

“A Hope, a Presence, and a Foretaste”
John 11:17-37
March 29, 2020
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

This morning we return to John chapter eleven.

Last Lord’s Day we looked at the first seventeen verses of John chapter eleven, and saw how it was Jesus’s love for his friends – for Lazarus, Mary, and Martha – that motivated both his action and his inaction towards them.

This Lord’s Day we come to verses seventeen through thirty-seven. And in these verses, we will consider what Christ offers to those he loves while they are in the midst of suffering – a topic that is quite timely, and I think it is providential that we come to it today.

As I said last Sunday, the sections of John 11 that we will consider really need to be heard within the context of the whole chapter. And so I will read the entire chapter, though our focus will be on verses seventeen through thirty-seven.

With that in mind: John chapter eleven.

Please listen carefully, for this is God’s Word for us this morning.

^{11:1} Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” ⁸ The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” ⁹ Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” ¹¹ After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” ¹² The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” ¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” ¹⁶ So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” ²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴ Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe

this?" ²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

²⁸ When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹ And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴ And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸ Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." ⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, ⁴⁶ but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." ⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." ⁵¹ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³ So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

⁵⁴ Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.

⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶ They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" ⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

"All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever." [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let's pray ...

Lord, our souls long for your salvation,
and so we hope in your word.
We long for your promise,

and we long for your comfort.
Whatever trials and hardships we face,
we do not forget you, but we look for your deliverance.
As we come now to your word,
We ask that in your steadfast love you would give us life.
Strengthen and guide us
so that we can keep the testimonies that have come to us from your lips.
Grant this, we ask, for Jesus's sake. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:81-84, 88]

When you find yourselves in suffering, what do you typically seek from God?

I want to start this morning with that question.

What is it that we typically seek from God when we find ourselves suffering?

I think two common things that we often seek are an answer, or an apology.

When we suffer, we tend to want either an answer or an apology from God.

We can come to God either with questions or with accusations.

Maybe we state them openly, or maybe they are murmurs in our heart. But still, they are often there.

Whether we have suffered some kind of loss ... or disappointment ... or sickness ... or sadness ... or anxiety ... or trauma ... when we turn to God, we often find ourselves asking him for an answer or an apology.

Often the questions well up in us: Why? Why did you allow this to happen, God? What are you doing in this? What good can come of this? God, you could have stopped this ... and you didn't. Why?

Of course, how that question is asked can vary. It need not be defiant or faithless – though it can be. Often, even as we trust God, we want to understand. We want to know what he is doing. And so we ask him for an answer. Why? Why is this happening to us?

Or perhaps, sometimes, we demand more. Sometimes, if we are honest, we cannot see how what has happened could possibly work for good. And we find ourselves wanting an apology from God. Our anger at our situation turns into anger towards God. And we find ourselves thinking how we are in the right and he is in the wrong, and he needs to apologize for what he has done.

Answers, or apologies. What does it look like for you when you suffer?

And I'm not asking what you project on the outside. I'm not asking what you are aiming for. I'm asking what is going on in your heart when suffering comes to you. What is it you really *want* from God when suffering has already knocked on your door and now seems unavoidable?

You probably have some material in your life to reflect on right now. Whether you are disappointed to be away from your friends at school ... or sad to be missing out on big events or big plans that

you had ... or you're worn down by involuntary homeschooling ... or you're reeling from job loss or the collapse of the financial security you have built ... or you are just so lonely in your house ... or you are reading all the stories about overrun hospitals and suffering patients, and you are sad for them and scared for what may happen to those you love ... whatever it is for you, what questions, or what demands, do you find yourself bringing to God right now?

We get something of a glimpse of ourselves in Martha and Mary in our text.

Mary and Martha send for Jesus ... and Jesus delays, and gets there after Lazarus has been dead for four days. It's unclear if they expected Jesus could have made it in time or not, but their statements are identical: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

It's not clear how we should read this statement. Some commentators read it as a statement of faith combined with grief. [Carson, 411-412] Others see an implied question in the statement. [Wright, 5-6, 8] Still others see a complaint that is put to Jesus. [Calvin, 433-434]

And if we think about it, we should recognize that these things are not mutually exclusive. Martha clearly confesses her faith in Jesus. And yet, there seems to be a question built into her statement, as well as a complaint. Why wasn't Jesus there? He said that he loved them. Couldn't he have been there?

Martha brings this statement and all its implied questions to Jesus first. Mary falls at his feet, weeping, and says the same thing.

Both of them loved Jesus. Both of them loved their brother. Both of them are grieving. Both of them are distressed that Jesus was not there to help them avoid this suffering. What do they want at this point?

We don't know for sure, of course – though if it were us, we could certainly see ourselves demanding an answer with those same words. We could maybe even see ourselves demanding an apology.

Of course, Jesus doesn't give either.

He does not apologize, for though they don't understand what he is doing, he has not done anything wrong.

And he also, as we reflected on last week, does not give an answer.

And if we're honest, neither of those things would really give the comfort that we need.

An answer or explanation might give some consolation ... but the pain and the loss would still remain. And an apology would mean that our God can fail us ... a frightening idea that means that, at the end of the day, we really are on our own in life. Neither an answer nor an apology would help us as much as we tend to imagine.

When we suffer, when we experience loss, we often find ourselves wanting answers or apologies from God. But we don't get them ... and if we did, they would not give us what we really need.

What then is the alternative?

If Jesus does not give this to Mary and Martha, then what does he give them instead?

Instead, what we see in our text is that when we suffer, Jesus gives us a future hope, a comforting presence, and a gracious foretaste.

When we suffer, Jesus gives us a future hope, a comforting presence, and a gracious foretaste.

That's what we see him give to Mary and Martha. That's what he gives to us.

Let's look at each of those aspects now in our text.

First, when we suffer, Jesus gives us a future hope.

And that is the first thing that Jesus points Martha to in our passage.

Take a look at verses twenty-one through twenty-four:

²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

Now, while it's true that Jesus's words in verse twenty-three may be intentionally ambiguous [Carson, 412; Augustine, 49.14], it also seems obvious that first and foremost Jesus expects Martha to hear – and so is pointing Martha to – a future she already believes in. [Wright, 6-7]

Martha is a faithful Jew. She believes in the future resurrection: that one day God will raise from the dead all who have trusted in him – he will make all things new and they shall live forever in God's presence, never subject to death again. This is the future hope of God's people.

And then, in verses twenty-five and twenty-six, Jesus ties this future hope directly to himself. He says "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

The first thing that Jesus gives to Martha and Mary in the midst of their suffering, is a future hope.

And he does the same thing for us ... though I think we can often lose sight of it.

We tend to be *very* oriented towards this life. And that's true not just of secular people, but of Christians as well. As Christians, because we are shaped by the culture around us, we tend to look for – we tend even to expect – our fulfillment and our satisfaction to come to us in *this* life – right here and right now. We focus on God's provision *here*. We focus on God's blessing *now*. But that is not what God has ultimately promised us.

We do in fact receive many good things in this life. We experience great blessings from God in this life. But the Bible is also clear that the fullness of the blessings that God has for us *will not* come to us in this life.

But it is a sure and solid promise to us for our future.

The promise of God is that, as Mary believed, God would return one day to dwell with his people forever, in a renewed heaven and a renewed earth – free from sin, and sadness, and death, and disease. And he would raise all who trusted in Christ from the dead, and he would give them a new body, and they would have a perfect soul ... and free from sin and brokenness they would live forever with one another and in his presence – in perfect joy and peace.

This is the promise of the gospel for all who trust in Christ. It is our Christian hope. This is what God has promised to his people. It is not a wish but a solid expectation. And we look forward to it with anticipation.

But it does not come to us in this life.

Yet I think we often act and think as if it does. We often *expect* to receive full blessing and true wholeness in this life. And when that doesn't come, we are indignant.

But that's not what God has promised us.

And if there is one thing that the current crisis should shake from us it should be our presumption and our sense of entitlement to the blessings of heaven in the here and now.

God doesn't promise those blessings now. But he *does* promise them in the future. And that sure promise, that solid future hope, is one of the first things that Jesus gives to his people in the midst of their suffering.

Do you see that in your life? When things do not go as you had hoped ... when disappointment, or grief, or suffering, or loss knock at your door ... do you lift your eyes up to your final destination? Do you turn your gaze to the promised future hope that you have as a child of God – to the promise that one day you will dwell with him forever?

That promise is the first thing that Jesus gives to his people in the midst of suffering.

But, thankfully, it's also not the only thing Jesus gives us.

He gives us a future hope, but he does not leave us to fend for ourselves in the present. Because the second thing Jesus gives to his people in the midst of their suffering is his comforting presence.

We see this in a few ways in our text this morning, but we see it most clearly in Jesus's emotions throughout this passage.

Jesus's emotional responses described here have been distressing to some readers throughout church history – so much so that, in his commentary, John Calvin felt the need to give a fairly long defense of the fact that Jesus's emotions described here were truly real – that they were genuine emotions, authentically experienced, and sincerely expressed – though emotions free from sin. [Calvin, 439-442]

And two emotions seem to be highlighted in this passage.

The first is seen in verses thirty-two and thirty-three. There it says: “Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my

brother would not have died.’ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.”

Key to understanding this is understanding what emotion is being described here.

One theologian, in an article on this passage, explains – he writes: “George Beasley-Murray points out a major disagreement between the English and German traditions of biblical scholarship on how to translate the Greek [...] in 11:33. The NIV’s ‘deeply moved in spirit,’ the Good News Bible’s ‘his heart was touched,’ or the New English Bible’s ‘sighed heavily,’ are all softened versions of the KJV’s ‘he groaned in the spirit and was troubled.’ However, at the Reformation both Luther and the Zurich Bible used a German word [...] [that] comes into English as ‘he became angry, disgusted, enraged.’ This translation reflects the usage of this word in classical Greek where it depicts a warhorse on the field of battle, the snorting of a stallion about to charge the enemy.” [George] D.A. Carson makes a similar argument, claiming that the word refers to anger and that the common English translation misses the mark. [Carson, 415]

Mary and the other mourners come to Jesus, and they weep before him ... and Jesus’s first response was to get angry. Why? What was Jesus angry at?

There are at least five different answers that commentators often give to that question, but the one that seems to fit best within the text itself is that Jesus is angry with the source of the sadness and suffering before him. His anger, as one theologian puts it, is “directed against Satan, the Evil One himself, who presides over the realm of death, wreaking havoc throughout God’s good creation.” [George] Jesus responds to the sorrow and death before him with anger at death and at the one who uses death to mar God’s creation.

But then we need to stop and think about what that means for us, and what it means for our relationship with Jesus.

First, it means that when we see sin and brokenness in this world, it should make us mad. It should make us angry to see God’s creation and his creatures marred and damaged by sin, death, and disease.

Of course, as fallen human beings, we struggle to do this without sin. Though, to be fair, as fallen human beings we struggle to do *anything* without sin – and so anger is not that unique. But anger at the fact that this world is not the way it is supposed to be – anger at the Evil One, the Devil, who delights in this brokenness – that is an appropriate response.

And not only that – but Jesus joins us in that response. Jesus is alongside us in that response. Jesus is angry too at the fact that this world is not as he first intended it to be.

He is present with us and along side us in our anger at this broken world order. And that is something of a comfort.

But it is not the extent of his comfort, because it is not the extent of his emotional response.

A few verses later, in verse thirty-five, as Jesus comes to the tomb with Mary and the other mourners, we read, “Jesus wept.”

One commentator translates verse thirty-five as “Jesus burst into tears.” [Wright, 9-10]

Jesus bursts into tears ... but as with his anger in verse thirty-three, we need to ask why. Why is Jesus weeping? What moved him to burst into tears here?

Some see something more abstract in Jesus's tears – something disconnected from Lazarus, Martha, or Mary. [e.g.: Carson, 416-417; Morris, 558]

But that seems to be a bit of a stretch to me. His tears certainly seemed personal and relational to the Jews who observed him in verse thirty-six.

As one writer puts it: “The tears of Jesus in verse 35 show his deep identification with those who are grief-stricken. It reveals the breaking of his heart for others whose own hearts are broken. Here Jesus weeps with those who weep, even as he learned obedience through what he suffered.” [George; see also the Piper article]

Indeed, as one commentator argues, in the tears of Jesus, God is revealing to us who he is and what he is like. He writes: “When we look at Jesus, *not least when we look at Jesus in tears*, we are seeing not just a flesh-and-blood human being but the Word made flesh [...]. The Word, through whom the worlds were made, weeps like a baby at the grave of his friend. Only when we stop and ponder this will we understand the full mystery of John's gospel. Only when we put away our high-and-dry pictures of who God is and replace them with pictures in which the Word of God can cry with the world's crying will we discover what the word 'God' really means.” [Wright, 10-11]

In other words, God – the true God – the God who was incarnate in Jesus Christ – is not just a God who promises a better future. He is also a God who weeps with his people as they weep, in the here and now.

And once again, that has serious implications for us.

For one thing, it again affirms our own emotions.

Several traditions within Christianity ... and Presbyterianism being one of them ... can have a tendency to turn the suppression of emotion into a virtue.

But then we have Jesus here – angry and outraged in verse thirty-three – bursting into tears in verse thirty-five.

As C.S. Lewis has pointed out, “There is no good trying to be more spiritual than God.” [Lewis, 64] And so, for Christians, there is no good trying to be more spiritual than Jesus!

And John Calvin agrees. In his commentary on this passage, as he discusses Jesus's display of emotion, he writes “The example of Christ ought to be sufficient of itself for setting aside the unbending sternness which the Stoics demand; for [where] ought we to look for the rule of supreme perfection but from Christ?” [Calvin, 441]

Christ shows us how to be a human being. And in this situation, it meant bursting into tears.

Of course, we can be sinfully excessive with our emotions. But we are reminded here that we can also sinfully suppress our emotions. Which one are you more prone to? And how might you need to repent?

Either way, while Jesus does give us an example here, he also gives us more than that. He not only weeps before us, but he weeps *with* us. He weeps *with* Mary and the other mourners. And he weeps with us as well.

John Calvin once again puts it so well – he writes: “By a strong feeling of grief, and by tears, [Jesus] shows that he is as much affected by our distresses as if he had endured them in his own person.” [Calvin, 439]

When you are broken ... when you are grieved ... when you experience sadness or suffering or loss and you want to burst into tears ... do you consider that when you do, Jesus is there and he weeps along with you – just as if your suffering was his own?

And sometimes that is exactly what we need. We need a future hope, to be sure. But we also need a present comfort. And Jesus gives us that, just as he does for Mary and for Martha. He too sees what is wrong with the world, and is angry that things are not the way they are supposed to be. He too sees our grief and our suffering, and he weeps along with us.

When we suffer, Jesus gives us a future hope, and he gives us his comforting presence.

But then he gives us one thing more. Jesus also gives us a gracious foretaste.

Jesus, in this life, gives us a gracious foretaste of that future hope that we wait for.

And we see this come out in Jesus’s words, in his emotions, and then in his actions.

First, there are Jesus’s words in verse twenty-five. Jesus had directed Martha to the resurrection. When she confesses her faith in the future resurrection, he then says to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Jesus ties the future resurrection to himself. [Carson, 412]

Jesus *is* the *future* resurrection. But he is also there in the *present*. And the implications of that should not be underestimated.

As one commentator puts it, Jesus here is telling Martha that “The future has burst into the present. The new creation, and with it the resurrection, has come forward from the end of time into the middle of time.” [Wright, 7]

By being, himself, the future resurrection, and by being with his people, now in the present, Jesus is telling Martha that when we are with him, we should expect hints ... we should expect pieces ... we should expect a foretaste of our future hope to come to us here and now in the present.

Jesus says that with his words.

Then he also indicates it with his emotions.

In verse thirty-three we see Jesus’s anger at Satan, sin, and death flare up. But then the same thing is described in verse thirty-eight, as Jesus stands before Lazarus’s tomb and prepares to raise him from the dead. Why is that?

Well, Calvin puts it in striking terms. He writes: “Christ does not come to the [tomb] as an idle spectator, but like a wrestler preparing for the contest. Therefore, no wonder that he groans again, for the violent tyranny of death that he had to overcome stands before his eyes.” [Calvin, 442 (Translation quoted in George)]

In other words, Jesus’s emotions are not only expressive, but they lead him to action. Jesus’s final and complete defeat of death lay in the future, that is true. But even so, his righteous anger at death leads him to action in that moment – it leads him to take on death in Lazarus’s tomb and in Mary and Martha’s life.

And Jesus’s words and emotions come to their fulfillment in Jesus’s actions. In what follows, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and restores him to Mary and to Martha.

Now ... we need to reflect on what Jesus is giving them here. This is a great miracle – a mighty work – a profound sign as to who Jesus is. Jesus has done something amazing, and it is a huge blessing to Mary and to Martha.

But even with that said ... this is not the fullness of what God has promised to his people. Lazarus is raised ... but he does not, from there, live forever. His body is not made perfect. He is not free forever from sin, death, and disease. He is not dwelling in a new heaven and a new earth before the face of God. As incredible as this miracle is, it is only a foretaste of the promise of God ... it’s not the thing itself.

That means we need to know that God *is* at work to bless us in the here and now – he *is* at work to bring life out of death. But that work is always incomplete and always partial in this life. Nonetheless, it is real.

Jesus gives us a foretaste of the restoration that is to come *spiritually*, as he remakes our hearts, as he helps us turn from sin and selfishness, as he makes us more like Christ, as he draws close to us in love.

Jesus gives us a foretaste of the restoration that is to come *relationally*, as he heals broken relationships, as he turns enemies into brothers and sisters in Christ, as he forms his Body, the Church, as a community of grace and sacrificial love, as he makes our families and our friendships in his image.

Jesus gives us a foretaste of the restoration that is to come *physically*, as he works, either directly or through his creatures, to bring healing where there is sickness, comfort where there is pain, life where we are threatened by death.

As one commentator puts it, in this passage we are reminded that “Jesus will meet your problem with some new part of God’s future that can and will burst into your present time, into the mess and grief, with good news, with hope, with new possibilities.” [Wright, 8]

When we suffer, Jesus gives us a future hope, a comforting presence, and a gracious foretaste.

Where do you most need that right now?

Where is suffering present in your life? Where does it seem imminent? Suffering is always with us in this life ... though it is present in some new and intensified ways in the current crisis. Where are you most feeling it right now?

How does your future hope in Christ reframe your current struggle? What has God promised you for eternity in that area of life? And how should you approach your suffering or loss now, if you keep that future hope before your eyes?

How, too, should Christ's presence be a comfort to you now? How should you seek his comfort? Have you cried out to him? Have you told him about your anger at the brokenness of this world? Have you wept before him? And if not, then why not? What are you afraid of? Do you have the faith to believe that if you weep before him, then he will weep with you – just as he did with Mary? Do you have the faith to believe that he will help you carry that burden by coming alongside you in your grief?

And finally, how should you look for a foretaste in your life of what is to come? How can you pray for a foretaste of physical restoration here and now, as a small sign of the future restoration Christ will one day bring? How can you pray for a foretaste of relational restoration, as a portion of the peace and harmony that will exist when Christ raises all his people? How can you seek a foretaste of spiritual restoration – of God in some way making you more like Christ in the midst of your suffering – of God in some way giving you his peace?

We each have experienced suffering in our lives. Some of us are experiencing it now. Some of us will experience it in new ways in the days ahead.

As we do, let us follow in the footprints of Martha and Mary. Let us run to Christ our Lord. Let us confess our faith in him. Let us fall before his feet and weep. And let us open our hands to receive whatever foretaste of the kingdom to come he has decided to graciously give us.

He loves us. Let us entrust ourselves to him.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

- Augustine. *Homilies on the Gospel of John*. Tractate XLVIII. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series, Volume 7.
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