

LENT 5 A — JOHN 11:1-44

Narrator: The religious elite, the power structure of the pious, the holy hierarchy, has been looking for opportunities to get rid of Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus continues on his way, proclaiming the good news of God's grace to the downtrodden and condemning the way of avarice and greed, fear and distrust, violence and bloodshed. While on the road, Jesus gets word that his good friend Lazarus, brother to Mary and Martha, is seriously ill:

Sisters: Lord, he whom you love is ill.

Narrator: Will Jesus do something for Lazarus? Some disciples said,

Disciple: Rabbi, shouldn't we go to Bethany for the sake of Lazarus?

Narrator: Others said,

Disciples: Sounds like a bad idea. Let's lay low and keep out of trouble, until the troubles pass.

Jesus: This illness leads not to death but to God's glory.

Narrator: So Jesus, though he loved Lazarus, did not set off for Bethany, where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived. Bethany was close to Jerusalem, thus in territory where people of power wanted to get rid of Jesus. So, when Jesus said,

Jesus: Now it's time to go.

Narrator: Some disciples said,

Disciples: What? To Bethany? That's suicide. The religious rulers are trying to have you stoned to death | And there's no telling what the Roman rulers are up to.

Jesus: We're not here to hide in the shadows. We are here to shine with the bright Light of God for the sake of the world, to wake up the world to walk in the Light of the Lord. Let us go, now, to wake up our dear friend Lazarus.

Disciple: What does he mean, 'wake up' Lazarus?

Jesus: Lazarus has died, but death shall not have the last word.

Narrator: Thomas, the disciple nicknamed 'the Twin', spoke to challenge and exhort his fellow disciples.

Thomas: Let us go with courage. If we live with him, shall we not also die with him?

Disciples: Yeah, easy for you to say.

Narrator: By the time Jesus got near to Bethany, Lazarus had already been dead for four days and was buried in the family tomb. Not only had friends and family come to console Mary and Martha, as they grieved the death of their beloved brother, but since Bethany was close to Jerusalem, professional mourners had come to weep and wail with them over the death of Lazarus. When word came that Jesus was coming up the road, Martha ran to meet him.

Martha: Lord, where have you been? If you had been here then my brother would not have died! Lord, do something!

Jesus: Martha, your brother will rise.

Martha: Sure, at the last day. But what about now?!

Jesus: That's right. What about now? I Am, right now. I Am Resurrection and Life. Death does not have the last word. Do you believe this?

Martha: O Lord, yes, I believe. You are the One—God’s Chosen!

Narrator: She runs off to her sister Mary, who is weeping.

Martha: Mary, come, the Teacher is here, calling for you.

Narrator: Mary runs to Jesus and falls to her knees before him.

Mary: Jesus, if you had been here, then my brother would not have died!!

Narrator: Jesus looks at Mary, who is still weeping. He is both bothered and deeply moved.

Jesus: Where have you laid his body?

Sisters: Lord, come and see.

Narrator: Jesus begins to weep. He raises Mary up, hugs her and goes with her.

Witnesses: See how he loved Lazarus!
If he loved him so much, then why didn’t he keep him from dying?!

Narrator: Jesus came to the tomb, a cave carved in stone, with a large stone covering the entrance. Jesus was disturbed and agitated.

Jesus: Take away the stone!

Martha: Master, it’s been four days already. It’s going to stink to high heaven!

Jesus: Don’t be afraid. We will get a whiff of God’s glory!

Narrator: The stone is removed. Jesus seems to be praying, when all of a sudden he cries out with a loud voice:

Jesus: Lazarus, come out!!!

Narrator: Lazarus, wrapped in cloth for burial, peaks outside.

Jesus: Let him loose! And let the party begin!