

A Sermon for DaySpring

by Abigail Villagrana

The Hope of Faith

John 11:17-27

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Buenos Dias, Good morning, for those of you that I haven't had a chance to meet my name is Abigail Villagrana, but I do go by Abby. I like to joke around saying that I leave "Abigail" to my mother if I ever need some kind of correction and those are far few in between now. It is a pleasure to be with you all here this morning. I have been coming to DaySpring for about 6 to 7 months. And DaySpring is a little different and unique from the places of worship I have been a part of. Mostly the difference lies in the predominant language of worship. You see my dad is a pastor, so I am a PK. He has been a pastor at two different churches where the predominant language is Spanish. And ever since I moved away from my parents' home, I have been attending churches where the predominant language spoken is English. The sweet thing about this is that sometimes the hymns that we sing here are in English. I learned them in Spanish, it's not all of them but when it does happen, I sometimes sing along in Spanish.

I feel a sense of unity when we sing these hymns. Because it is the same God that we worship but just expressed in a different language. These hymns and short songs hold so much truth and power in them. They tell us about who God is and what he has done for us. It was sweet to be taught these types of songs growing up in the church. I don't know if you come from a similar background as me, but these songs are foundational to the development of my faith. One of the first songs I remember learning was a Psalm. I am going to sing the first line very briefly, it goes like this... *"Este es el día, Este es el día, que hizo el Señor, que hizo el Señor."* Does that ring a bell to anyone? The song is This is the day. This is the day, this is the Day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it. This is such a truth about God's goodness.

However, as I grew older, and have seen what evil, and the hard things that happen in this world these foundational truths have at times seemed so far away. Maybe you like me have wondered if God had actually made a day good. Maybe when a loved one was sick, a relationship was broken, or you just went through a significantly tough time you wondered... where is God? Where are you, Jesus? And although you know these foundational truths you maybe forgot them in the face of adversity.

Well, we are not the first ones to have ever asked these questions. In today's gospel narrative, we see Martha. Her brother had just died, and she and her sister were mourning his death. Jesus was aware of the situation that this particular family was in but he chose to delay his arrival. Martha was expecting Jesus to come to the rescue to heal her brother just as she had probably seen him do too many others. However, it did not happen as she wanted.

Martha feels hopeless here. Not only did she potentially lose the provider for her and her sister, but she lost a loved one. Martha felt hopeless against the adversity of this grand loss she wanted to know where Jesus was. If only he was here sooner, he could have probably healed him. I wonder how many times in our lives we have been like Martha, looking for Jesus in the middle of our pain. She asked Where were you, Lord? you should have been here. Martha also felt a sense of hopelessness because she knew of Jesus but didn't really know him to his fullness. Martha says the truth that Jesus has real access to God, but she failed to realize that he **is** God. She hadn't fully grasped yet who Jesus was himself and I think are like that too. We know of Jesus, we talk about Jesus, and we study big thoughts about Jesus (hey, I am a seminarian), but do we really grasp who Jesus is?

Now within this encounter, Jesus doesn't just leave her there... He was using this particular family and this particular miracle of the raising of Lazarus to teach her and us something.

Jesus responds to her hopelessness, I think, with kindness. He's not responding to her in a way that he necessarily is trying to correct her. He doesn't say well actually you're wrong and here are the reasons why you're wrong. His response to her feeling hopeless about the death of her brother is "your brother will rise." Now, this statement is almost left ambiguous. Because when Martha first hears this statement, she automatically thinks about the final resurrection. She comes to this conclusion because she finds solace in the promise that God made to his people. That he will make everything right at the end of history and resurrection in the future is hopeful. This Isn't necessarily wrong because there is hope in the final resurrection but with the phrase "your brother will rise," Jesus is going to show something different. Jesus says I am the resurrection and life. This is the foundational truth and our source of hope. Jesus' resurrection brings us hope. It brings us hope because not only are we expectant of a future provision, but we have provision for our present reality as well.

Jesus lays claim and authority over life and death. The God who gave the vision to Ezekiel about the dry bones having life again and bringing hope back to the house of Israel where it

seemed like there was none is the same God who is bringing hope to us today and breathing new life in us.

And so when we respond to this as Martha responded to Jesus, “Yes, Lord! I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who has come into this world” it ignites something within us. Because of this, the Christian life is now without the constraints of death. Because of this newfound hope in the resurrection of Jesus, we have a different life. Not saying we have a different degree of life or that we were given a different kind of life. Rather now because of the resurrection and because of this new life and New Hope we submit to the authority of the Son of God, who both secures our end and is renewing us as a people who are free indeed. As the people who have hope.

And as people who have hope, we become beacons of this hope. We shine the light of this hope we have in the resurrection of Jesus to all of those around us. We open our homes to refugees and asylum seekers, we feed the hungry, and we provide care for orphans and widows. And in the midst of trial and hardships and pain, we have the ever-present Jesus with us... One night I was babysitting for a family and one of the little girls of this family had a very particular way to go to bed. She asked me to sing a song for her. The first one that came to mind was “this little light of mine,” (maybe some of you all have heard this song before) After I was done singing, she asked me a very profound question. She said, “what happens when my little light doesn’t shine anymore?” And listen, I was stuck, I did not know how to answer her, such a profound question for such a young girl, and right before she went to bed!... I do remember telling her that when we feel like our little light is not shining anymore, we have a community around us to remind us of that light...to remind us of that hope. So my prayer for you is that you remember that you have everlasting hope in the resurrection of Jesus as we come to the communion table today...