

SERMON – FAITH LUTHERAN – MATTHEW 9:19, 23-25 – MIDWEEK LENT  
2011

Dear friends in Christ,

There is a Shakespeare play that comes to my mind in connection with this Bible account tonight – “Much ado about nothing”

>> I have to admit that all I know about the play is its title – I don’t even know what it is about – but the title “Much ado about nothing” leads me to think of exactly what we have here in Matthew 9 –

All the noise when Jesus got to house – customary at a death – noise – big fuss made – more money, more noise – burial same day

We do not have that custom – so we don’t understand the noise factor – but we do know how the death of a child makes news – we think of that family not long ago who lost several of their children in a house fire

So how can I say that the Shakespeare title fits here – “much ado about nothing?” That is not true – there was much ado here about SOMETHING! Jairus’ daughter had died! Everyone who was there knew that!

I call it much ado about nothing – because that is what Jesus says! “Go away – the girl is not dead, but sleeping.”

“All you mourners and noise makers and flute players – get out! She is only sleeping! You are making much ado about nothing!”

What is Jesus doing? Is He somehow condemning the whole practice of how they mourned the death of a loved one? No.

Is Jesus ignorant of what had happened? No – He knew that this girl was actually dead – that is why He had come with Jairus.

Is Jesus somehow trying to make light of things? Is He not aware of what death is, and how serious an issue it is? No.

Then what is Jesus doing, in saying, “Go away, she is not dead, but sleeping”?

Isn’t it simply this – that death is NOTHING to Jesus?

Now – before you get ahead of me – listen for a moment. To say that death is NOTHING to Jesus is NOT to say that it is not a serious thing to Him – it is! Jesus was by no means trying to make a mockery of our human woe and suffering and mourning and sadness in the face of death – far from it! Remember what happened when He went out to the place where His friend Lazarus had been buried? “Jesus wept.”

Jesus is well aware of what a HUGE thing death is to you and me. He knows what death is all about for us.

Death is something that every single human being has looming over him – all because of sin.

“The wages of sin is death.”

And as each and every one of us is a sinner, and has broken the law of God, each one of us is mortal – a person who is going to die.

“The soul that sins shall die.”

Jesus knows very well how you and I and every other person is helpless in the face of death.

We cannot take care of the problem we have with sin – because for that to happen we would need to be perfect.

And if we can't get rid of sin by ourselves, then there is no way that we can get rid of death either – the two go hand in hand!

So again we ask – what is Jesus doing here when He orders the mourners and flute players out, and says, “She is not dead – only sleeping”? If He is not making a mockery of us poor miserable sinners who have nothing but death ahead of us, then what IS He doing? If He is not making light of what a serious matter and insurmountable obstacle death is for you and me, then why say what He does?

It is because death is NOTHING to Jesus – not anymore!

You do remember, don't you? You do know why it was that Jesus had come to the earth in the first place –

1 John 3:8 “For this reason the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

Hasn't Jesus come to remove sin and its penalties and its guilt and its result – death – from us?

1 Cor 15:56 “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law – but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

Romans 7:24-25 “Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God (it is) through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Did you hear that? Not only did Jesus COME TO DO this – to get rid of the curse of sin and death, BUT HE DID exactly what He came to do! He has DEFEATED DEATH!

1 Cor 15:21 “By man came death – so by Man came the resurrection of the dead!”

So it is true – death is NOTHING to Jesus! He has defeated death! He has proved that by rising from the dead Himself! And He who has the power to rise Himself, also has the power to raise others – as He did here in an unmistakable way –

He reached out His hand, “took her by the hand, and she got up.”

The very word itself used in the Greek for Jesus “taking her hand” has the idea of “power, might, strength.” Jesus was powerful over the death that had claimed her.

His hand, as we have in our theme tonight – His hand is a hand of resurrection!

Much ado about nothing? Those people at Jairus’ home were mourning the death of a young girl – which we know was a day full of grief for her family.

But all of that was for nothing – as we see Jesus raising her from the dead.

Death itself is nothing to us anymore – because of Jesus!

Death is nothing but the gateway to everlasting life, to being with Jesus forever, leaving behind this world of sin with its pain, sorrow, loss and sadness.

So during Lent, we do not make “much ado about nothing” – we make “much ado about something” – what Jesus did in defeating death by His own death on Calvary’s cross! Amen.