

John 11:1-45

Without opening your bibles I want you to turn into groups and within your group I want you to retell and build up the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. As you retell the story I want you to ask what does this story mean? If John wrote his Gospel with the desire to show who Jesus was why did he record this miracle?

What does this story mean to you?

Now let us watch the scripture which is taken from the Good News Version of the bible. (Watch the DVD)

Having talked about the story and having watched it I want us now to spend some time in reflective prayer.

The method we will use is familiar to many Christians. And used for many years. It is a prayer style where you take a passage and then seek to live the experience with your imagination. Ignatius of Loyola wrote of the form of prayer encouraging prayers to apply all their senses to the task, smell, hearing, touch, taste, sight. As I lead you through the scripture I will ask questions that will help you to use these senses.

Please make yourself comfortable and pray and ask God to show you, our passage in another way.

After a short time in silence I will start to lead you through the text.

Imagine you are a disciple of Jesus and you hear a messenger who was sent by Mary and her sister Martha tell Jesus that their brother Lazarus who was sick.

Do you hear what Jesus, is saying "This sickness is not fatal. It will become an occasion to show God's glory by glorifying God's Son."

What does that mean?

Life quickly returns to normal after the excitement of the messenger. Oddly Jesus does not go to Lazarus even though it is clear that Lazarus is very sick.

Two days later when you were just beginning to forget all about the messenger Jesus suddenly announces "Let's go back to Judea."

How does this make you feel are you scare like the other disciples who immediately reply "Rabbi, you can't do that. The Jews are out to kill you, and you're going back?"

Are you willing to follow Jesus to dangerous places? Do you see the fear in the others faces.

9 Jesus replied, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in daylight doesn't stumble because there's plenty of light from the sun.

10 Walking at night, he might very well stumble because he can't see where he's going."

What does he mean by that?

Jesus carries on saying

"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

But if he is sleeping why should we wake him he will need his sleep. As you think this Jesus carries on to inform everyone

14 "Lazarus is dead,

15 and for your sake he is glad he was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

But what is the point did not Jesus say let the dead bury the dead?

So you journey to Bethney with Jesus. What do you see, what do you hear and what do you smell on the way?

When you get there it becomes evident that Lazarus has been dead for 4 days. How does this make you feel after walking for so long?

There are lots of people around many of them Jews. They have gathered to grieve with the family.

Suddenly you see Martha run out to Jesus. Crying out allowed

21 "Lord," 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."

Do you see the tears in her eyes?

How does this make you feel?

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?"

He's asking Martha if she believes this but you can not help but think it is directed at you. Do you believe?

Martha replies 27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

Martha goes off and brings Mary back to where you and Jesus are waiting outside the village. Many people are following them. These must be friends and family that have come to mourn with them.

Have you noticed that Mary is angry? Look at her face.

She falls at the feet of Jesus and says, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

How do you feel witnessing this grief?

Do you notice how Jesus is moved by the grief?

Jesus is asking where they have laid Lazarus's body and he wants to go to it.

Will you follow him?

What are you thinking?

Do you notice all the other people? There are even some who are mumbling criticism like "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Hearing this what do you think?

What do you see in the crowds faces?

What's that Jesus is asking he wants them to roll the stone away from the grave? Martha is objecting being the practical one she is reminding Jesus that there will be a real stink. for he has been there four days."

Jesus replies, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

As they start to take the rock away what do you think?

What do you see?

Jesus says out aloud "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

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."

Then even louder he says

"Lazarus, come out!"

With that a body wrapped in bandages appears from the cave.

What do you notice, first with the body and secondly at the reaction of those that around you. Look at their faces, listen to what they are saying.

Jesus instructs you to "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

As he tells you to do this listen to what else he tells you.

When you are ready leave Jesus and Lazarus and the crowd and return to the here and now.

45 ¶ Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.