

**“THE RESURRECTION REMOTE CONTROL!”**

John 11:17-27, 38-45

Friends in Christ,

What would you say is the greatest invention in our lives today? I think your answer depends on your age. Some of you are thinking the greatest invention is **color TV**. Remember when NBC was the first network to go all color in the fall of 1966? Some of you think the greatest invention was the air conditioned car, the garage door opener, the microwave, the gas grill, the power mower, the snow blower, the automatic Maytag washer/dryer, the wireless phone, the VCR (which always blinked 12:00 ‘cuz you didn’t know how to program it). Yikes-those are some old memories.

Others of you are more modern: bunk beds, pillow-top beds, car seats that are like baby Lazyboys, calculators, computers, laptops, WIFI, cell phones, smartphones, I-pads, me-pads, you-pads, and whatever other electronic pads there are. Great inventions – all of them.

But there’s one invention that probably 100% of us use regardless of age. and that’s the remote control. This gadget controls the world inside our homes. If you don’t believe me, then **just lose this thing** somewhere in your home. It has a record button, a play button, a pause button, a rewind button, and a fast-forward button. These buttons allow us to stop the action, replay the action, or skip the commercials to get back to the action. When it works, it’s a great invention!

Our familiar story could use **a remote control** because when you scan the details of this miracle, you want go back and go forward. Today we’re going to do that. Let’s...

*1. Rewind back to the unavoidable*

*2. Fast forward to the unbelievable*

And when all is said and done, we’ll learn how Jesus uses:

**“THE RESURRECTION REMOTE CONTROL!”**

## 1

You know the story like the back of your hand. Word gets to Jesus that Mary/Martha’s brother is critically ill. Lots of people were like that, but Lazarus happened to be Jesus’ friend. But instead of making a beeline to Bethany, Jesus delays his arrival by a few days. Well, by the time Jesus got to Bethany, it was too late. Lazarus had passed away!

At first glance at Jesus’ response to his disciples, you’d think Jesus had no heart, no compassion, no sensitivity to Mary/Martha’s loss. He told the disciples: “...**for your sake, I am glad I was not there**... (John 11:14) But of course, Jesus has the big picture in mind. He can **rewind to the unavoidable and fast forward to the unbelievable** by saying that **this sickness will not end in death, but it is for God’s glory**. In other words, Jesus has the **Resurrection remote control** in his hands!

As we proceed in this story, we’ll hit the “pause” button a few times. Martha went out to meet Jesus with her grief: **If you had been here, my brother would not have died**. With tears streaming down her face, Mary repeats the same thoughts when she sees Jesus. It tears your heart out to hear this.

But now the **one who was so bent out of shape** that she had to slave in the kitchen while Mary never lifted a finger and just sat around at Jesus’ feet is the one who confesses her trust that Jesus will help them in their loss. Martha tells the Lord: **But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask**. (Jn 11:21-22) Jesus says Lazarus will rise and Martha simply says: **I KNOW HE WILL RISE AGAIN in the resurrection on the last day**. To which Jesus assures her: **I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL LIVE, EVEN THOUGH HE DIES**... Oh, let’s hit the **pause button** here. Jesus has the power over death. Jesus is **the resurrection**; He is the life. He is the one in whom you believe to continue to live after this life. Even though your body is dead, your soul keeps living. It never dies! That makes death but a door to pass thru to eternity!

And we need to know that. When sin came into this once-perfect world, so did death and we’ve been cursed with it ever since. This story makes **us rewind to the unavoidable** because the fact is (unless Jesus returns first) we will experience death. That’s the result of the sinful world we live in. That’s the result of the sinful nature we’ve inherited. God didn’t make Adam and Eve to die, he made them to live. But they followed their own desires and disobeyed God. And the entire holiness of mankind came crashing down on them.

**So death is unavoidable**. It tells us we are condemned creatures, lost in the hopeless hell that awaits every sinner who disobeys God with our words, our thoughts, our actions/attitudes. What should he do? Excuse us ‘cuz we don’t know any better? No, he should punish us because we do know better. He is clear in His Law to **love-not hate**; to **praise-not curse**; to **help-not hurt**, to **protect-not defame**; to **keep** what’s ours-not steal what’s not; to **worship-not skip**; to **have no other gods-not idolize** our man-made gods, to **be faithful to our spouses-not covet** other spouses. Our sinful nature is like a natural spring and just keeps bubbling up with more ways to disobey God, and therefore more reasons we deserve to die forever!

I don't like [rewinding to the unavoidable](#). I wish I could erase the record, but we can't. That's why Jesus didn't delay his coming to this earth as God promised. Jesus came to erase our records and wash us clean with His precious & holy blood. Christ's love held that remote control and pushed the delete button to clear us of all our sins, transgressions, and iniquities. They're gone, they're history and through faith in this Savior, they will never harm us. **For in Christ alone**, there is forgiveness, mercy, and love. **In Christ alone**, there is life – even though our bodies are lifeless.

I hope we all push the record button for Martha's confession of faith when she told Jesus: **I BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD WHO WAS TO COME INTO THE WORLD.** (Jn 11:27) And then replay this confession of faith over and over and over again for our comfort every time we have to [rewind back to the unavoidable](#)!

## 2

This 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent is the last one before Palm Sunday and Holy Week. Today our service uses both the penitential themes of Lent combined with the joy of the resurrection of that holiest of days only two weeks away. With Lazarus, we are reminded of our own mortality and [REWIND TO the unavoidable truth](#) that we will die one day. But with Jesus, we **FAST FORWARD TO the unbelievable truth** that we will rise one day. And so we grab the **RESURRECTION REMOTE CONTROL** again!

Jesus is moved to tears at Mary/Martha grief as well as his own personal grief over losing his buddy. Wait, why is Jesus crying? Isn't he Mr. Cool, Calm, & Collected? Isn't he the Savior-Hero? Isn't he in control, so why does he lose his emotions? **Because Jesus is human and He has a heart, feelings, emotions just like us.** That heart leads him to Lazarus' grave with the request to open it up.

Oh, but let's hit the "stop" button here. Lazarus has been dead ½ week. He won't be a pretty site, there's no embalming fluid in his veins – he's gonna stink—that's just the way it is.

But Jesus has the **RESURRECTION REMOTE CONTROL** in his hands. He prays to His Father to thank him for hearing his prayer for the benefit of those standing near. And with the voice of power, Jesus orders Lazarus to **COME OUT** and out walks a former dead man who is alive. Death has no power over Christ. Death must obey the word of Jesus and Lazarus is **healthy, breathing, living proof.**

Our pericope has this reading assigned for this Sunday two wks before Easter. It's about the same length of time when Jesus performed this miracle before his death. Jesus [fast forwarded to the unbelievable truth](#) that He would suffer for our sins, die our death on the cross, and be buried in a tomb. He [fast-forwarded](#) to see another Mary, his mom weeping with other mourners. He [fast-forwarded](#) to hear soldiers mock him: **He saved others: He can't save himself.** He [fast-forwarded](#) to feel the pain of a rescue that never happened because His Father has left him to hang with our sins. He [fast-forwarded](#) to see another grave cut out rock where his body would be laid to rest in peace.

But thanks be to God that Jesus always had **the resurrection remote control** in **his** hand, to fast-forward to the unbelievable truth that Jesus lives. As true God, he didn't need a voice to command himself to rise. He just did – because He has conquered death and the grave and opened the door to heaven.

In two weeks, we will [fast-forward](#) to the blessed results of Christ's passion for us and see a preview of something bigger yet to come. Resurrection – life – death swallowed ...there's so much more to come, so much more to tell! Next Sunday we begin to [rewind to the unavoidable](#) as we begin Holy Week. Then in two Sundays, we [fast forward to the unbelievable](#) **EASTER SUNDAY!** Can't do that without the **RESURRECTION REMOTE CONTROL.** That's one invention we never want to be without!! **AMEN**