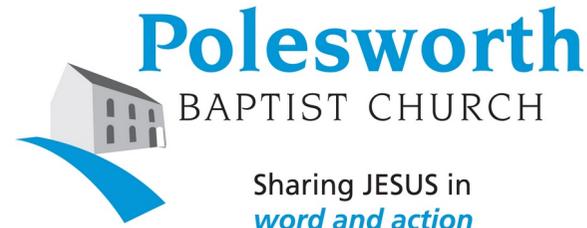


Martha, He says to us, He says to you, Do you believe this?

Blessed are you who do believe, for God will wipe away every tear from your eyes and you will dwell in His love and joy and peace for ever. Amen.



**Revelation 21:1-5:
God's New Creation**
[and John 11:21-26]

Have you ever stood before the locked front door to your home and with complete confidence put your key in the lock to open the door so you can enter your home? Then you the key won't turn, the door stays locked. Your home is blocked to you, and that's not right. It's your home, your door, your lock, your key.

The dwelling of all your love, the comfort zone of your peace in the midst of your struggles, the familiar place of your belonging the sanctuary of your being is blocked, barred, barred to you. You stand there in shock. You tell yourself you should be able to enter. You try the key again. And again it fails. A host of unwanted feelings – fear, anger, distress – may start splurging in your mind. And then you see that all unthinking you've been trying the wrong key in the door. In self-embarrassed foolish-ness you try the lock again with the right key and the door opens, and Oh the relief as you enter your home.

I know that for some people the place where they live is not a true home. It's a place of suffering, of hurt, of sorrow and loss. Sometimes we only appreciate the value of what's really precious when we don't have it. Just as we value well-being more when we suffer sickness, how much more we treasure home when we are locked out of it, where the place we live is without love, without joy, without peace.

If this is so in our present life, how much more in our future, after death life? We read earlier some of the history of what happened when Jesus meets Martha. She is one of two sisters to Lazarus, who has died and has been buried for some 4 days. The house where Martha and Mary live is no longer home. Death has devastated it. Now Jesus has come and Martha wants Him to

make her house home again, by restoring her brother to life.

But Jesus wants to do so much more than that for Martha and her sister Mary, for Lazarus and for us. He wants them and us to know that He is the key who unlocks the door to our true home. Our dwelling with God when He gives us life in the new creation, where there is no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

There is, and Jesus never pretends otherwise, another destiny that people may go to. It is the realm where God is not. And life there is therefore life without love, life without joy, life without peace, and therefore where life is full of mourning and crying and pain. The value of what is really good about life is not just in itself but also in what it is not. The life of the new creation is measured also by the suffering of Bible calls the second death.

Do you watch your diet? Do you wear a fitness watch of some sort? Are you counting steps for a longer life? Do you jog or dash about in gyms for better health and longer days? The world is full of good health advice. Whether you follow it in hope or ignore it one thing is sure about all of it: it all fails when it comes to death. How valuable will that good health advice be to you when you discover your destiny is not the new creation?

So, here without any cost is some eternal health care advice. When Jesus meets Martha He doesn't straight-away restore her brother to life. Instead He refers her to the future general resurrection when everyone will rise to be judged for how they have lived their life. Today many people doubt that such a thing happens, but Martha did not, I know she says that her brother will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. It was her general trust that Lazarus would rise to life with God. Her trust is still with us in the vague hope that if there is a good life in heaven after death, everyone you love will be there.

But Jesus wanted her and us, including you to know that our future destiny depends on our present response to Him. At this point some people say, what about all those people who have never

heard of Jesus? The answer can be summarised as this: trust God, will not the judge of all the earth do right? But what of you, you have heard of Him. So we come to the question Jesus asked Martha and asks us: I am, He says, the resurrection and the life. Which is a God statement. Martha knew that 'I am' is the name of God and that God alone gives life, where there is no life. I am, Jesus says, the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. That's an absolute truth statement. And as such it's open to testing. Science says that something can only be true if its testable. In a few minutes in this conversation Jesus will demonstrate the truth. One more act of evidence that He is the key who unlocks the door of life, and lets us come home.

But first Jesus asks Martha, do you believe this? Belief is not a matter of knowledge but of trust. Jesus is asking Martha: do you entrust your brother's life to me? Do you entrust your own life to me? We don't just let anyone into our homes. Even if in hospitality we give a temporary home to strangers we still set some parts aside no go areas. Our Home is only fully open to our family, for home is the dwelling place of trust.

In Martha's trust and Mary's also Jesus moves to the tomb of Lazarus, he asks that it be opened and then He commands Lazarus to come out. And though he has been 4 days dead, Lazarus re-enters life, he rises up and walks out. Home has been restored.

I am the resurrection and the life Jesus declares. He is the key to the new creation. The hope and desire of which is in our hearts. We all yearn to live in love and joy and peace. Only Jesus can unlock the door that let's us come home. And His key turns for us now. As the hope of a medal shapes the life of an Olympian so our destiny in God's new creation shapes our present living. When we trust Jesus we turn away from our old life, in Christ we become a new person, our future is written into our present. We still live in the world, but the world is no longer our home, the second death is no longer our future, we are homeward bound. As Jesus said to