

## **John 11:2**

**“. . . she went back and called her sister Mary aside.  
“The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.”**

The Word of God to which I would direct your hearts and minds today for your comfort and instruction is suggested from the devotional booklet: *“Portals of Prayer.”* This booklet has been placed into the hands of everyone present today. It is the devotional text for July 7<sup>th</sup>, the day on which the departed fell asleep in the Lord. This short text contains a wealth of comfort and instruction, especially for you dear mourners, on this day when you lay to rest a dear brother. It also is meant for all of us who still are pilgrims and wayfarers in this vale of tears.

**“The Teacher is here and is asking for you.” John 11:28** These words were spoken by Martha, one of two sisters who were left to mourn the death of Lazarus. Their home in the little village of Bethany had been a place of retirement for the Savior more than once. This household was truly a Christian place where Jesus was a familiar and frequent guest. One day, however, sadness came to this home. Lazarus was taken sick and as time went on he grew worse and finally died. Jesus was in Perea when the message reached him from the well-remembered home in Bethany: **“Lord, the one you love is sick.”** **When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”** John 11: 3-4

He next spoke of Lazarus, their friend, as fallen asleep and that he was going to wake him out of sleep. It was four days after the burial of Lazarus that Jesus came into the village of Bethany. The message reached Martha: *“Jesus is coming.”* Straightway she hastened to meet the Master saying that if he had been there, their brother would not have died. In answer, Christ pointed out to her the connection between himself and the Resurrection. In comforting Martha, Jesus is speaking to Christians of all times when he says: **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”** John 11:25-26 After speaking these words of comfort to Martha, Jesus knew how Mary also grieved over the death of her brother and he wanted her to come and hear the same words of consolation which he had just spoken to Martha. Martha hurried back home and said to Mary: **“The Teacher is here and is asking for you.”** John 11:28 Mary also lost no time in hurrying to Jesus. We can also say this today:

### **The Teacher is here**

Yes, the Teacher is here. Jesus Christ came down from heaven, from the Father to all people. When we say: *“The Teacher is here”* we first of all mean that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, begotten of the Father from eternity and born of the virgin Mary came to this sinful earth. He took upon himself

our flesh and blood in order to be our substitute. Christ did this in order to take upon himself the sins of the entire human race. Yes, all of the sins against God's commandments were placed upon his shoulders. **"... and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity (sins) of us all."** **Isaiah 53:6** People had sinned and continue to sin against the divine laws of God frequently and every day. Sin is going against God's laws and the soul that sins will surely die. Because of our sins against God's law we have deserved nothing but eternal punishment. But thanks be to God, Jesus came. He took our sins upon himself and suffered their punishment for us. It was nothing else than our sins and God's unspeakable love for the sinner that caused Jesus to bleed, suffer and die on the cross. **"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."** **Isaiah 53:5** Jesus has come and he has died for us, and those that believe in Jesus will not die but instead have everlasting life.

As our substitute, Jesus was laid into the grave. But the grave could not hold him for he conquered death. Therefore we confess that on the third day: *"He rose again"*. So now we can say in full assurance of faith: *"I believe in the resurrection of the body"*. For his death is our death, his resurrection, our resurrection. Jesus, our Master has come and he is the: **"... resurrection and the life."** **John 11:25** What a blessed truth: Jesus has come and conquered sin, death and the devil.

During the days of his public ministry, Jesus came to comfort and to instruct the bereaved family of Lazarus in Bethany. And he still comes to us today through the Gospel (*Bible*). He comes today through Word and Sacrament and gives great comfort for you dear mourners in this hour of your bereavement. Jesus came to the departed through the Gospel Word and Sacrament. We have every reason to believe that the departed was a sincere believer in Christ Jesus and embraced Jesus who said: **“I am the resurrection and the life.” John 11:25** **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6** Just as Jesus came to that home in Bethany during the days of his public ministry - so Jesus came here. The same ministry of the Gospel was operating with the Holy Spirit through the blessed Means of Grace. Jesus also came to the departed during the last few days of his sickness through his blessed Sacrament of Grace, the Lord’s Supper. In this connection it is well for us to bear in mind and consider seriously the frequent use of this blessed Sacrament. We do not know the last opportunity we will have to be guest at this most heavenly and glorious of all meals. The departed did not only receive this Sacrament of Grace in his last days, but at other times as well. Just as we dare not let a sin go unforgiven, so we should welcome every opportunity we have in this blessed Sacrament. In communion the very purchase price of forgiveness is given to us with and under the bread and wine as an assurance and for the strengthening of our faith.

So then, today also, Jesus comes in order to welcome and to bless us. Dare we spurn his gracious call when the Master comes and calls us? Especially today dear mourners: the Master comes and calls to you in order to comfort and strengthen your faith. The same Savior says to you through his Word: *“Be of good cheer: For I am the resurrection and the life.”*

Finally, Jesus comes to take his believers to himself in heaven. **“The Teacher is here and is asking for you.” John 11:28** Jesus has promised to all of those who have accepted his gracious invitation (*and have enough true faith to hold him as their only Savior*) that he will take them unto himself at the time of death. He says: **“Because I live, you also will live.” John 14:19** So then lift up your hearts and be of good cheer, for it is the Master that has finally come and taken your beloved brother to himself in heaven.

By dying in Jesus, the departed is not dead, but lives. Jesus has finally delivered him from all sickness, sorrow and crying, and safely harbored him on the heavenly shore to live and reign with him in all eternity.

These words: **“The Teacher is here and is asking for you.” John 11:28** contain a message for all of us. Today Jesus calls all people to himself through the means of grace. Sad to say, many spurn his gracious call and live as though the Master had never come. These people will finally come to render an account if they

do not turn from their sinful ways and cling to Jesus for forgiveness. They will have a day of horror in store for them when the Master comes and calls them to judgment.

Today you are numbered among the living, you still are living in the day of grace, and today Christ is offering salvation to you. Even now he extends his merciful and forgiving arms to you. He says: **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Matthew 11:28-30**

Jesus has already given the final summon to the departed. He will call all of us here present and yet we know not when. Are you ready?