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| Isaiah 60:1-6John 11:38-44 | Stories, New and Old(New Beginnings) | Pinelands – 9am – 29/12/2024Thornton – 10:30am – 29/12/2024 |

**Who Got a BOOK for Christmas?**

 Books have a Story to tell… Fiction or Non-Fiction

 Fantasy or Science Fiction

 Our **EXPERIENCES** become **STORIES…**

 We all have a story to tell about Christmas Day

 Gifts we got, Church we went to,

 Shared meal, Visits we made,

 Holiday we were on

There are… Happy stories, Sad stories,

 Funny stories, complicated stories,

 True Stories, False Stories,

 The list goes on and on.

***BUT…***  Generally we all like **STORIES.**

We have just come through the **ADVENT Season…**

where we heard the… **Christmas Story**

In a few months time we will hear the… **Easter Story**

**Not only that BUT…** There is a thing called… ***OUR STORY***

***PERSONALLY…*** We all have a **story to tell…**

That would be Our Experiences, Our journey,

who we are, what we have done.

 ***Our past…*** our history…

 **AND** we cannot change that.

***BUT…*** We also all have ***A STORY* that is still to be written…**

 That is what lies ahead, what we will do,

the decisions we will make

 **Our Future…**

 **AND** that **we can help determine.**

At the END of a Year (2024)…

We can **close a Chapter** in our STORY

At the BEGINNING of a new Year (2025)

 We can ***START a NEW CHAPTER…*** A NEW STORY

So let us see what we can learn about **New Stories…**

**From the story of Lazarus… *(John 11)***

**Background…** Jesus hears the news of Lazarus’s death…

 But does not respond immediately.

 ***2 Days later*** Jesus decides to return to **Judaea.**

 When Jesus arrives…

 Lazarus had been buried ***4 days*** earlier

 A large number of people / mourners had gathered...

 **Jesus is ‘deeply moved’**

We pick up the story in **verse 38**… ***(Read John 11:38-44)***

[**John 11**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11%3A38-44&version=GNT)**:38-44 -** [**Lazarus Is Brought to Life**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11%3A38-44&version=GNT)

[***Deeply***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11%3A38-44&version=GNT) ***moved once more, Jesus went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone placed at the entrance.***

***“Take the stone away!” Jesus ordered.***

***Martha, the dead man's sister, answered, “There will be a bad smell, Lord. He has been buried four days!”***

***Jesus said to her, “Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believed?” They took the stone away. Jesus looked up and said, “I thank you, Father, that you listen to me.***

***I know that you always listen to me, but I say this for the sake of the people here, so that they will believe that you sent me.” After he had said this, he called out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” He came out, his hands and feet wrapped in grave cloths, and with a cloth around his face. “Untie him,” Jesus told them, “and let him go.”***

**Lazarus, Mary, Martha** and all the mourners…

 Had a **NEW STORY (a New Beginning)** when…

Lazarus was brought back to life.

Just as **Lazarus** is called back to life… Given a **New Beginning…**

 **We too** are Called by Jesus…

to a **NEW BEGINNING.**

 ***To be the people He intended us to be.***

**Jeremiah 29:11-12… God says…**

 ***“I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you***

 ***prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future***

 ***you hope for.***

 ***Then you will call to me. You will come and pray to me,***

 ***and I will answer you.”***

**John 10:10… Jesus says…**

***“The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy.***

 ***I have come in order that you might have life –***

 ***life in all its fullness.”***

For **every one of us…** There is a **Story to be Written…**

 As we prepare for the beginning of 2025…

 ***What Story are you going to Write?***

 ***What New Story are you going to tell and make?***

**Two insights** that come from the **Story of Lazarus….**

**The FIRST insight** is that…

There are things that **BIND US…**

 **That prevent NEW STORIES / BEGINNINGS.**

 **Lazarus’s** **grave clothes…** *(symbol of death)*

***We can be so bound by…***

**Doubt…** ***It can confuse us***

 What is right and wrong

 Is this of God?

 I cannot do this

 What people say

**Unworthiness…** ***It can prevent us***

 I am a nobody / uneducated

 I am not good enough

**Despair…** ***It can blind us***

 Lack of Hope

 Feeling overwhelmed

**Fear…**  ***It can cripple us***

 Failure or messing up

 Success… what it will lead to

 Future

**ALL those things… can Prevent us…**

From **doing** what God wants us to do

 From **being** all that God wants us to be

 From **living** ***a ‘Full, Abundant life’***

**ALL those things…** **can Prevent us…**

 ***FROM….*** **A NEW STORY / BEGINNING**

**SECOND insight is…**

We need to **GET RID of THOSE ‘BINDINGS’…**

 **That prevent** **NEW STORIES / BEGINNINGS.**

This is often much **easier said than done…**

 It is never easy to get rid of…

 ***Doubt, Despair,***

***Fear, Unworthiness, etc***

Often something needs to ***DIE*** for there to be a ***NEW BEGINNING.***

 A **seed needs to die** for there to be **a new plant**

 Something **needs to stop** for there to be…

**something new** that can take its place.

The Caterpillar needs to TURN into the Butterfly

**Lazarus** had to ***DIE…*** for him to be Raised back to Life…

 To have a ***NEW STORY / BEGINNING***

**What needs to change in your life…?**

 **What needs to ‘Die’…?**

 For there to be a **NEW STORY / BEGINNING.**

 A Behaviour that needs to stop

 A Relationship that needs to end

 Choices that need to change

***Will you notice*** what **Jesus** says in **verse 44…**

 ***“Untie him and let him go.”***

 **It was** the people / the mourners / the community…

 Who needed to help ***Lazarus…***

 He could not ***do this on his own.***

 He needed the community

**MIRACLES happen when people PARTICIPATE**

 **NEW STORIES happen when PEOPLE HELP.**

People / Loved Ones / Church Community help us…

***Resolve*** *our* ***Doubts***

***Restore*** *our* ***Hope*** (ease our despair)

 ***Overcome*** *our* ***Fear***

***Encourage*** *us…* so we see ***our Worthiness***

**NEVER** neglect the people around you ***who care for you…***

*Church Community, Family,*

 *Wise Councelors / Mentors…*

 They are there to help.

**FINALLY** will you notice…

 **NEW BEGINNINGS… point towards GOD…**

 They become our **testimony.**

In our **Old Testament** reading… **Isaiah 60:6…**

 ***“People will tell the good news of what the Lord has done!”***

 **Israel / Jerusalem…** Had a story to tell…

 Had a New Beginning…

 **God** was doing **A NEW THING**

The whole story of **Lazarus** was for…

***“For God’s Glory so people will believe”***

*(John 11:4 and 15)*

 So they would have a **NEW BEGINNING.**

**May God** *lead us, guide us and be with us* **in 2025…**

***AND…*** May it be a YEAR of… **NEW BEGINNINGS**

 **NEW STORIES**

**Isaiah 60:1-6 The Future Glory of Jerusalem**

Arise, Jerusalem, and shine like the sun;

The glory of the Lord is shining on you!

Other nations will be covered by darkness,

But on you the light of the Lord will shine;

The brightness of his presence will be with you.

Nations will be drawn to your light,

And kings to the dawning of your new day.

Look around you and see what is happening:

Your people are gathering to come home!

Your sons will come from far away;

Your daughters will be carried like children.

You will see this and be filled with joy;

You will tremble with excitement.

The wealth of the nations will be brought to you;

From across the sea their riches will come.

Great caravans of camels will come, from Midian and Ephah.

They will come from Sheba, bringing gold and incense.

People will tell the good news of what the Lord has done!

**John 11:38-44** **Lazarus Is Brought to Life**

Deeply moved once more, Jesus went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone placed at the entrance. “Take the stone away!” Jesus ordered.

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