

## Called to Life

### Drama:

I can't believe I'm alive! Wait...I can't believe I died. I had been sick for days. I remember lying there, feeling so weak, so powerless, praying that God would heal me. I was so tired; I just had to close my eyes, and then there was darkness, until I heard Jesus calling out to me. I rose slowly, stiff and sore and covered in clothes that were not mine. I remember seeing these clothes before though, at my Father's funeral. He was wrapped in them before he was put into a tomb. These were grave clothes, meant for a dead man! I guess I know I died; I remember seeing myself lying there and my sisters and friends gathered around mourning, but it all just seems so surreal. And then, everyone was so happy to see me when I walked out of the tomb, and I was happy to see them, though it never really felt like I lost them. And you know, even Jesus was crying, his eyes all puffy and red...Jesus...wow...He must really love me. I know that Martha and Mary sent word to Him that I was sick, though I didn't see the need at the time. Their faith in him is so great. And I'm so glad now that he came. Of course, it was too late, or what seemed to be too late. I wonder what delayed Him. Not that it mattered; I know He has the power to heal, even to revive the dead! Though I do not know how he can will the body to become well, it could only come from God.

I guess I just never could have expected that this sickness would kill me. I'm so young; I still have so much to do. I'm only 25 for crying out loud. That very morning I was going to tend to the sheep; they need to be led to pasture every day to feed and given plenty of water. Our livelihood depends on their wool, so they need to be taken care of; we can't afford to lose a single one. Of course, you can't work when you're dead. Maybe that wasn't so important after all. But I had plans! I was going to find a good girl, get married and build an addition onto the house. I can't afford to die now! You know, I've never really thought too much about death. I've had some family members and friends die before, but that was them. I guess I've just always lived like I was invincible. But apparently it could all be taken away so easily. Nothing was ever really guaranteed to me.

And now I have a second chance. Jesus brought me back to life, but why me? Why did Jesus heal **me** and bring **me** back to life? Sure we're friends, but that doesn't mean that I deserve it more than anyone else.

I remember when I first met Jesus. Martha had invited Him to come and eat with us. Of course as usual, she buzzed around the house busying herself with cleaning and preparation for the meal. Mary, on the other hand, just sat at the feet of Jesus so that she could listen to Him. Mary didn't always have the greatest work ethic, and so Martha was naturally upset with her. Of course, Martha had to be a tattle-tale and called out to Jesus, "Jesus, Jesus, I'm doing all of the work, but Mary's not doing anything. Make her help." Jesus did something surprising though. Instead of chastising Mary for being idle, He said that we worry about too many things in life when only one thing was necessary, faith in Him. Mary was eagerly listening to Jesus in faith, and He couldn't be upset about that. I don't blame Mary. There just seemed to be something about Him, something good.

I've heard stories of others that Jesus has raised from the dead. And the prophets spoke of resurrection too. I remember the prophet Ezekiel telling about a time that the Lord brought him into a valley littered with bones. They were sun-beaten and dry and scattered everywhere. The Lord asked Ezekiel if these bones could live again. Ezekiel responded that "only you know Lord." Ezekiel must have had some kind of faith to trust that the Lord could do something so miraculous; I mean, how can bones come back to life? Of course, that's what happened to me. The Lord commanded Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones, and then the bones would become covered in tendons and flesh and would again be alive. And so he did, and for a moment nothing happened. As I listened to my mother telling us this story when I was very young, I used to imagine that Ezekiel had a moment of panic. Maybe the bones didn't rise because I didn't have enough faith? Boy that would be a tough thing to swallow. But then, he heard a crack, and another crack and another. And he heard a noise like sandals sliding across the desert. He looked all around him and saw that the bones, which once had been this jumbled

mess, were joining together and forming skeletons. Soon too, tendons began gathering on the bones to draw them together. Muscle was forming on top of that, and then skin began to appear. This valley, which had once been covered with piles of dead, dry bones, was now full of people. But they had no breath of life in them. The Lord then told Ezekiel to prophesy to the wind: the wind! He told Ezekiel to call to the four winds and ask them to fill these dead men; fill them and offer them life from their suffering. So again Ezekiel prophesied, this time to the winds and called them to give breath to these lifeless bodies. Suddenly, there was a rushing, driving force all around him as the wind steadily picked up. And a chorus of (make the noise of breathing in air) as these bodies took their first breath. And then, they began to stand, and an army of men and women were formed. God told Ezekiel that he had done this to show the world His glory. It was symbolic of how He was going to resurrect the nation of Israel, which had for so long deserted God. He was going to take this dead thing and bring it to life, even though it didn't deserve it.

Maybe that's what Jesus was doing here with me. Martha told me that Jesus said "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" God revealed His glory through my resurrection. Imagine, being a vessel of God's splendor. Yes! I understand now. This must have been symbolic too. Martha told me that Jesus said He is the Resurrection and the Life. If we believe in Him, even though we die, we will live forever. But not everyone dies and is raised from the dead by Jesus. Maybe not all death is a physical death. I can't always understand what Jesus is talking about; sometimes what He says is so confusing. But I remember hearing a story about how He healed a blind man, and then He talked about how people who are blind can see and people who can see are really blind. What a paradox! Maybe in that same way, people who are dead can be brought to life, and people who think that they are alive are really dead. Like Israel, God's chosen people, who outright rejected Him for many years, and yet the prophets tell of God's immeasurable love for them. They thought that they had it all together, that they were in control and safe, but they didn't trust in God and were swept away by bigger nations. And God saved them, a nation who didn't deserve it. All I know is that I was dead, and now I am alive again because

of Jesus. But, maybe I was dead before that. Maybe I didn't really trust in God either. I really love my family, I enjoy tending the sheep, I like where I live and I would like to make it bigger. But in the end, none of those things could save me. I still died, just like everyone else. So what is life really all about? Hmm...I'm going to have to think about this...

### **Meditation:**

What is life *really* all about? What should we be living for? If we died today, what would our lives have looked like?

Oscar nominated movie *127 Hours* tells the true story of Aron Ralston, an avid outdoor adventurer who made the news in 2003 for his dramatic escape from death. Aron, a pathological loner, was hiking by himself in Blue John Canyon, Utah when a large boulder fell on his arm and trapped it against a canyon wall. He had not told anyone of his plans and so he knew that nobody would be searching for him. For 127 hours, 5 days, Aron stayed there, trapped, slowly drinking the last of his water and trying to dislodge his arm from the rock. Of course, all of his efforts would be proved in vain; even the elaborate pulley system that he rigged up was of no use. He would find out later that it took 13 men and a winch to move the rock. During this time he used a video camera and recorded messages to his loved ones. As the movie goes on, and he runs out of water, these recordings get more and more desperate. Finally, he carves his name, date of birth and date of death on the canyon wall and records his final goodbyes to his family. He apologizes to them for ignoring their calls and not keeping in touch. At one point in the movie, he declares that every minute of his life had been leading up to this rock; every time that he decided that he didn't need anyone else, that he could do it on his own, that his friends and family were expendable, had led to the point where he was now going to die alone. And so he had to face this question: What had his life meant until this point? What had isolating himself from his family and the world proved about himself? All it had showed was that he needed people. So, dehydrated and delirious, Aron tied a makeshift tourniquet around his trapped arm and proceeded to cut it off using a completely dull knife which he described as "what you'd get if you bought a \$15

flashlight and got a free multi-use tool.” After he painfully and excruciatingly cut through his own arm, Aron had to rappel down a 65 foot rock face and hike until he ran into a vacationing family who were able to call in a rescue team. He was finally taken away by a helicopter six hours after freeing his arm.

Aron went on to get married, have a child, and hike all 53 mountains in Colorado above 14,000 feet as well as Mt. Kilimanjaro. He plans to tackle Everest in the future. And he never plans a trip without writing a note.

Aron was only 28 years old when he almost died. He thought he had life figured out, that he could do it all on his own. And what he discovered was that he was absolutely in need of help. How often do we find ourselves taking everything on and refusing to let others share in our burdens? How often do we rely on ourselves instead of God? Sometimes, it seems that we only turn to God when things get really bad. But the truth is, we can never save ourselves; only Christ can save us. Only Christ can give us life. We’re never really in control. Aron thought that he was, but nature proved to be a much greater force.

This week our community has been mourning the unexpected loss of our police chief Ron Murray: Forty one years old, Father, Grandfather, husband, son, Shriner, clown, 4-H leader, Elder at his church, staple at Adriel. Many of you may have known him and his family well, and all of us were touched by his life in some way or another. It is a tragedy, and yet, it is a reminder that we are never guaranteed tomorrow. And the things that we value so much in this life, achievements, careers, things, even family, cannot save us in the end. The only true life and salvation from the despair and death that this world offers is Jesus Christ. He is the resurrection and the life. Even though we all may die, we can truly live in peace and rest in this life and hope for the eternal bliss that will come in the next life.

In order to receive this life our minds and hearts and souls must be transformed. We can no longer rely on ourselves for our help; we need to invite God into our lives and direct our energies to him. We need to allow Christ to rule in our hearts; we need to give over those areas which we cling to so tightly: security, self-reliance, etc. But, if we are willing to hand over control to God, then we will be

blessed immensely and receive true life. Paul writes about this exchange in Romans 8:6-11 when he says...

*<sup>6</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.*

*<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life<sup>[a]</sup> because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of<sup>[b]</sup> his Spirit who lives in you.*

Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life. Whoever comes to Him will never die but live forever. Can you, like Martha, say "Yes Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God." Are you willing to give up this shadowy world we call life and embrace true life in Christ?