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Here's Hope

By Rev. Jerry Rea

It's Not Over

When Lazarus was put into the tomb everyone assumed it was over. When Jesus finally arrived, they really knew it was over. The sisters advised Jesus not to open the tomb. Lazarus had been dead long enough that the Jewish idea of the body hanging around after death "proved" he was gone. One might say, "It's over," "that's it." Then, here comes Jesus and it's not over. The awesome scary sight of a dead man walking through the door of the tomb surely left an indelible impression on all there. Movies at Halloween that contain mummies cannot hold a candle to this real story of real death... and then real life. All their ideas about life and death were put into a tailspin. They learned it wasn't over.

What about Jesus? The idea is much the same. He was captured in the Garden with disciples taking off in all directions. Peter defended Him, but then wound up denying Him. You'd have to credit him with at least trying to protect his Lord. Jesus is thrown into prison and we might say "that's it." If you've ever walked into or about in a prison, you can feel the heavy weight of "it's over." There is just no way out. Jesus was put on trial. Trials are often trumped up affairs. They are sometimes held by politicians who already know what the outcome will be. Jesus is questioned and beaten. Three times Pilate said he found no wrong in Him, but Jesus remained in prison. At the end of that fiasco Jesus is nailed to a Roman cross. That has certain finality to it. We might say "well, it's over." But, it's not over. He is secured by nails and watched by guards. All the people who look on at this ghastly sight call for Him to come down "if you are who you said you are." Jesus is mocked with a robe and a crown. He is then speared as an almost final indignity. For anyone who cared, that's it, it's over. But, it's not over. The disciples assume that it's over. They take Him down, wash His body and lay Him in a tomb. The guards secure the tomb with a stone and everybody assumes that's it, it's over. But, it's not over. As one day rolls into two then three His friends and family mourn and question all the recent events. If anyone had ever felt there was any type of chance, these days of the tomb prove it, it's over. But it's not over.

You know the story, it's not over. At the end of three days (just as He said) Jesus rose. He rose, because God is a life-giving God. Death to us is final. Once it's over, then it's over. Obviously to God it's not over until He says it's over. Death is not the end.

What about us? We all are headed to the end of our earthly existence. All mankind has this in common. Ecclesiastes points out that we live our lives then death comes to us all. You don't have to have a college degree to understand that we're all headed to the same place. We all die. Someone said it this way, "The statistics are remarkable one out of every one person dies." Death does come to us all. In that Ecclesiastes was right on the mark, but Ecclesiastes lived long before Jesus. Jesus came, He was executed, and He rose. In the process Jesus made a way. He is our forerunner into the next life. By His we have a doorway into forever. Because of all this, it's not over. Because of Jesus everything has changed.

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Jerry Rea