

Third Sunday of End Time - Saints Triumphant
November 15, 2009
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

John 5:25-29

I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. (NIV)

As many of you know I recently went back to my home town for a funeral. Going back to where I grew up brought back many memories. At the committal service I was standing in a cemetery I walked through every day to get to school growing up. I was standing in a cemetery that I was once responsible for mowing and trimming. But as I stood there I not only thought about the past but started thinking of the future. Would I want to be buried here? In fact Lisa and I had this week, for the first time I can ever remember, a conversation about where we might want to be buried.

Have you ever thought about this, or perhaps even made plans and picked out the plot? Whether we have or not, I hope we realize there is something much more important than what we have done with our bodies after we die. It is much more important to understand what is going to happen to our bodies no matter where they are laid. It is comforting to listen to what God says about all His saints. We anticipate an eternal triumph over the grave. Today I pray we listen to, marvel at, take comfort, and rejoice in - **The life-giving voice of Jesus!**

Some Jews were attacking Jesus for healing on the Sabbath, and then, when Jesus answered their accusations, they became much more upset. They heard Jesus call Himself the Son of God. Jesus was telling them that He is equal to God the Father in every way, and many did not like what they heard - to say the least. But you and I both know that every time Jesus speaks it is pretty important to listen up, especially when Jesus starts by saying "***I tell you the truth***" or "***truly, truly I say to you.***" What Jesus just said using those words is that eternal life hinges on one thing and one thing alone - believing in Him. Those that listen to His words and believe in Jesus as the Savior have eternal life. They have crossed over from death to life.

Now Jesus expands on this in the words of our text. "***I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.***" This is a pretty awesome truth, isn't it? Jesus gives life. He gives life to the dead. He gives life by His voice. He speaks and the dead have life. Like He did for the widow of Nain's son, as He did for the little girl of Jairus, and as He did for Lazarus, Jesus speaks and the dead simply hear and live.

But we know this is true for much more than just physical life! For Jesus gives life to those who are dead in a far worse way than being physically dead. He came to give life to those who were dead in sin and by nature objects of God's wrath. He came to save sinners like us from eternal death. He came to give life - life with God here and

forever. Again He gives that life through His voice - His voice connected to water in baptism - His voice in His Word. Through His Word, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead. Through His Word Jesus reveals Himself to us as the Word made flesh. Through His Word the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see Jesus as our Righteousness. He opens our eyes to see Jesus who died on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. He opens our eyes to see Jesus as the Resurrection and the life.

All this is due to the life-giving voice of the Savior. Jesus says once again He has the power to give this life. ***“For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.”*** Not only is Jesus the Messiah who saves and gives life, Jesus also reminds us what else the Father has entrusted to Him: ***“And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.”***

Again, this is an amazing truth, isn't it? Jesus simply speaks and there is life where before there was only death. He turns sinners into saints simply by His powerful voice - the good news of His gospel. But if we think that is something just wait! Jesus says: ***“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”***

In the early 19th century there was a native of Hanover, Germany who had great contempt for the message of a bodily resurrection. In his will he made sure that great slabs of marble would be laid across his grave, bound together with iron bands and covered with a granite boulder weighing nearly two tons. It bore the inscription: ***“This grave is purchased for eternity; it shall never be opened.”*** But a funny thing happened. A poplar seed began to sprout within the tomb and press its way toward the light. Gathering strength with the years, it broke the bands, moved the boulder, and opened the grave.

Just like that grave all graves will be opened. Even if that plant wouldn't have broken that tomb open Jesus' voice would. It does not matter where we are buried or what happens to our bodies after we die for that matter. You can scatter your ashes in the ocean, dig a hole thousands of feet below the earth - it will make no difference. On Judgment Day ***“all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out.”*** Talk about power! At Jesus' voice every single person will be raised. From Adam to Abraham, from Hitler to Bin Laden, from the very first to the very last to die - not a single body will remain in the earth. All will arise to be judged. What a sight this will be! All will hear Jesus and come out.

On this Day when all bodies are raised it will be great day for those who heard and believed Jesus' Word. It will be a day that we will be so thankful to hear Jesus' voice - the voice we heard say to us many times, ***“take heart your sins are forgiven”*** - the voice we heard countless times tell us, ***“do not be afraid, peace be with you”*** - the voice which proclaimed from the cross once for all, ***“It is finished!”*** It will be a wonderful day to be a saint - one made holy and set apart to live for Jesus. On that day Jesus will point to our lives of faith and Jesus will call them good. Jesus will graciously point to the evidence of our faith - our good deeds done out of love for Him who saved us. We will rise to live. We will not have to stand, like the unbelievers and have God point to our many sins and all the evil we have done. Jesus removed those sins from us and covered us with His perfection. We will not be condemned. The not guilty verdict is

already in for those who hear Jesus' voice and believe. It will be a day of saints triumphant.

Dear friends, that's why when I really thought about it, it doesn't really matter to me where my dead body is buried. As I stood in that familiar cemetery as a loved ones lifeless body was being put into the ground I thought about what really matters. I thought about the day all will hear Jesus' life-giving voice and be raised. I thought about the plans God has for my body. I thought about the glorious future that awaits us. How awesome that reunion will be when all God's children arise and are gathered together! Think of seeing your loved ones who died in Jesus again and the joy of knowing you will be with them forever in heaven. Praise the Lord for the life-giving voice of Jesus. Listen to it often. When Jesus speaks miracles happen and the dead are raised to life. We, who know Jesus as Savior, are living proof. Listen to Jesus' life giving voice often so that when He speaks on the Last Day it will be a voice that we recognize, a voice that brings comfort, a voice that calls us to our final victory, a voice that that makes us and all the saints truly triumphant. Amen.