

Raising of Lazarus
April 3, 2022, Fifth Sunday of Lent
Gospel of John 11:1-45
Fr. Brad

As we continue our way through Lent and approach the celebration of the Triduum, we note in our Gospel Jesus is getting closer to his final trip to Jerusalem and his arrest, suffering and death, and the end of his earthly life. We also see that his boldness is increasing. He boldly healed the blind man in last week's Gospel in Jerusalem. Today's miracle of the raising of Lazarus pushes things further.

Note that in his ministry he has cured the sick, healed the blind and the disabled, and brought people back to life who have just died or were about to.

Unique to this episode:

- Today, he **raises someone** from the dead, one **who has been dead for four days**. What was irretrievably dead would live again.
- As well, these are not just strangers to Jesus. Martha and Mary are dear friends of his and **Lazarus**, their brother, **was also a dear friend**.

The Gospel says that those who came with Martha and Mary believed after witnessing the miracle. That is, they entered into a deeper awareness of the implications of who Jesus truly is as the Son of God. With power and authority over earthly life and death, it is revealed that death does not have the last word after all.

What looked final was not. What seemed finished had only just begun. As Ezekiel prophesied over the valley of bones, even a people as good as dead could hope in the living God. When all was lost, much more would be found. "I will put my spirit in you that you may live, I have promised, and I will do it, says the Lord."

Two types of being raised:

- Although in this instance, **Lazarus' being raised back to life** was resuscitation to life in this world, different than the resurrection of Jesus Himself, it was highly effective in demonstrating the power and glory of God. Yet it was a return to life in this world - - **a reversal**.
- The **Resurrection of Jesus**, soon to follow, **reveals a forward movement** - - life beyond this world and beyond these earthly mortal bodies to a resurrected body - - a transcendence of death.

The raising of Lazarus from the dead is a temporary action as were all of Jesus' miracles. They would only stave off or delay the inevitable final departure from mortal life in this world. These miracles communicate a sign from God, a foretaste of his kingdom and a promise.

What can we learn?

We are asked to trust in that promise. It shows us that nothing of our good grace will be lost or forgotten even after these mortal bodies return to dust.

Another point to make about the story of the raising of Lazarus shows **that a person can feel sure about things and still be altogether mistaken even if you have faith.** Martha and Mary were persons of faith and believed in Jesus as the Messiah but they were still limited enough in their perspective that they were mistaken about the depths of Jesus power over life and death. They had it in their heads that once Lazarus died it was too late for Jesus to do anything about it.

Both Martha and later Mary say to Jesus, *“If you had been here, my brother Lazarus would not have died.”*

We too can be caught up in our putting limits on what God can do. There’s nothing we can do personally about our past but God can transform its meaning and transform us and raise to new life areas of our lives we thought impossible.

On this Fifth Sunday of Lent we address two more steps of the 12 step program. The 8th and 9th steps address the issue of **making amends wherever possible.** Restoring broken or bruised relationships is part of our process of healing and renewal. We make a list of people who we have harmed and with whom we are willing to make amends and actually do so when possible.

It is not always possible however, but we can do penance and **acknowledge the harm we have done even though we can’t change the harm that was done.** The past cannot be undone, but the way we perceive it or interpret it can in a way that brings new life for the future.

We acknowledge and admit wrongdoing. Such acknowledgement is an integral part of the season of Lent and why penitents are given penances in the sacrament of reconciliation.

The penitent expresses sincere regret for the evil done and is willing to make up for it in a way that potentially brings new life where before there was hurt. This is not an easy task and it may not be completely successful or may even fail miserably. But the desire to make amends and acknowledgement of wrongdoing is key to humbling our hearts and opening ourselves to the Spirit of God.

As we prepare our hearts to enter Holy Week soon may we recall that not only life but death and sorrow are also given within God’s gentle love.

May we not let the hardships we are facing or the failures we have experienced, deter us from our faith in God’s all pervading power and authority.

No matter how hopeless we perceive things to be, know that our God has the last word and that word is life. Amen