

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

Lazarus was sick (Jn 11:1).

It wasn't just a minor cold, or a battle with the flu—
it was fatal.

The doctors said he took a turn for the worse,
it wouldn't be long now.

And the sisters should start making arrangements, calling those that love him.

So they sent for Jesus,
because Jesus loved Lazarus (11:3, 5, 36).

But Jesus didn't come—
at least, not at first.

No, when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick He stuck around another couple of days (11:6)—
taking His time,
waiting.

Why didn't He come?
Didn't Jesus love Lazarus enough to help?
Didn't Jesus care to heal him from this disease?
There's no doubt that He could've—
so why didn't He?

By the time Jesus arrived, it was too late; Lazarus was a good 4-days dead in the tomb (11:17)
(and that's one too many!).
He started to stink, carrying the strong odor of death (11:39).

Again, why didn't Jesus come?

Well Jesus didn't come because He wanted Lazarus good and dead.

He's already proven that He can heal—
think of the blind man (9:1-7),
the invalid (5:3-9),
the demon possessed, and the sick.

But not this time, not Lazarus.

Our Lord didn't want to heal Lazarus; He wanted to *raise* Lazarus.

Our Lord said it Himself,
“**I am the resurrection and the life**” (11:25).

And so when Jesus cried in a loud voice into a dark and stinky cave,
 “Lazarus, come out!” (11:43),
 Lazarus came out.

The dead man listened; Lazarus came out.

Jesus is Himself the Resurrection.
 And when Jesus commands the dead to rise, they rise.

This raising of Lazarus is the last great sign before Jesus walks this same road Himself.

Jesus too will walk the road of death.

Here we are in the fifth week in Lent and Holy Week is just around the corner.
 We’re closing in on the Passion,
 preparing for the Lord Jesus to enter Jerusalem with palm branches,
 to institute His Holy Communion in the upper room,
 and finally to be declared guilty and sentenced to death,
 death on a cross.

Like Lazarus, Jesus walks the road of death.
 Like Lazarus, Jesus will call out for help, for healing, but none will come.
 None will make Him better or nurse His disease back to life.
 Like Lazarus, Jesus died.

He too was buried in a tomb, a cave like Lazarus.
 And a large stone was rolled in front of it, just like Lazarus.

That’s it, death, no more—
 Well, not quite.

Because like Lazarus, Jesus also rose from the dead.
 It was Jesus who called out in a loud voice,
 “Lazarus, come out!”
 And it is Jesus who comes out Himself!
 “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25)

The stone is rolled away, the earth quakes, the angel appears, and Christ rises.

But that’s enough Easter talk for now—
 we’re not there yet!

So what good does this story of Lazarus do for you?

Well, first of all, it reminds you that you’re in the same boat—
 death can come quickly, suddenly, while family and friends are still a ways off.

It reminds you that you're just a man like Lazarus.
Sinful, weak, and unable do anything about it.

You can't heal yourself,
you can't convince yourself to live,
no matter how hard you try, or how much you believe in yourself.

You, like Lazarus, will die.

You'll cry out to the Lord, just like you've always done,
but then it will seem like He's dragging His heels.

And sometimes, He'll get there too late.
Sometimes the cancer will strike too hard,
sometimes the car swerves too quickly
and sometimes it'll seem like there's no excuse, He should've been here.

But Jesus waits.
He wants you good and dead,
so that rather than simply healing you back to this broken and sinful world,
He'll take you to be with Himself in Eden restored.

So, the story of Lazarus gives us hope.
It encourages us to joyfully await that Great Easter when Christ raises our buried bodies
from their graves to be with Him in paradise.

But that's not all this story does.

Hope is good, but faith is better.
In fact, "**faith is the *certainty* of things hoped for**" (Heb 11:1).
It's the "amen,"
the "**yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who
is coming into the world**" (11:27).

The story of Lazarus reminds you not only that you are man and dust and sinful and dying,
but it also reminds you of who your Lord actually is:
**"I am the Resurrection and the Life.
Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,
and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die"** (11:25-26).

He is the resurrection and life not only for Lazarus, and for Himself, but also *for you*.

And this resurrection and life is already in place.
It's not only a future resurrection and life,
but a resurrection and life from the dead even now!

You, who are baptized have already died and risen with Christ! (Rom 6:3-4)

You already have had your death put away,
 your sin is already covered,
 your burial clothes have already been removed!

It is already Christ who lives in you! (Gal 2:20)

“Do you believe this?” (11:26)

Do you believe that your life is already hidden with God in Christ?
 Do you believe that your sin is already paid for,
 that your death has already been suffered,
 that your guilt is removed,
 and that you are free to live?

Do you believe that this Lord who spoke creation into being,
 who said, **“Let there be light”** and there was light (Gen 1:3),
 this Lord, who called Lazarus by name and said, **“Lazarus, come out!”**,
 is the same Lord that calls you by name?

Do you believe that Jesus loves you
 and wants nothing more than to heal you and cure you and help you along the way?

Do you believe that this Jesus sometimes waits,
 sometimes gives you to suffer a bit,
 and sometimes even lets you die?

And in your suffering,
 in your bearing the cross,
 in your making your way along the road of death,
 do you believe that in all things, God works for the good of those who
 love Him? (Rom 8:28)

Because to you who do believe,
 to you who have received this faith as a gift,
 the Lord Jesus Christ,
 who is the Resurrection and the Life,
 promises that you will never die.

Never!

Because Jesus loves you.
 He loves you like He loved Lazarus.
 And it's for you that Jesus died and rose three days later from the tomb.
 Easter is all for you.

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