

Mar. 26, 2023, John 11: 1-45, Ez 37:12-14

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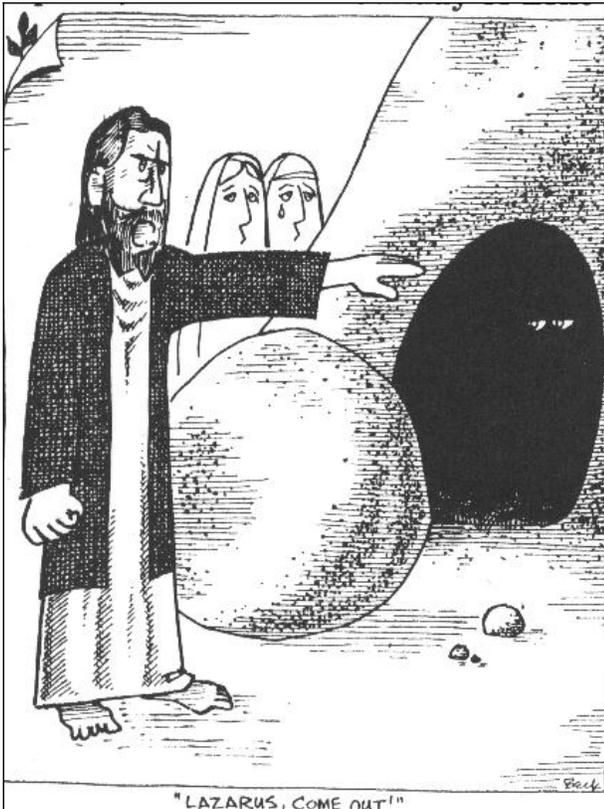
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Stone, Naomi. [An Expanding Silence](#)

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ENTERING THE SCENE:

Having died once, our Lazarus seems reluctant to come out of the tomb. All we see are his two eyes and the tips of his toes. With what we are beginning to know from reports of people who have clinically died, is they often have to struggle with whether to come back to live in space and time after getting a taste of the beyond. It is often their love for those who need them that is the critical in their choice. Lazarus, whose two sisters would be very vulnerable without him seems to have chosen for this same reason. So it is love for others that gives him, and us, our reason to live. How is this Lent helping you to sharpen your awareness of Jesus' love for?

John 11:1-45

1 Now a man named **Lazarus** was sick. He was from **Bethany**, the village of **Mary** and her sister **Martha**. 2 This **Mary**, whose brother **Lazarus** now lay sick, was the same one who **poured perfume** on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, **the one you love** is sick."

4 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." 5 Jesus loved **Martha** and her sister and **Lazarus**. 6 Yet when he heard that **Lazarus** was sick, he stayed where he was **two more days**. 7 Then he said to his **disciples**, "Let us go back to **Judea**." 8 But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews **tried to stone you**, and yet you are going back there?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who **walks by day** will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. 10 It is when he **walks by night** that he stumbles, for he has no light."

11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend **Lazarus** has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." 12 His **disciples** replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." 13 Jesus had been speaking of his **death**, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. 14 So then he told them plainly, "**Lazarus is dead**, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so **that you may believe**. But let us go to him." 16 Then **Thomas** (called Didymus) said to the rest of the **disciples**, "Let us also go, that **we may die with him**." 17 On his arrival, Jesus found that **Lazarus** had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 **Bethany** was less than **two miles** from **Jerusalem**, 19 and many Jews had come to **Martha** and **Mary** to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When **Martha** heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but **Mary** stayed at home. 21 Lord," **Martha** said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have **died**. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will **rise again**." 24 **Martha** answered, "I know he will rise again in the **resurrection** at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "**I am the resurrection** and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he **dies**; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will **never die**. **Do you believe** this?"

27 Yes, Lord," she told him, "**I believe** that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." 28 And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister **Mary** aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." 29 When **Mary** heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet **entered the village**, but was still at the place where **Martha** had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with **Mary** in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to **mourn** there. 32 When **Mary** reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother **would not have died**." 33 When Jesus saw her **weeping**, and the Jews who had come along with her also **weeping**, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. 35 **Jesus wept**. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how **he loved him!**" 37 But some of them said, "Could

not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have **kept this man from dying?**" 38 Jesus, once more **deeply moved**, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 **Take away the stone**," he said. "But, Lord," said **Martha**, the sister of the **dead man**, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there **four days**." 40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the **glory of God?**" 41 So they **took away the stone**. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, **that they may believe** that you sent me." 43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "**Lazarus, come out!**" 44 The **dead man came out**, his hands and feet **wrapped with strips of linen**, and a **cloth around his face**. Jesus said to them, "**Take off the grave clothes** and let him go." 45 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit **Mary**, and had seen what Jesus did, **put their faith in him**. 46 But some of the went to the **Pharisees** and told them what Jesus had done. 47 Then the **chief priests** and the **Pharisees** called a meeting of the **Sanhedrin**.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus called Lazarus came back to life because of his love for him and his sisters. How does loving others call you to life? (Jn. 11: 1-45)

PRAYER: Jesus, often like Martha and Mary, I am so caught up in the needs of the here and now I am blinded to the deep love that you have for me. If I could only truly trust in the promise of my resurrection, I know that would make all the difference. Help me to put my faith in you, so that I can truly rest in your promise. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

LAZARUS: Lazarus' name means "God has helped me". All throughout John's gospel we see how God helps those in need. This seventh/final sign closes the book of John on this phase of Jesus' ministry in this gospel.

How does Jesus' help affect the various people in the story? Lazarus? Martha and Mary? Those who experience Lazarus? The Pharisees/ high priest/ Sanhedrin?

BETHANY / JUDEA / JERUSALEM / ENTERED THE VILLAGE: We see Jesus reluctant to enter the territory because he knows that the authorities want him out of the way and by going there he is within their grasp..

Have you ever been torn between helping someone and your own personal safety? If so, what do you remember about that situation? Can it help you to understand this one?

MARY / MARTHA: These two sisters of Lazarus, like all women of those times, depended totally on the male members of their family for their identity and security.

How might this dependence affect their plea to Jesus? Do you think they have any idea of the danger they would be exposing Jesus to with their plea? If so, do you think that it mattered to them?

POURED PERFUME: Chapter 12 tells the story of the anointing by Mary of Jesus' feet. We are told in chapter 11 of this event in order to identify the particular Mary in question.

What connection does John's gospel hope we will make by telling us this? Could this be Mary's way of acknowledging that Jesus signs his own death warrant by helping their brother Lazarus?

THE ONE YOU LOVE / HE LOVES HIM: Love seems to be the energy for all that happens here.

What does this tell you about the God of Jesus?

DISCIPLES / THOMAS: Now the disciples have to decide if they are going to go the next step with Jesus.

If you would have been there, do you think your faith would be strong enough to go along with them?

DEATH / DEAD / DIED / DIES / KEPT THIS MAN FROM DYING: Conquering death is what the life of Jesus is all about. Lazarus will live again, only to have to die again.

How does Lazarus' reanimation differ from Jesus' Resurrection?

TWO MORE DAYS / TWO MILES: In scripture, the number two always signifies incompleteness. Jesus waits two days, and is two miles from Jerusalem.

Are you two days or two miles from something in your faith development this Lent?

TRIED TO STONE YOU / WE MAY DIE WITH HIM: Already there has been attempts on Jesus' life, and now the disciples realize that they are also in danger if they continue on with him.

How do you think Jesus felt when the disciples pleaded with him not to go to Lazarus? When they then decided to go along with him?

WALKS BY DAY / WALKS BY NIGHT: Jesus is walking with an inner light that the disciples have yet to experience.

Does this express your struggle as you try to "walk with Jesus"?

THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE: DO YOU BELIEVE / I BELIEVE / PUT THEIR FAITH IN HIM: Everything in the gospel is there so that we may believe. We see the progression from a question to an affirmation.

Does this story help you to move in that same direction? How?

FOUR DAYS: It was believed that a person's spirit hovered about the body for three days and then left. A person would not be truly dead until after four days.

Does this help to explain why Jesus delayed going to Bethany?

WOULD NOT HAVE DIED / RISE AGAIN / RESURRECTION / NEVER DIE: This story prefigures the big story to come. The eternal question of death is confronted head on here.

Where are you on the question of death and eternal life? Which person in this story best describes where you are in your understanding now?

I AM / THE GLORY OF GOD: John's gospel sees Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection, as the revelation of God and God's glory. This is only possible after Easter and their experiences of the risen Christ.

How has 2000 years of Christian witness helped you as you mature in your own faith life?

MOURN / WEEPING / JESUS WEPT: We weep and mourn if have first loved.

Are you able to keep on loving in spite of the inevitable mourning and weeping all loss involves?

TAKE AWAY THE STONE / COME OUT / CAME OUT: In this rehearsal for another empty tomb Jesus reveals God's power to free people from death. Lazarus hears Jesus' voice (Jn. 5: 24-5) and is brought to life.

If you would have been there that day, what do you think you would have made of this experience? How does hearing Jesus' voice bring you to life?

WRAPPED WITH STRIPS OF LINEN / CLOTH AROUND HIS FACE / TAKE OFF THE GRAVE CLOTHES:

Here we have further similarities (see Jn. 20:5f).

In what ways are these two events the same? Different?

PHARISEES / CHIEF PRIESTS / SANHEDRIN: All these people see this event as the last straw. Jesus must be stopped, and the only effective way to do this is to kill him and put an end to his understanding of God.

What makes Jesus' understanding of God so dangerous for these people?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Jn. 11:1f // Jn. 12:1-8; Lk. 10:38f; Jn. 11:8 // Jn. 8:59; 10:31; Jn. 11:9f //

Jn. 12:35f; 1 Jn. 2:10; Jn. 8:12; 9:4; Jn. 11:13 // Mt. 9:24; Jn. 11:20 // Jn. 12:9,17f; Jn. 11:22 // Jn. 11:32; Jn. 11:25 // Jn. 5: 24, 29; 8:51; Jn. 11:27 // Jn. 1:9; 6:69; Jn. 11:36 // Lk. 19:41; Jn. 11:42 // Jn. 12:30;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Ezek. 37: 12-14; Ps. 130: 1-8; Rom. 8:8-11; Jn. 11:1-45;

Revised Common Lectionary: Ezek. 37: 1-14; Ps. 130; Rom. 8: 6-11; Jn. 11:1-45;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

to Jerusalem that this would be the beginning of the end, and here it is. As he calls Lazarus forth, he in effect causes death embarrassment, which is now seen to be without its sting. The kingdom of death can no longer terrify us with a claim to be the final stage, the end of all human striving, all life. For if that were the case, from where did Lazarus return? If he came back to life, he hadn't ceased to exist, but must have been away somewhere, from which he could now return. Death, who has pretended to be the last stop, is unmasked as a pretender. There is life after death, and the fear of death no longer need prevail. But death will not allow this impudence, this embarrassment, to go unpunished. Death will even the score. And so Jesus must pay a price. Pg. 57 Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2008..

One of the marks of spiritual maturity is the quiet confidence that God is in control - without the need to understand why He does what He does. – Anonymous

Faith in the risen Jesus is not fully developed until it enables a believer to face physical death with the firm confidence that the present possession of eternal life is not simply a pledge of resurrection on the last day but it rather a present and continuing participation in the life of the ever-living Jesus now, at this moment. Those who believe in Jesus never truly die. Pilch, John J. [The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle A](#). The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 1995. Page 62.

Jesus uses himself to illustrate the Self in each of us. "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn. 11:35). Death is only for the personality, the true you is eternal "Those who believe in me, even though they die, wil never die" (Jn 11:26), all you have to do is see that I AM who you are, and the death of the personality will not be the end of life because the I AM is birthless, deathless, and timeless – and the I AM is all. Pg. 178-9.

Shapiro, Rami M. Listening to Jesus with an Ear for God. Bruteau, Beatrice. [Jesus Through Jewish Eyes](#). Maryknoll, NY. Orbis Books. 2001.

Jesus gives life to Lazarus, yet the remarks of Jesus show that the restoration of physical life is important only as a sign of the gift of eternal life. Pg. 166. Wessels, Cletus. [Jesus in the New Universe Story](#). Maryknoll NY. Orbis Books. 2003.

The Arab town of el'Eizariya (the New Testament Bethany) derives its name from Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead. It is located three kilometers east of Jerusalem along the Jerusalem-Jericho road. The Byzantines built a basilica over the tomb venerated as Lazarus' tomb. While an exact date cannot be given, the church was standing by 390 since Jerome mentions it in his translation of Eusebius' *Onomasticon* published in that year. It was an apsidal basilica that measured 34X17 meters. It was decorated by a mosaic with geometric patterns. This church was destroyed by an earthquake and replaced by a larger one in the fifth century. Both church abutted the tomb of Lazarus. The church that visitors see today was built by the Franciscans in 1952. Trap doors just inside the doorway of the modern church reveal portions of both Byzantine churches.

Hoppe, Leslie, O.P. [The Synagogues and Churches of Ancient Palestine](#). Collegeville, MN. The Liturgical Press. 1994. Page118.

In a purported [letter of Clement](#) (written around the same time as the Gospel of John) we find: "And they came to Bethany. And there was a certain woman there whose brother had died. And approaching, she prostrated before Jesus and said to him, "Son of David have mercy on me." But the disciples rebuked her. And having become angry Jesus went away with her into the garden where the tomb was. And immediately a great cry was heard from the tomb. And approaching, Jesus rolled the stone from to door of the tomb, and going in immediately to where the young man was, he stretched out his hand and raised him, talking hold of his hand, but the young man, having looked upon him, loved him and began to entreat him to be with him, and going out from the tomb they went into the house of the young man: for he was rich, and after six days Jesus commanded him; and when it was evening the young man came to him wearing a linen sheet about his naked body, and he remained with him that night; for Jesus was teaching him the mystery of the kingdom of God. Then arising, he returned from there to the other side of the Jordan.

Brown, Scott. The Secret Gospel of Mark: Is it Real? *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Jan/Feb. 2005. Pages44ff.

How completely satisfying to turn from our limitations to a God who has none.... For Him time does not pass, it remains.... God never hurries. There are no deadlines against which He must work. To know this is to quiet our spirits and relax our nerves. - A. W. Tozer

Death remains not a condition for resurrection, but death is the only point at which resurrection can be entered. In fact, death is the very entrance to resurrection. As it is for Jesus, so it is for us. Death for Jesus is the ultimate achievement of his faith, the ultimate faith decision of self-giving.

Parr, Raymond. [Process Person Presence](#). Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1990. Page 126.

This is my enlightened, well –founded hope: dying is a farewell inward, and entry and homecoming into the ground and origin of the world, our true home, a farewell perhaps not without pain and anxiety, but hopefully in composure and surrender, at any rate without weeping and wailing, and without bitterness and despair, but rather in hopeful expectation, quiet certainty, and (after everything that has to be settled is settled) ashamed gratitude for all the good things and less good things that now finally and definitively lie behind us – thank God. Pg. 206.

Kung, Hans. [The Beginning of All Things](#): Science & Religion. Grand Rapids, MI. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. 2007.

Give yourself over to this process of life and trust that it is God's process. Willigis Jager

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2008. Pgs. 56-58. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2011. Pgs. 69-71. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

William J. Bausch. [Storytelling](#) Twenty-Third Pub. Mystic, CT. 1984. **Obituary** : Pages 61-62.

Kelsey, Morton. [The Other Side of Silence](#). NY. Paulist Press. 1976. Reflections on the raising of a man from the dead. Pages 264ff.

White, William R [Stories for the Gathering](#). Minneapolis, MN. Augsburg Pub. House. 1997. TWO FUNERALS: Page 62ff.

Fr. Zossima "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams. Love in dreams is generally for immediate action, rapidly performed and in the sight of all. Men will even give their lives if only the ordeal does not last long but is soon over, with all looking and applauding as though on stage. But active love is labour and fortitude, and for some people, too, perhaps a complete science.

But I predict that just when you see with horror that in spite of al your efforts you are getting further from your goal instead of nearer to it - at that very moment you will reach and behold clearly the miraculous power of the Lord, who has been all the time loving and mysteriously guiding you