenger. When she announced his name, most did not know who he was, but then she said that he was a veteran who had earned the Medal of Honor for his valor on the battlefield. We were surprised and we clapped our hands with appreciation.

Our theme for this Lenten season is about the Son of God going forth to the war that would change the whole world. But Jesus did not look like a warrior any more than the passenger on the plane did. Jesus as our great warrior walked among the people like anyone else. You could say he was a:

Hidden Warrior

- 1. Like us in his humanity (He wept over Lazarus)**
- 2. Unlike us in his divinity (He raised Lazarus from the dead)**
- 3. As the God-man: He fights for us.**

We are told that Jesus was like all of us. He got tired, hungry, and thirsty. When he was a child, he grew up like every other child. The Bible says: Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. (Lk.2:52)

But there was one major difference. He had no sinful nature and was completely without sin. As a result he was always respectful, always obedient, always faithful, never cheated, never stole, never lusted. The Apostle Peter says: **“Jesus committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” (I Peter 2:22)**

Could you, could I, live a sinless, perfect life? I can't, neither can you. That's why we can be so thankful that Jesus remained without sin all his life. When he gave himself for us on the cross, we can know for certain that his was the absolutely perfect sacrifice! There has never been a human being like Jesus! But you couldn't tell he was sinless just by looking at him. He felt compassion for others, he wept, and he even was justly angry when God's house was turned into a market.

Yet there were times when Jesus greatness and power were evident. We have such a time before us in this account. Jesus arrived at the home of some friends: Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, who lived in Bethany (about 2 miles outside of Jerusalem). Lazarus had died and been buried for four days when Jesus arrived. Mary was crying. **“When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.**

‘Where have you laid him?’ he asked. ‘Come and see, Lord,’ they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’” (John 11:33-36)

What a caring heart Jesus has! That’s what caused him to cry real, human tears when he saw the grave of his very good friend Lazarus. Even the people who were there to support the family of Mary and Martha could tell that those tears rolling down his face were real. They knew that Jesus had spent time with that family – they had eaten together, laughed together, and now cried together. Jesus felt their sorrow and pain. It was a completely human thing.

You know what that is like. You have been at funerals of friends or loved ones. Tears are the outflow of a grieving heart. The pain that comes from loss is very real. Jesus’ heart was as broken as yours or mine has ever been.

We have other tears to shed as well. Lent is really a good time to consider the pain we have caused others in our lives – how many times have our children been hurt by angry, thoughtless words that come out of our mouths? How much irritation, how much anger have we caused because we’ve spent way too much time on Facebook, YouTube, or internet gaming? How many tears have been shed because we’ve allowed our love for our family to shrivel and starve? How many times have we avoided the chance to start a conversation about Jesus and left another soul untouched by our Savior’s love? How many regrets do each of us have because of our sins?

Lent is really a good time for contrition and for repentance, for a self-evaluation of our spiritual life and where we stand before our God. May you and I daily confess our sins before God, knowing and trusting that He will forgive us all because of His Son, the Valiant Warrior, yes the Hidden Warrior.

2. Unlike us in his divinity (He raised Lazarus from the dead)

Those in Bethany at the death of Lazarus had questions. **“Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” (John 11:37)** The friends of Mary and Martha refer to a miracle that Jesus had performed recently in Jerusalem. He had given sight to a man who had been born blind. These friends were naturally wondering why Jesus had not used some of that healing power on Lazarus, his good friend. It’s the same question that was on Martha’s mind. She had said to Jesus: **“If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” (Jn.11:22)**

They asked because they knew there was something special about Jesus. To give sight to a blind man is nothing but miraculous! We know that Jesus has such power. In the Book of Hebrews we are told that Jesus made the universe, which includes us. Think of the awesome power he has! Astronomers estimate that there are one hundred trillion galaxies in the universe, a number so big we can’t even imagine it, much less design it. They say there are more than ten million different species of animals on earth! Think of the unlimited creativity, brilliance, and power it took to make all that! None of it was an accident.

These truths remind us that the man Jesus is also the very Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. He's not 50% human and 50% God. Rather, he is what the Bible describes as the God-man, 100% fully human and 100% fully God. Martin Luther said that trying to understand this was "like trying to illuminate the sun with a candle!"

This is the astounding truth: The eternal Son of God took on human flesh and blood in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Apostle Paul put it this way: "**Jesus made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.**" (Philippians 2:5-7) All of this was done as part of God's plan of salvation, to save the world lost in sin and unbelief.

In this account we have Jesus telling Martha that she would see the glory of God (Jn.11:40). You know the rest of this miraculous event. He called the dead Lazarus out of the grave. He showed a glimpse of the power at his disposal. He smacked death in the face and forced it to yield. Like a warrior practicing his skills before a great conflict, Jesus is getting ready for the final battle with Satan just a week or so away.

Look at the damage Satan has done and is still doing. His personal goal is to rob you of your faith, take away your hope, and see you perish in hell while he laughs in your face. Satan is stronger and more powerful than any human being can handle. That's why God's plan to save this world was so necessary and so perfect. We have our sinless human Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for our sin. He is our substitute AND the substitute of all humanity. His suffering and death was complete for each one of us! Perfect man Perfect God. Perfect plan!

3. As the God-man: He fights for us.

Jesus called Lazarus his friend (Jn.11:11) His friend Lazarus was important to him. He also calls you his friend and has made you his friend by Baptism. He has also promised to remain your friend throughout your life. Because of sin you and I will continue to struggle in our lives. Maybe it's physical pain. Maybe your heart is aching over some personal problems.. We struggle with doubts about our faith. Sometimes God seems so far away, doesn't he? You pray, but it seems as if he's not listening. You read your Bible, but it doesn't seem to speak to you. When you struggle, when you agonize, when you feel overwhelmed in your life, please picture this: With one hand the God-man Jesus is controlling our universe, and his other hand is wrapped around you. You can't see it yet, because our risen Jesus has chosen to remain hidden from our vision right now. But he's there – always has been there. He's working out his plan for you because you matter to him. The cross proves that!

Jesus is fighting for you each and every day. The Bible tells us that he is making all things in our lives work together for our good! He has even assigned angels to protect us as in the spiritual battles that are waged for our souls.

The tears of Jesus over the death of his good friend Lazarus show that he cares deeply. You're in the best, the most loving, and the most powerful hands in the universe! You are in a mighty warrior's hands! Amen.