

## **Lazarus Come Out**

When I was the Pastoral Director in Plainfield, a wonderful faith filled lady named Linda would join me in visiting the parishioners at the assisted living centers in the area as well as their homes. We often shared with each other scripture passages and teachings of the church during our travels. She always told me that one of her favorite Gospels was the Lazarus account, especially when Jesus proclaimed “Lazarus Come Out”. She shared with me that when she passes on from this life to the next, she wants that Gospel proclaimed at her funeral and that she hopes that she would hear similar words proclaimed to her from her grave, “Come Out!”

This is certainly a powerful Gospel about how Jesus has the power over death. This was just a foreshadowing of what was to come with his own resurrection from the tomb. As I shared with you before, when we read John’s Gospel, we have to pay attention to the details as they share a deeper meaning. So why did John emphasize that it took Jesus four days to get to Lazarus when he was only a couple of miles away? You see at that time, it was believed that the spirit of the body remained inside the body for three days. On the fourth day, the body was completely dead. If Jesus would have come and performed this sign before the fourth day, many people might have said that this was not a big deal as the spirit of Lazarus was still in the body anyways.

John also points out that Thomas was the apostle that told the others that they should go with Jesus and to die with him. I believe that John may have pointed this out as many people who saw this sign, came to believe in Jesus because they actually saw this with their own eyes. Do you remember that it was the apostle Thomas who doubted the resurrection of Jesus before he saw Jesus with his own eyes?

And then John points out that Mary was the woman who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair. Why was that so important for John to point out? Could it be that John wanted to emphasize that Jesus gave Mary new spiritual life because of her sinfulness and then wanted to bring the story full circle showing that Jesus could also bring back Lazarus to a physical new life.

These are all beautiful little details that John writes in his Gospels that encourage us to take the time and reflect on the deeper meanings of the story.

This Gospel is commonly used for Catholic funeral Masses and services. When I reflect on them at a funeral, I point out that Martha most likely did not come to Jesus in a nice way when she greeted him. I could see her grabbing Jesus in her deep distress and maybe even exclaiming to Jesus in an upset voice, saying “Where were you Jesus when

Lazarus was sick?" This is a point that maybe all of us get to in our lives when we, as faithful people, find things not going so well in our lives. I hear people ask me, why would Jesus let this happen? Why would Jesus forget about us at our time of need?

I share with you that Jesus never leaves us along at our time of need and it is often that he walks with us and has a greater plan for us no matter the situation. We just have to trust in that plan, and that is the Gospel message today.

I usually ask the question, "Where is Lazarus today?" when I share my last reflection point of this Gospel at a funeral. I will give you a hint, he is not here, he died again. With the victory that Jesus won for us on the cross, I can with faith, suggest to you that Lazarus died again and is now with Jesus in heaven. Jesus loved Lazarus so much that He wanted Lazarus to be with Him in heaven.

This is a beautiful Gospel of physical resurrection and also reminds us of a new life in our spiritual lives as well. You see one day, our prayers for healing for our physical bodies will come to an end and we too will be faced with the physical death of our bodies. We trust, that if we live faithful lives and continue to have a relationship with Christ now, that he will also call us to a new and eternal life with him in heaven.

And hopefully, we will hear those words proclaimed to us as Jesus rolls back the stone on our graves "Come Out" and be with me for eternal life.

May God Bless you all as you continue on your Lenten journey.

*Deacon Jim*