

John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped His feet with her hair, her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, He said, "This illness does not lead to death" rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, He stayed two days longer in the place where He was.

Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again," The disciples and said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone You, and are You going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." After saying this, He told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that He was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met Him, while Mary stayed at

home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever You ask of Him.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming in to the world.”

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to Him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw Him, she knelt at His feet and said to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, “See how He loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not He who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone,” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to Him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you

would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank You for having heard me. I knew that You always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that You sent me.” When He had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a clothe, Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in Him.

The Gospel of the Lord

Reflection Questions

- 1) ***The Context:*** John's gospel describes several events and miracles that reveal who Jesus is; in the scenario with the woman at the well, Jesus reveals Himself as the living water (4:10); in the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus reveals Himself as the Bread of Life (6:35); in the story about the man born blind, Jesus reveals Himself as the Light of the world (9:5), and in the raising of Lazarus from the dead, Jesus reveals Himself as the Resurrection and the Life (11:25). How is Jesus Living Water, Bread of Life, Light of the world, and Resurrection and Life for you? In what circumstances has He revealed Himself as these things for you?
- 2) It is interesting to note that the name "Lazarus" is a form of the name, Eleazar, which means "God is my help". What is the correlation between experiencing God's miraculous interventions and various forms of help and our willingness to rely on Him, really lean on Him and have as our mantra is "God is my help"?
- 3) In the story of the man born blind, Jesus tells His disciples that the man was born blind because God wanted to glorify Himself through the cure. The same is true in this story. Jesus sends the very plain message to the mourners in the beginning of this text that Lazarus' illness and death is for *God's glory*, and so that the "Son of God may be glorified through it." Those are powerful words to offer to people who are in the midst of deep sadness, but Jesus was telling the Truth. How has a difficult Truth challenged us but also brought us life? How do we allow God to speak to us through weakness, illness, death, mourning and sadness?
- 4) The text tells us that when Jesus received the message from Martha and Mary that He should come to Lazarus before He died, Jesus intentionally stays where He is for two more days. This intentional lingering seems incredibly callous. Some of Jesus' best friends are begging Him to save the life of another good friend and He lingers where He is. This does not make sense to us. But if we look at it from the perspective of the purpose of the illness and death (e.g. to glorify God and His Son), then we regain our understanding. Jesus *intentionally* lingers so that Lazarus will have been dead at least four days by the time He arrives in Bethany. The number 4 here is very significant Jewish people believed that after a person was dead for three days, the soul left the body and there were no more chances for resuscitation. Four days have passed; allowing enough time for a significant number of Jewish mourners to gather (the very people that God

desired to have witness the miracle), and for it to be obvious to all that Lazarus was as dead as dead could be. Sometimes it seems that God is very slow to respond to our requests (and even at times seems callous in His slowness to respond). How can ask God to help us understand that His timing is PERFECT for the number of miracles that He wants to create in our lives? How is God calling us to ask for more patience and trust so that we can be a part of His perfect plan for our lives? (e.g. where He can Glorify Himself and draw many to Himself through us)?

- 5) When Jesus arrives, Martha is honest with Him about feeling abandoned in His absence “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” But even in the midst of her deepest grieving, Martha makes one of the most powerful faith statements recorded in all the gospels, “Even now I know that God will give you whatever You ask of Him....” and later...”Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Messiah, the Son of God, the One coming into the world.” We have a God embraces the fullness of our humanity (i.e. Lord if you had been here!....) but at the same time hopes for a faith statement to come out of us (i.e. Do you believe this?). How has God nurtured a faith-statement out of you in some of the darkest moments of your life?
- 6) Next, Jesus demonstrates the fullness of His humanity (showing us that He is not ashamed of our humanity) by being “greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved” and then “He weeps”. The depth of His compassion for the mourners evangelizes the Jewish mourners who see Him and say “See how much He Loved him!” In the midst of their being deeply touched by His humanity, the Jewish mourners then have the opportunity to see Jesus’ divine power as He raises Lazarus. The combination of Jesus’ profound demonstration of humanity and divinity touch many people to the point where they desire to become His followers. How has God used your humanity (maybe even something you would consider a weakness...e.g. tears that seem to flow embarrassingly easily..) to demonstrate the power of His Divine Love moving in you and through you?
- 7) Jesus says “Take the stone away! Come out....and “Unbind him. Let him go!” What “stones” need to be removed in our lives so that we can be witnesses of and participants in our own resurrection? What are some things that may still cling to us (or bind us) even though we have been resurrected? (e.g. from an illness....maybe we became physically well....but we still held onto some psychological residue?)

8) Jesus orders others to “Unbind him. Let him go!” Lazarus was raised but still bound. It would have been impossible for him to personally unbind himself all by himself because the burial wrapping cloth was so tight. We have all experienced how God has resurrected each of us in various ways at various points in our lives. Even though He has resurrected us, we can remain bound. Often God humbly calls upon other people to aid Him in His restorative work with us. How has God used your faith community to ‘unbind you’ and set you free? When has God asked you to be the person who ‘unbinds’ another and set them free?