

Monday Morning

When Jesus saw her sobbing and the Jews with her sobbing, a deep anger welled up within him. He said, "Where did you put Lazarus?" "Master, come and see," they said. Now Jesus wept.

The Jews said, "Look how deeply he loved him." Others among them said, "Well, if he loved him so much, why didn't he do something to keep him from dying? After all, he opened the eyes of a blind man." Then Jesus, the anger again welling up within him, arrived at the tomb. It was a simple cave in the hillside with a slab of stone laid against it. Jesus said, "Remove the stone." The sister of the dead man, Martha, said, "Master, by this time there's a stench. He's been dead four days!"

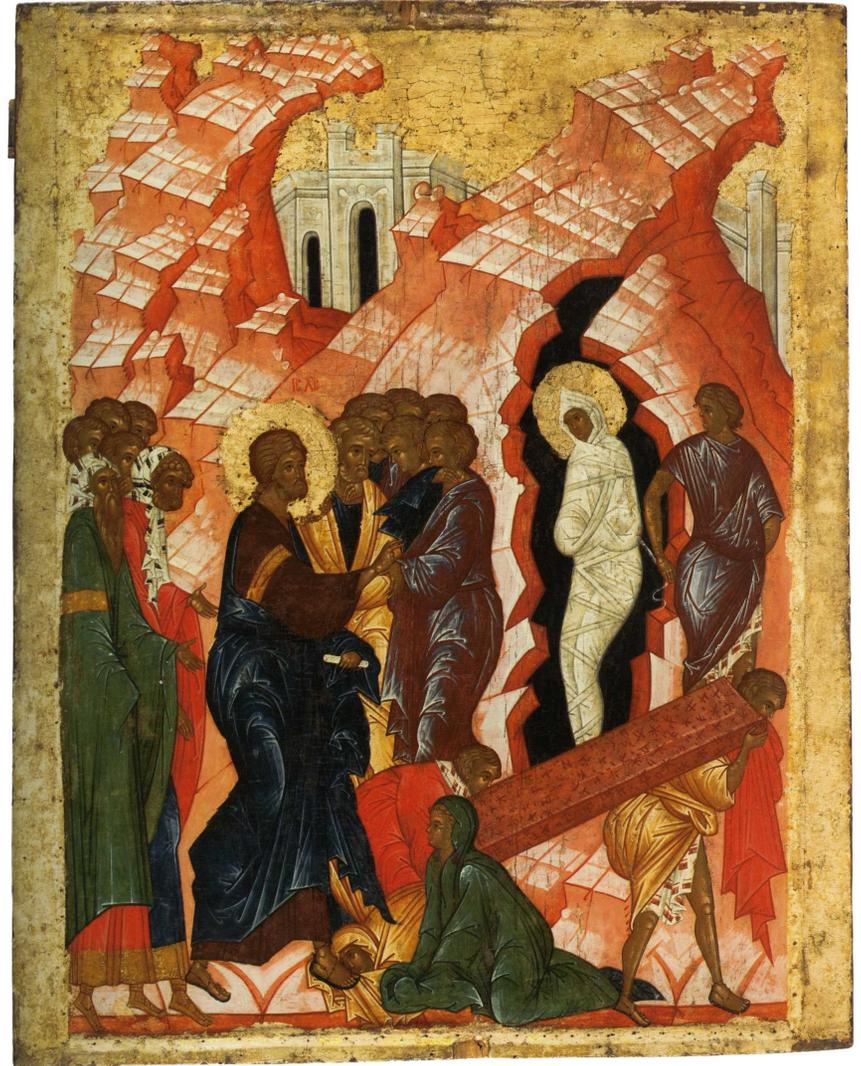
Jesus looked her in the eye. "Didn't I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" Then, to the others, "Go ahead, take away the stone." They removed the stone. Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and prayed, "Father, I'm grateful that you have listened to me. I know you always do listen, but on account of this crowd standing here I've spoken so that they might believe that you sent me."

Then he shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" And he came out, a cadaver, wrapped from head to toe, and with a kerchief over his face. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him loose."

John 11 — *The Message*

In this tumultuous season of terrifying, 24/7 headlines, we who have been tasked with preaching to dry bones, we who have witnessed Lazarus unbound and resurrected, need to proclaim in confidence that God has not, does not, will not abandon us. Jesus weeps with us. The community mourns together. The wind of the Spirit still blows where it wills and if we pause and listen, we will surely hear the sound and see the impact of it. Jesus will not ignore our pleas to come and help. While we do not know when we will return to our churches in person or when we will embrace each other with abandon or when we will get back to work in our offices or find grocery stores with fully stocked aisles, we can be sure that dry bones will become living, breathing human beings. The one who raised Jesus will sustain us even now. And Lazarus, four days in the tomb and decomposing, will make an astonishing return to his family and community.

Rev. Jill Duffield — "Looking into the Lectionary" — Presbyterian Outlook



"The Raising of Lazarus" — 15th century. Novgorod school
The Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia

Father in heaven! When the thought of thee wakes in our hearts
let it not awaken like a frightened bird that flies about in dismay,
but like a child waking from its sleep with a heavenly smile.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55) — Danish philosopher

If I could not mourn, how deeply could I love?
If I could not cry, hollow would be the sound of my laughter!

Of course, the Holy Spirit comforts me – how could I have
survived what happened had that not been true!

The Holy Spirit comforts me, but never takes away my humanity.
He wipes the tears from my eyes, but never does He forbid the
tears to come.

Nor would I have it so. How easy the young would have life to
be! I would not want to lose touch with any one of the emotions
of life – even those deep feelings that cause me pain.

Don't you remember how Jesus wept when Lazarus died? He
wept not for His friend, but for Himself – for the loss of that
friendship – for the years of loneliness that He would feel until
they were reunited in heaven.

Now if Jesus was not afraid of these feelings, neither should I be.
Oh, I have heard men say that because of their faith, they are
always happy. Well that was not true of their Lord!

Jesus was sometimes angry, sometimes lonely, sometimes even
afraid. Oh, there was great joy about Him – but this joy was not
at the expense of other emotions.

I do wonder about people who want life to be other than human.

Let the tears come when they will – for then God sends His Spirit,
bringing comfort beyond what men can ever give, and peace so
complete it defies all understanding.

“The Wilderness of Loneliness” by Marilee Zedenek, 1977

I know how to make a bed
While still lying in it, and
Slip out of an imaginary hole
As if I were squeezed out of a tube:
Tug, smooth—the bed is made.
And if resurrections are this easy,
Why then I believe in all of them:
Lazarus rising from his tomb,
Elijah at the vertical—
Though death, I think, has more than clever
Household hints in mind and wants
The bed made, once, and for good.

"Making a Bed" by Howard Moss from *New Selected Poems*

Jesus Christ overthrew evil powers
that enslaved and degraded people,
yet he made no use of power to protect himself.
He healed those who were sick in body and mind,
yet he did not avoid pain and suffering for himself.
He commanded his followers to place loyalty to him
above loyalty to family and country,
yet he lived among them as a servant
Jesus taught with authority,
challenging many time-honored customs and ideas,
yet he submitted to humiliation and death
without a word on his own behalf.
He forgave sinners,
yet he was counted among sinners.
We recognize the work of God in Jesus' power and authority.
He did what only God can do.
We also recognize the work of God in Jesus' lowliness.
When he lives as a servant
and went humbly to his death
the greatness that belongs only to God was manifest.
In both his majesty and lowliness
Jesus is the eternal Son of God,
God himself with us.

from “A Declaration of Faith” — Presbyterian Church (USA)

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