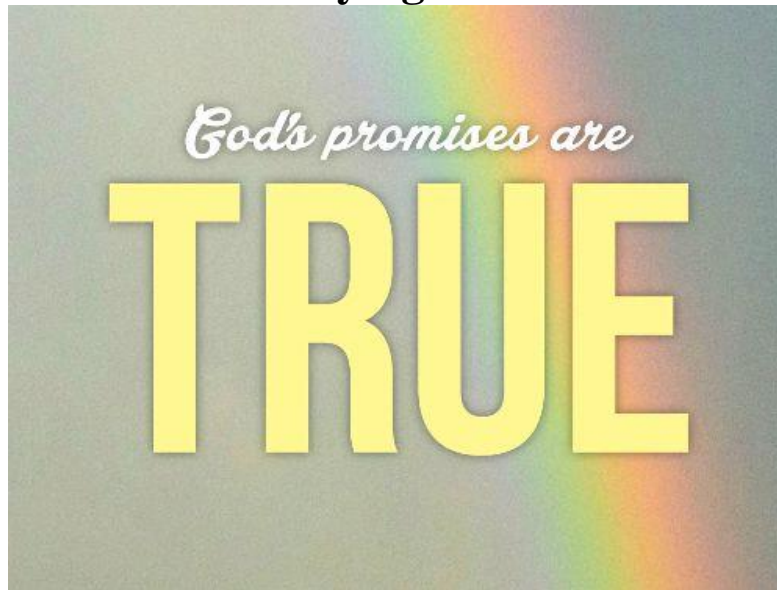


## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 3-22-2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, March 23 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week let us continue to pray for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who have been subjected to attacks and bullying because of false claims that Asian people are to blame for the pandemic. Pray for the end of racism and descent treatment for all people, and especially for those who are unfairly and unjustly targeted for violence or other abuse.

John 11 tells of the death of Jesus' friend Lazarus and of Jesus raising him from the dead. It's a wonderful story filled with hope and promise. It shows Jesus' power over death and the good news of resurrection. The conclusion can give us confidence and expectation for how things will turn out when we struggle with difficult times and with loss. But there is a great deal more than just the message that "God will fix everything in the end."

Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha. They lived in Bethany a short distance from Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples often stayed with this family whenever they were in the area. When Lazarus became sick, Martha and Mary sent word to Jesus about Lazarus' illness. They felt confident that if Jesus came quickly, He could and would heal their brother. But, by the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been buried in a tomb for four days.

Upon hearing that Jesus has come, Martha goes out to meet Him. She expresses her disappointment saying, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” It is at this point that we can readily identify with Martha. So often, there are things that happen in our lives that are beyond our control or ability to fix. It is then that we turn to the Lord, seeking the help that we feel only He can provide. Mostly we accept the outcome if that miraculous healing doesn’t happen. But there can also be questions about why some few receive the special intervention of God, while most of us do not. “Lord, if you had been here...”

Martha also expresses her confidence in God’s providence. “But I know that even now God will give You whatever You ask.” Jesus shares the promise of the resurrection, “Your brother will rise again,” and Martha acknowledges that assurance, but only as a later event. “I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Mary also expresses her disappointment in Jesus late arrival. Nevertheless, we know from the end of this narrative that Jesus does perform the miracle of raising Lazarus even after four days.

What we often miss in this story, though, is what happens between the time the sisters speak with Jesus and the resurrection of Lazarus. Jesus goes to the tomb to see the place where His friend has been laid. And we’re told that “Jesus wept.” Jesus, like all the others who had come to support the sisters and to grieve the loss of Lazarus, mourns his passing. Though it gets fixed in the end, Jesus is there in the meantime, grieving with the sisters and neighbors. Jesus joins them in their time of loss. Jesus waits with them until the time when Lazarus is raised.

When we are in difficult times, we certainly can and should look to the future and God’s promises for us. God will bring about the Kingdom in its fullness at the end. But we must not forget that though there is hope in final outcome, we are not alone in our struggles. The promise of Jesus, of God made flesh, is that God is with us during our challenges and supporting us in whatever trials that come our way.

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey