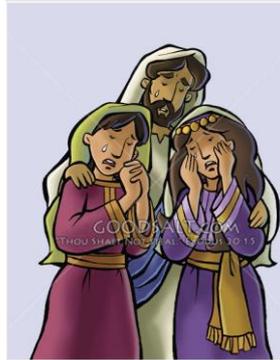


A few thoughts for Sunday 29th March, based on today's Bible reading, John 11:1-45

TEARS &



TIMING

This is a very long passage, but it's probably one you know well, about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. If you read this passage you'll find that there are a few sub-plots, but as today would have been a Family Service it will be kept relatively simple!

Jesus' great friends were sisters Martha & Mary & their brother Lazarus. This is the Mary who anointed Jesus' feet with perfume & sat at his feet when Martha thought she should be helping in the kitchen! The family lived in Bethany, a short distance from Jerusalem, & I imagine Jesus enjoyed spending time with them, feeling part of a family, & sharing the odd meal when he was in the vicinity.

But when news came to Jesus that Lazarus was ill and had died he did not react as his disciples expected. Instead he continued travelling & preaching. A few days later he decided to go to Bethany, but by the time he got there Lazarus had already been buried four days.

[When Martha heard that Jesus was on his way she ran to meet him and wept bitterly saying:

"If only you had been here Lord, Lazarus would not have died, you could have healed him. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask."

And Jesus answered, "I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this Martha?"

"Of course I do" said Martha, "You are the Messiah, the Son of God."

Then Martha ran back to the house to tell Mary that Jesus was on his way and wanted to see her. There were many visitors in the house, weeping with Mary and comforting her. When Mary got up and ran towards Jesus..... they all followed her, weeping, thinking she was going to Lazarus' grave.

But Mary went to Jesus and said exactly what Martha had said, "Lord if you had been here, Lazarus would not have died".

Jesus was very moved by so much grief around him and he too wept. Those around him said, "See how much he loved Lazarus."

Then Jesus asked to be taken to Lazarus' tomb, a cave with a stone rolled in front. But Martha & Mary said, "No No Master, he has been dead four days, there will be a terrible smell".

But Jesus ordered the stone to be rolled away & shouted, "Lazarus come out!"

And Lazarus came out, still wrapped in grave clothes. All the people there were astonished, but Jesus said to Martha, "Didn't I tell you Martha that you would see God's Glory if you believed? Now everyone here will believe too."]

Tears & Timing

Tears - there are plenty of tears in this passage, which includes the shortest verse in the Bible: - Jesus wept. The brevity of this verse gives it more effect. Jesus wept. In the Middle East it's customary, for the women especially, to express their sorrow with loud weeping & wailing & that was probably one of the aspects that moved Jesus to tears. Jesus was human & felt sadness. Jesus wept. And it's OK for us to weep too.

Lord, we weep for all those who are fearful & those who are suffering today.

Lord, we weep for...

Timing – Why did Jesus take so long to go to Bethany after he heard the news of his dear friend Lazarus' illness and death? The Bible passage leads us to understand that Jesus knew that if he had gone immediately & healed Lazarus before he died, then it would not have been so remarkable. After all, Jesus healing people happened frequently. Jesus' purpose was to glorify God through the raising of Lazarus.

How often have **we** wished & prayed for God to intervene in some aspect of our lives, only to realise later that God's timing was different and more beneficial for us?

In these troubled times we have to trust that God's timing is best too. When this pandemic is over, mankind may have learnt valuable lessons.

Loving God, renew our trust & faith in you, that we too may glorify You

Raising Lazarus was a crucial turning point in Jesus' life. His enemies realised the miracle would attract many more followers & they plotted to get rid of him, and Lazarus too. This occasion is the start of Jesus' path to Palm Sunday & Good Friday.

Loving God, we don't know what lies ahead of us.

Let us feel your presence with us, so that we can confidently face the days ahead.

Give strength to all the Key Workers keeping us safe & supplied during this coronavirus pandemic, especially those working for the NHS.

Give wisdom to those in government making decisions.

And give us the grace to help others & glorify your name.

In the name of your Son Jesus Christ,

Amen

So let us give God the Glory:

To God be the glory! Great things he has done; so loved he the world that he gave us his Son;
Who yielded his life an atonement for sin, and opened the life gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord! Let the earth hear his voice;

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice:

O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son, and give him the glory, great things he has done.

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood! To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things he has taught us, great things he has done, and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher and greater will be our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.