

Scripture Study

Fifth Sunday of Lent – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Ezekiel 37:12-14

(Psalm 130:1-8)

Romans 8:8-11

John 11:1-45

Overview of the Gospel:

- In John's gospel, there are traditionally seven great signs performed by Jesus that point to his divinity, beginning with his turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana (John 2:11). This Sunday's gospel relates the raising of Lazarus, the last and greatest sign, and the one that leads directly to the Jewish leaders' decision to kill Jesus—and Lazarus too, for that matter (John 11:46-54, 12:9-11).
- Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary were close friends of Jesus (Luke 10:38-42) and Jesus apparently stayed at their home in Bethany when visiting Jerusalem (Bethany, on the other side of the Mount of Olives, was about 2 miles to the east). From the Scriptures, it is clear that Jesus loved them very much (verses 3,5,11,35,36).
- When Martha and Mary send word to Jesus of Lazarus' illness and he delays, both sisters evidence great faith, though they don't understand Jesus' actions.
- By this miracle, Jesus is proved to be the Son of God, increasing the faith of his disciples (verse 15), Martha and Mary (verses 26-40), and the rest of the people (verses 36,45).

Questions:

- How does the First Reading relate to the events in the Gospel? What are its implications for all those who hope in Christ?
- According to St. Paul in the 2nd Reading, why should we put our trust in Christ's promise of the resurrection (verses 10-11)?
- In the Gospel, why does Jesus deliberately delay in his response (verse 6)? Given the disciple's objection (verse 8), what do you think Jesus means by his parable in verse 9-10?
- Why does Jesus return to Lazarus when he does (Verses 11-15)? What do the disciples fear instead (verses 8,16)? How would you feel if you were Martha or Mary and you heard that Jesus had finally come? What do you learn about Martha from the way she talks to Jesus in verses 21-27? How does Jesus stretch her faith by his claim in verse 25? How does this relate to his claim in John 10:9?
- How is Mary's greeting (verse 32) like and unlike Martha's? Since Jesus knew he was going to raise Lazarus (verse 11:11), how do you account for his weeping (verse 34)?
- Have you ever felt like God was not listening when you prayed? How did you deal with this? How does the way in which Jesus postponed his response to the sisters' request help you in understanding your own prayer life?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 548, 640, 993-994, 2604

Closing Prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings this week!

Those who have a sure hope that they will rise again lay hold of what lies in the future as though it were already present—St. Cyril of Alexandria

"Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God!"

Scripture: *John 11:1-45*

Meditation: *"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity"* (Proverbs 17:17). Jesus loved Lazarus and his two sisters as dear friends and he often stayed in their home at Bethany. Why did Jesus delay in coming to Lazarus' side when he knew that his friend was gravely ill? Sickness can befall us for a variety of reasons. Jesus attributed Lazarus' sickness to the glory of God. The glory which Jesus had in mind, however, was connected with the cross. He saw the cross as his supreme glory and the way to glory in the kingdom of God. For Jesus there was no other way to glory except through the cross. Jesus knew that if he went to help Lazarus he would expose himself to grave danger from those in Jerusalem who were plotting his destruction. Jesus was willing to pay the price to help his friend. Are you ready to give help when it costs dearly?

Jesus' two day delay must have puzzled his disciples. But they were clearly startled and upset when Jesus did announce that he was going to Bethany, which is very close to Jerusalem. This looked like suicide since they knew the religious authorities were out to get rid of Jesus. For Jesus to come to Jerusalem at Passover time was an act of courage. The explanation which Jesus gave to his disciples was simple and challenging at the same time. *"Are there not twelve hours in the day?"* In so many words he said: "There are enough hours in the day to do what one must do." A day can neither be rushed nor extended. Its period is fixed. In God's economy we each have our "day" whether it be short or long. While time is limited, there is enough for us to accomplish what God intends. God gives each of us our allotted portion in life. We can either waste it or use it to the utmost for God's glory. Jesus did not let circumstances or pressure dictate what he would do. Nor did he permit others



to dictate his actions or timetable. He took action of his own initiative and in his good time. Don't we often try to get God to do things in our way and on our timetable?

When Jesus announced that Lazarus was dead and that he was going to Jerusalem, Thomas showed remarkable courage. *"Let us go, that we may die with him."* This courage, however, was not tempered with faith and hope in God's promise to bring victory out of defeat. Even though Thomas was a witness to Lazarus' resurrection, he betrayed his master when arrest and death stared him in the face. He doubted his master's resurrection until Jesus showed him the wounds of his passion. God gives us faith, courage, and the strength we need to persevere through any trial and suffering we must face in this life. If we embrace our cross with faith and trust in God, then we, too, will see victory and glory.

What is the significance of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead? It is more than a miraculous event. It is a "sign" of God's promise to raise up all who have died in Christ to everlasting life. That is why Jesus asked Martha if she believed in the resurrection from the dead. The Christian creed, which is the profession of our faith in God

the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and in the saving power of God, culminates in the proclamation of the resurrection of the dead on the last day and in life everlasting. This is our faith and our hope (Romans 8:11). God gives us the power of his Holy Spirit that we may be made alive in Christ. Even now we can experience the power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus in our personal lives. The Holy Spirit is ever ready to change and transform us into men and women of faith, hope, and love. Do you believe that the power of Jesus' resurrection is at work in your life today? Let the Holy Spirit strengthen within you the life and joy of God and the hope of heaven.

The name Lazarus means "God is my help". Jesus' parable of the poor man Lazarus who died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:19-31), ends with a warning: *"If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead."* Through Lazarus' sickness and subsequent death, God brought glory through Jesus his only begotten Son, who raised his friend from the dead in anticipation of his own death and resurrection. Our participation in the Lord's Supper in the Eucharist already gives us a foretaste of Jesus' transfiguration of our bodies. Psalm 27 ends with the great prayer of hope in the resurrection: *I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord!* Do you find joy and hope in the resurrection of Christ?

"Lord Jesus Christ, you have ransomed us with your blood and restored us to life with the Father in heaven. May your resurrection be our hope as we long for the day when we will see you face to face in glory."

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