

## The Death of Lazarus

**11** Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> (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.) <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

<sup>4</sup> 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." <sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, <sup>7</sup> and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

<sup>8</sup> "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"

<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. <sup>10</sup> It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

<sup>11</sup> 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."

<sup>12</sup> His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." <sup>13</sup> Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

<sup>14</sup> So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, <sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

<sup>16</sup> Then Thomas (also known as Didymus<sup>[a]</sup>) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

## Jesus Comforts the Sisters of Lazarus

<sup>17</sup> On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was less than two miles<sup>[b]</sup> from Jerusalem, <sup>19</sup> and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

<sup>21</sup> "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

<sup>24</sup> Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

<sup>27</sup> "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

<sup>28</sup> 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.”<sup>29</sup> When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.<sup>31</sup> 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.

<sup>32</sup> 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.”

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.<sup>34</sup> “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept.

<sup>36</sup> Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

<sup>37</sup> But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

## **Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead**

<sup>38</sup> Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.<sup>39</sup> “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.”

<sup>40</sup> Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.<sup>42</sup> 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.”

<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”<sup>44</sup> 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.”

## **The Plot to Kill Jesus**

<sup>45</sup> Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

This story is one of faith, hope and love and that resonates with us as a church.

On our opening power point slide we have the short mission statement at the top – sharing God’s love.

It has two meanings. Here, together we share God’s love in our friendships and worship and being a church family.

We also seek to share the love of God with all whom we encounter so that a stranger quickly becomes a friend.

At the bottom of the slide is the outworking of our life together and our aspiration.

To live by faith, to be known by love, to be the light of hope.

The story of the raising of Lazarus is one of faith, hope and love and a great deal more – it's a real story of real people.

There's anger. I think Mary and Martha are angry with Jesus who didn't come and heal their brother. We get angry with each other and with God when things don't work out as we want. We know anger.

There's confusion. The disciples didn't understand what Jesus was saying or what he was doing and we can be confused. What is God doing???

There's the deepest compassion. Jesus deeply feels the anguish of loss and death and weeps at the awfulness of bereavement. Well. We've been there. We might be there now. Death and separation are the pits.

There's theology and revelation. Jesus is the resurrection and life, Martha declares he's the Messiah, it's through Jesus Christ we receive the grace and forgiveness of God. We too have an understanding and experience of these things.

There's a lot in this story and there's faith, hope and love.

Faith. I see faith in the person of Thomas.

He doesn't really know what's going on, the disciples are telling Jesus that Judea was where they tried to stone him to death but because Jesus is going there anyway Thomas – who thinks it might end in their deaths says.

Let's go with him.

That is to live by faith. I don't know what's going on, I have no idea of the outcome, but I'm following Jesus anyway.

Here we are in the school, the church is getting ready for the contractors, we are still waiting on certain funding bids, we don't know the outcome BUT – we are following Jesus anyway. We are living by faith.

Hope. I see hope in Martha.

I know she is angry at Jesus but she appears to ask the incredible. "But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

She asking for the incredible and her hope is in Jesus.

In the brief discussion about the resurrection she states her hope in the resurrection to come and that is a hope we share. We hope for things in the temporal life – like our hopes for church...but encompassing that is our hope of eternal life. But she had hinted at more...she puts her hope in the Saviour.

Love. Love runs through this story alongside all the other emotions. Jesus loves Martha and Mary and Lazarus and despite what's happened they love him.

It's love that opens the door for Jesus to feel their pain and sorrow so deeply. It's love that takes him to a place he might be stoned but it's a greater love for the disciples and for all of us that he let things play out the way that they did.

Perhaps he knew Lazarus would forgive him for letting him experience death and Lazarus would come to realise that for love to triumph over death Jesus' power and authority needed to be displayed.

From time to time we suffer and I don't know anyone who wants to simply suffer needlessly. We want something to come out of our suffering.

A refining of character. A deeper understanding of ourselves and of God. Freedom from the awful things from the past that we buried and resurfaced. We want suffering to have a purpose and meaning.

All that said. Sometimes we are not going to see the big picture, we're not going to have the satisfaction of a neat equation...suffering = this positive outcome.

But that is when faith and hope and the love of Jesus Christ reassures us that in Gods great plan things will one day be made right and understood.

As Corrie Ten Boom used to say – we often only ever see the reverse of the tapestry.

St. Thomas had no idea I would quote him 2000 years later and admire his dogged faith.

Martha had no idea I would feel anger as she did and also admire her hope in Jesus Christ.

But I think Jesus knew all that time ago, that in the centuries to come we would seek to love and be loved.

Whatever you are facing personally and what we face as a church may it be that faith and hope and love are what we exhibit and in doing so may we too experience something incredible, nothing less than our transformation...and that of the church.

Let us pray

**Revd. Jon Hutchinson, 22 March 2026**