

Lazarus Come Forth!

There is a lot going on in this long reading from the Book of John. We have the tension between the disciples and Jesus as they decide to go back toward Jerusalem where they have been threatened with death by stoning. I'm sure they were also confused about Jesus' decision to go when they realized that His friend Lazarus was dead. After all they might have thought, why risk our own death when there is nothing to be done now except attend the funeral. And think about this, how did Jesus know that Lazarus was dead if he wasn't there with him when he died?

When they get to Bethany, there is the subtle change in the roles of Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. Did you catch it? Martha the hostess is now the one who leaves the guests and goes to be with Jesus. Then Mary comes and they both believe that Jesus could have prevented their brother's death if he had been there.

There is the emotion of Jesus who weeps when he sees the tomb and the other people there crying. Could it be that He is weeping because He knows that soon he will be in a stone sealed tomb as his friends stand outside it and weep? Could he be truly upset by the death of His friend or saddened by the

knowledge of what these same people will soon do to him? Or it be that he somehow feels responsible for putting them through this sorrow when He knows what he is going to do for Lazarus?

There are many other parallels between the death of Lazarus and the death of Jesus. Lazarus and Jesus are both buried in caves. Both caves are sealed with large stones. Both stones are rolled away. The people who see Lazarus return from the dead quickly believe in Jesus but within a week they turn against him. The people who witness the resurrection of Jesus quickly believe in Jesus and their belief starts a movement that continues to this day. The main difference between the two is that Lazarus returned to a physical temporary existence. Jesus came back in a new spiritual body that will last forever.

The life we have now is temporary and though it may not be as dramatic as the rising of Lazarus each of us has been brought back to life many times. Today this last Sunday of Lent we are being called forth from our graves like Lazarus. The stone that sealed the tomb that encased our lives has been rolled away. Light is shining into our lives? Can you see it? The voice of Jesus is calling out to you: Arnie come out! Tracy come out! Bob come out! Can you hear it? The sins that have covered our eyes and stilled our mouths and bound our hands and feet like

the bindings on Lazarus have been pulled away as Jesus commands us to be set free! Can you feel it? We are free! We are alive and there is nothing between us and life everlasting because Jesus commands it. How did Jesus know that Lazarus had died—because Lazarus did not die alone the Trinity was there with him. Jesus didn't stop Lazarus from dying because there something wonderful planned to reveal God's power and glory through that death. Do you see that through this scripture God is telling us that our loved ones did not suffer or die alone? God was with them and God will free them too. Death is not stronger than Jesus. And life—Life in Jesus will always overcome the darkness. Because He lives I can face tomorrow! Because He lives all fear is gone! Because I know he holds the future and life is worth the living just because he lives!