

John 11: 3-7, 17, 20-27, 33B-45

**So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.**

**But when Jesus heard it, he said,**

**This illness does not lead to death; rather it is 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.**

**Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.'**

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

**When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him,**

**while Mary stayed at home.**

**Martha said Jesus, 'Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died.**

**But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.'**

**Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'**

**Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.'**

**Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life.'**

**Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,**

**and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.**

**Do you believe this? She said to him, 'Yes Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'**

**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.'  
Many of the Jews therefore,  
who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

## **Meditation:**

**I remember the day that Carter came to the Center  
as a new gentleman in our Pathway to Sobriety program.  
The best way to describe him was sullen.**

**He sat on the couch in the Parlor during a staff meeting with his head down  
his legs and arms crossed...totally turned in on himself.  
His physical detoxing was still in process  
and his emotional and spiritual healing had barely just begun.**

**As the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months,  
you could literally see Carter begin to open and  
begin to blossom once again into the man he once was...**

**Carter, as I remember, is one of the lucky ones...  
His family celebrated his recovery and welcomed him back into  
family events and gatherings...**

**But not all the men are so lucky.  
not all of them are welcomed back into the hearts and lives  
of their families...**

**I remember the conversations I once had with a woman that I shall call Betty...  
She said that her mother repeatedly told her as a child  
how stupid and inept she was...  
that she would never amount to much and lo and behold...**

**when she did grow up even though she had a successful career  
and a good marriage**

**Betty rarely felt 'good enough' or capable or competent.**

**Betty and Carter were entombed...**

**because of the opinions, judgments and attitudes of others...**

**Because of other people's opinions and attitudes they were bound tightly  
and were unable to grow into who they were created to be....**

**One of the most harmful things we do to each other as human beings  
is put each other in boxes and categories with negative labels such as:  
lazy or dumb or selfish or immature.**

**When we do that, we put people in the tomb, so to speak...**

**put them 'over there'... we separate from them,**

**But tragically, very often people then take on these labels as their identity:**

**I am stupid.**

**I am incompetent.**

**I am a liar.**

**I am irresponsible.**

**I can never make the right choice...**

**They take on an identity which keeps them entombed in the dark cave of negative self  
perception.**

**In our reading today, Jesus calls to Lazarus to come out...**

**and he does...life has begun to breathe in Lazarus once again...**

**he walks out of the darkness of his tomb into the light of new life**

**but his face is still hidden... still bound with strips of cloth**

**Jesus then says to the people gathered: Unbind him and let him go.  
This directive is so very, very important...  
Jesus was able to restore this man to life...  
but he couldn't really live until his community: his family and friends  
unbound him and let him go free...**

**Human beings are beings are meant to be in relationship.  
There is an African word 'ubuntu' which translates that a  
person is a person through other people.  
We are all connected.  
We are a human community.  
We need each other...  
We find the fullness of our lives, of our purpose, of our selves  
with and in community.**

**For Lazarus to rise from the dead, he needed the power of the Divine and  
his community and his family.  
So...if Jesus assures us of God's presence and love,  
that part is taken care of ....  
Now we need to do our part.  
We need to release anyone bound up by our opinions and our anger and our resentments,  
to they can fully rise up out of the darkness.**

**You know it is not just unforgiving families or those terrible parents  
who keep people bound up and in the tomb of darkness...**

**Think about how often in our own families we say:  
oh...he's the smart one,  
she's the kind one...**

he's the funny one,  
or she's lazy one...

We do it all the time, not intentionally wanting to cause harm,  
but none the less, judging and labeling very harmful and very limiting...

Putting labels on people: children or adults,  
stereotyping people we do not know...

quickly entombs them into a category:  
a nice neat box of our expectations.

We think we know what to expect, what they will or will not do...  
what they are and are not capable of...

and since we will only see what we are looking for,  
we most likely won't recognize the "more" of who people always are....

I remember how our youngest daughter,  
when she was little... was always being silly...  
so she gained the reputation of being the clown of the family...  
and she was, and still is...very funny.

The problem was, that she also had a very deep and serious side to her.  
As she grew into her teenage and adult years  
it took sometime for us to recognize her ability and desire to be thoughtful,  
reflective and not always the family clown....

We had to unbind her from our opinions and judgments...  
so that we could see her larger, true self...  
which was so much more than we had ever known before...

Labels, opinions, judgments for good and for ill...

**bind a person and restrict a person from growing into the fullness  
of who they were created to be...**

**Yes, We can help to set other people free...**

**we can call people out of their tombs and,  
remove the bands, the labels that are inhibiting and restrictive...**

**We can help them show their real and true face...**

**and we can say, with them:**

**Alleluia! She has Risen! He has come back to Life!**

**And...**

**And we can forever and always say, Thank you!**

**amen.**