

John 11: 1, 3-6, 17, 33-44

**Now a certain man was ill,
Lazarus of Bethany,
the village of Mary and her sister Martha.**

**[So] The sisters sent a message to Jesus,
“Lord, he who 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.**

**When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.
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 for 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 upwards 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 cloth.

Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

Meditation:

I have been told that many men, from a very early age have been taught,
never to cry.

“Don’t be a sissy,” they are told.

“Don’t act like a girl,” they are warned.

Don’t look weak...

Be strong...act like a man...

suck it up...

For many men to shed tears, is a sign of weakness...

What a sad, sad tragedy...

In our reading today,

Jesus weeps.

Weeping isn’t just shedding a quiet tear...

it is crying with a deep sadness, a profound sorrow...

Even though, according to the Evangelist John...

Jesus knew that the illness of Lazarus was not going to end in permanent death at that

moment in time it seems that the deep sorrow of Mary and Martha

and the others who grieved Lazarus’ passing caused Jesus deep sorrow..

the pain of others, broke the heart of Jesus and he cried...

he felt the very human pain of a friends in need...

Jesus the Son of God, the Messiah...

shows us that God is not disconnected from God’s creation..

God does not sit far, far away watching the events of human life

unfold upon the Earth,

but that the Holy One of the Cosmos is smack dab in the middle of human life...
in the middle of human sorrow and grief...

Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah

shows us a God who is deeply disturbed at the sight of human sorrow and suffering,

He shows us that God's heart breaks when we suffer....

that God is deeply disturbed when we are unable to see as God sees...

But of course, death did not prevail...at least not this time..

Jesus calls Lazarus came back to life,

but only for a little while because

for at some point, he will have to die again..

While it is striking that Jesus, with the Power of God,

was able to summon Lazarus out of the tomb,

from the darkness of the cave into the light of the country side..

that Jesus, though Power of God was able to breathe life

back into the dead body of Lazarus...

it is significant as well,

that Lazarus came out still bound by death's wrappings...

It took his community to untie him...to let him loose...to allow him to go free...

and this is no small matter.

If we take Lazarus' story into our lives..

If we look at death metaphorically, not just that which happens at the end of this life..

but that which prevents anyone from really being alive in THIS life...

we could begin to understand that yes,

God can breathe new life into all situations into all peoples...

but it is up to each of us, the community and the families

to unbind that which keeps us from being set free...

**We are often bound, by jealousies, our envy, past hurt,
indignation, resentment, ...and when we are so bound...
we bind them by our opinions and judgments...**

**But even as God calls us back into the light, back into life...
the wrappings of death must be loosened so that we and they can be set free!**

Think for a moment...

**Is there anyone who has embarked on a life changing journey
anyone who is attempting to do better, be better, act better, speaker more kindly
and yet, you are unable to accept them in their 'new life'?**

**Unless we can set them free to live again,
unless we unbind them from their past reputations,
unless we can unbind them from our anger and resentment...
they might as well have remained in the darkness of their addictions,
their fear, worry, envy or jealousies...
because no new life will be possible for them,
or for us...**

**When we cannot let loosen the death wrappings of those in our own families and
communities we remained bound as well and
we can see by the example of that man from Nazareth,
that God's heart breaks once again.....
God once again shed tears over the death of one whom God loves....**

**But if we can set the dead free...
we too are set free....
and then we will have every reason to say, "Thank you!"
Amen.**

