

## SERMON FOR THE 2<sup>ND</sup> MID-WEEK LENTEN SERVICE, 2020

### The Hidden Warrior

#### John 11:33-37

Grace and peace to you all from our risen Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The text for our sermon tonight is John 11:33-37: **When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews weeping who had come with her, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled.** <sup>34</sup> He asked, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see!” <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup> Therefore the Jews said, “See how He loved him!” <sup>37</sup> However, some of them asked, “Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, also have kept this man from dying?”

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Our theme for this Lenten season is about the Son of God going forth as a mighty Warrior to the war that would change the whole world. However, Jesus did not look like a warrior as He walked among the people just like anyone else. Therefore, we could say that He was *the hidden Warrior*.

The Scriptures tell us 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. Luke tells us that “*Jesus grew wiser and taller and increased in the approval of God and of people*” (Luke 2:52).

But there was one difference: Jesus had no sinful nature and was completely without sin. When He was a child, it must have felt unusual to be His parents, because Jesus was always respectful, smart, and obedient, even when they lost their temper for the wrong reasons or were grumpy. They never had to give Him a time-out or a spanking, or to send Him to His room without supper. The Apostle Peter tells us that “[*Jesus*] committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22).

Could any of you live a sinless, perfect life? Of course not, neither can I. That’s why we truly are glad that Jesus remained without sin all His life. When He gave Himself for us on the cross, we know for certain that His was the absolute perfect sacrifice! There has never been a human being like Jesus! Again, Peter says that we have been “*ransomed from the futile ways inherited from (our) forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot*” (1 Peter 1:18-19). But you couldn’t tell Jesus was sinless just by looking at Him. He felt compassion for others, He wept, and He even got angry when God’s house was turned into a market.<sup>1</sup>

If someone had paid close attention, they may have seen that He was different. Every year Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover.<sup>2</sup> As a 12-year-old, Jesus went with His family just as they always had, but Jesus showed He had come for the battle that was to come. As He engaged the temple teachers in discussions, they could see that Jesus was a boy - He looked like your average boy, but the words that came from His mouth gave evidence that He was much more! They were getting the first recorded peek at the hidden side of Jesus.

His greatness and His power were evident at times. On one occasion, this perfect Jesus arrived at the home of friends: Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, in Bethany. Lazarus had died and been buried for four days when Jesus arrived. Mary was crying: “<sup>33</sup> **When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews weeping who had come with her, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled.** <sup>34</sup> He asked, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see!” <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup> Therefore the Jews said, “See how He loved him!”

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, laughed, and now cried together. Jesus felt their pain. It was a completely human thing that we all can relate to. How?

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 21:12; John 2:14-15

<sup>2</sup> Luke 2:41

We have all suffered different kinds of losses that have caused tears to flow. We know 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 a really 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? How much irritation and anger have we caused because we've spent way too much time on Facebook or other social media? 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 Saviour's love? How many regrets do each of us have because of our sins?

Really, we ought to have a box of tissues alongside us as we grieve over our sin. True repentance begins with sorrow (contrition). Lord, let it be so tonight!

We have something better than tissues to dry our honest tears, because great unimaginable power lies just beneath the surface of our Warrior!

Those in Bethany at the death of Lazarus asked: **“Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, also have kept this man from dying?”** Jesus grieved because of the damage sin had done. Death originally wasn't part of God's plan for this world. It was introduced by Satan from outside our earth, and we hate it.

The friends of Mary and Martha hated it too. They may have heard - perhaps even seen - the recent miracle of restoring sight to the blind man in Jerusalem. Those 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.

They asked because they knew there was something special about Jesus. We know that Jesus made the universe<sup>3</sup> which includes us! Think of the awesome power He has! How many galaxies are there in the universe? How many countless different species of animals live on the earth! Far too many for us to count! Think of the unlimited creativity, brilliance, and power it took to make all that! None of this was an accident.

St. Paul writes, *“(Christ Jesus) was in the form of God, yet He did not consider His equality with God as a prize to exploit. <sup>7</sup> Instead, He emptied Himself, took on the form of a slave, and became like other human beings”* (Philippians 2:6-7). That means that the man Jesus is also the Son of God, the Second Person of the Triune God. He's NOT 50 percent human and 50 percent God. Rather, He is what the Bible describes as the God-man, 100 percent fully human and 100 percent 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, when He was born in Bethlehem, added a second nature to His perfect, holy, almighty self. God also became a human being! *“He emptied Himself.”* In other words, He set aside and put on the shelf much of His God nature. He hid His glory, but once in a while He peeled back the veil and let it show.

The event that our text was leading up to was one of those times. Jesus told Martha that she would see the glory of God.<sup>4</sup> You know the rest of this miraculous event. He called the dead Lazarus out of the grave, showing 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, to take away your hope, and see you burn in hell while he laughs in your face. He's bigger than any human being can handle. That's why God's plan to save this world was so perfect. We have our sinless human Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for our sin, but if Jesus were just a perfect human, His life would only count as a sacrifice *for Himself alone*, not for the rest of the world. He'd have to keep coming back and go through hell billions of times, once for each of us. But He is the all-powerful Son of God whose death was more precious than the death of one human. 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!

Jesus called Lazarus His friend.<sup>5</sup> Lazarus was important to Him. He also calls you His friend, making you His friend by baptism. How do you think He feels about you, especially when you are at a weak spot in your life - kids bullying

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 1:2

<sup>4</sup> John 11:40

<sup>5</sup> John 11:11

you in school, co-workers constantly critical of your efforts, your spouse giving you the silent treatment, or your friends abandoning you? Look at the cross and find your answer there. Jesus has your back.

You and I shall continue to struggle in our lives. Maybe it's physical pain. Maybe your heart is aching. We struggle with doubts about our faith. Sometimes it seems as if God is far away. You pray, but it seems as if He's not listening. You read the Bible, but it doesn't seem to speak to you. It's almost as if He is hiding. For now, He actually is hiding in plain sight in His Word and sacraments.

We are fully aware of the fact that the devil and his evil angels are circling our lives, looking for just the right time to pounce, but we know that God has made this promise to each of us: "*The One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world*" (1 John 4:4).

So 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, who fills the entire world with His presence, has chosen to remain hidden from our vision right now. But He's there – He always has been there. He's has worked out His plan for you because you matter to Him. The cross proves that!

Each and every day He's fighting for you. His Word tells us that He is making all things in our lives work together for our good!<sup>6</sup> Every prayer you have uttered has been picked up by Him and personally delivered to our heavenly Father. He has assigned angels to protect us as the spiritual battles are waged for our souls.

The tears of Jesus over the death of His good friend Lazarus show that He cares deeply. The cross proves it, and our risen Jesus assures it. You're in the best and most powerful hands in the universe! Now He remains hidden, but His power remains through all eternity - for us now. You are in a mighty Warrior's hands! Live boldly with Him! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 8:28