

"If you believe in Jesus, even if you die, you'll come to life. If you are alive and believe in Jesus, you'll never die. **Do you believe this?**" That's the question Jesus puts to Martha and Mary. That's the question he also asks us: "Do you believe this?"

Do you really believe that parts of your life you have allowed to die (or perhaps neglected or abused) can be brought back to life? Do you believe that the events of your life that long ago you hid or buried can be called out of darkness and into the healing light of day? Do you believe that Jesus can give his Spirit to you and free you from what binds you and even kills you?

Ezekiel tells the people that God will give them the divine Spirit of life, and then they will know Who is the Lord, and that God has adopted them in love to be God's own people. It's is God's great love for us that compels God to do this.

Look at the situation of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Obviously Jesus cared about them very much, and we know more about them from the Scriptures than some of the apostles. Jesus made himself at home in their home; he scolded the sisters when they squabbled. They were close enough friends they could even be angry at Jesus and scold him when he showed up late after their brother has died. They were like family to Jesus, and they also obviously had become disciples with a great faith. The Scriptures tell us how deeply moved Jesus was by the death of his friend Lazarus.

But still, there are some doubts lingering in the background, the same kind of doubts that we express when we hear God's invitation to pull us out the grip of death and back to life again.

"I can't do it," we say, thinking it is our power and not God's Spirit that's at work.

"I'm already dead," which is to say "it's too late" but not for God.

"I stink," or "I'm not worthy" but God loves us and so it doesn't matter.

We wrap ourselves up tight; we crawl into our caves; we kill ourselves -- and in a refusal to believe, we do not allow God to bring us back to life and keep us alive for eternity.

As we join Allen in scrutinizing our lives, let's be aware of what we're clinging to, what we refuse to hand over.

"Come out! Come out!" Jesus calls to us. He wants to call us out of the dark places of shame, of painful memories, of addictions that we keep hidden. He wants to set us free from the things that bind us in knots and restrict our freedom. He wants us to let go of the things we cling to that kill us. He desperately wants to heal us.