

John 11:38-44

38 Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 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." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. 42 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." 43 When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go" (NRSV).

At the last festival Jesus stated that he and God are one. The religious leaders then demanded proof of his divine status. The death and resurrection of Lazarus provides the proof the religious leaders demand. This event is not just a display of divine power; it is a message of faith, hope, and the promise of new life. As we think about today's Scripture let us open our hearts to what God reveals to us.

Jesus delayed traveling back to danger because everything happens on God's time. When he arrived in Bethany, Lazarus has been sealed in the tomb four days. By this time, all hope is gone. God's timing is perfect. This delay was not a denial or a withholding of divine care. It was an opportunity for the greater work of God to be revealed to the people. It was delayed for God's glory to be revealed. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she ran outside of the village to greet him. She ran back to their house and told her sister Mary. Then she ran out to Jesus. It is a very emotional scene; the loved ones rushing out for the homecoming of their hero. The sisters are both upset that he did not come when needed. At this point, Jesus demonstrates a very human characteristic – he began to weep with them. This story demonstrates the love the Lord has for humanity.

Jesus has a very human emotion of sorrow. He knows Lazarus is going to be OK. He also knows that this resurrection will result in his own death. However, his sorrow is not for himself, his sorrow is for his friends and I believe it may be because they had to suffer on account of him. The tomb of Lazarus is very much like the one he will be placed in. It is a cave with a huge stone covering the entrance. Jesus knows what is happening. When Jesus calls for Lazarus to come out of the cave, Martha protests about the smell. Jesus reminds her that he has already told her that she will see the glory of God. When Jesus prays to God he explains the purpose of the situation. It is for the sake of the crowd; so that they may believe. Jesus is not just a miracle worker. He is the source of life itself. Faith in him transcends from death to eternal life.

The raising of Lazarus is the climax of the miracles. The various miracles that have been performed throughout his life are proof of divine power. He turned water into wine, multiplied food by thousands, and the many healing miracles, are all proof of his divine status. But the raising of the dead is proof that he is the giver of life. His life is not about his prophetic power. The setting is a crisis, an emergency situation. One of his closest friends has died. And those closest to Jesus still do not get who he really is. They do not understand what Jesus is all about. So, Jesus teaches once again. Whoever believes

will not perish but have everlasting life because he is the living bread, whoever eats it lives forever. Whoever consumes it; whoever becomes one with Jesus in word, deed, heart, and attitude, will live forever. The raising of Lazarus teaches us the true meaning of Jesus' words. We are to be totally into Jesus. He is the giver of life and when he made this known to the religious leaders it was his own death sentence.

Jesus has the power over death. He does not have to physically touch someone to heal them. The power that Jesus has over death is demonstrated by a simple verbal command. The dead man walks out wrapped in grave cloth. Now I can only imagine the family reunion as the siblings get together. After all the excitement dies down they get together and talk about everything that happened. They appreciate Jesus bringing their brother back to life but now they may be having some trouble with all of this being for the sake of the crowd. Lazarus had to die and rot in the grave for four days just so the people can believe that God sent Jesus. Well, yes but Jesus cried too. Jesus cried because of what it did to them. They didn't fully believe and needed to see it to believe it. They needed to be able to grasp that Jesus is more than a prophet; he is the giver of life. The time is fast approaching for Jesus to go to the cross for the sake of all of humanity. This is the proof of his divine status that the religious leaders demanded. This is given to us as the proof that people need to see in order to believe.

The concept of resurrection is a cornerstone of our faith. The raising of Lazarus is an invitation to faith in Jesus. It is a good time to check your own level of faith. Jesus is indeed the resurrection and the life. Jesus called Lazarus from death and Jesus calls us to be free to a new life. Let us walk in faith, trust his compassion, and answer his call. Jesus has power so great that the word of the Lord is what is needed, then and now.