**JESUS WEEPS FOR YOU**

**John 11:1-35**

**The Fifth Sunday in Lent**

**Trinity Lutheran Church**

**Springfield, Missouri**

**29 March *Anno Domini* 2020**

**The Gospel reading for the Fifth Sunday in Lent is from the Gospel according to Saint John, the eleventh chapter. I invite you to open your own Bible, or app, at home to follow along during this sermon, verses 1-35. The story we will hear and share today took place in the village of Bethany, which was located about two miles east of Jerusalem, just beyond the ridge known as the Mount of Olives. The amazing event that took place there was an event which shocked and rocked the world of Jerusalem like no other miracle of Jesus. This event was still headline news when Jesus, shortly thereafter, entered Jerusalem on what we today call Palm Sunday.**

**Let’s begin with verses 1-5:**

***Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister***

***Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her***

***hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom***

***you love is ill.” But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.***

**Here in Bethany lived a well-to-do family, who not only were followers of Jesus, and who not only hosted Jesus and His disciples at their estate when He was in Jerusalem, but had become very close personal friends with Him. Jesus and Lazarus shared a friendship that was, according to the Greek word used in verse 3**

**(phileo), as close as beloved brothers. His two sisters, Martha and Mary, we have previously met in Luke’s Gospel, chapter ten. In an earlier visit, Jesus’ presence had filled Martha’s house with His disciples and the rest of the traveling band, along with neighbors, necessitating a heavy workload as by custom she was expected to prepare a meal for those who had come to hear Jesus teach. In that visit, Martha’s younger sister, Mary, abandons her station in the kitchen, to secure a front-row seat during the presentation. And Jesus commends Mary for her choice.**

**Lazarus became ill, and probably when death threatened, the sisters decided to send a messenger to Jesus with an emergency plea for help. Because of the threats to His life, Jesus had taken His disciples out of Jerusalem to a remote place southeast in the Judean wilderness area and across the Jordan River. But people found out where He was and still were coming to Him for teaching and healing. Verse 6:**

***When Jesus heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day?***

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***If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep.***

***Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”***

**How confusing Jesus’ words and choices must have been to the Twelve! On the one hand, Jesus assures the messenger who brought the news from Bethany that the final outcome of Lazarus’ illness will not be death, and this was the message returned to Martha and Mary, whom Jesus also loved, according to verse 5. (We do note here the word for love is agape, divine and pure love.) On the other hand, after sending the messenger on his way, Jesus doesn’t budge! He waits two days before leaving for what will be a two-day journey to Judea. His disciples have seen Him heal people before from distances, merely by pronouncing them well. So when He describes Lazarus’ physical death, which Jesus knew had already taken place, as “sleep,” what are the disciples to think, other than Lazarus has turned the corner to recovery. But then after more difficult words about day and night and spiritual light, Jesus sees that they are clueless, so their mental and emotional pendulums are swung again when He speaks plainly, “Lazarus has died.”**

**Why all this mystery and drama? Does Jesus always have to do things with a twist?**

**Lazarus’ death is a tragedy for his sisters for the whole family, and, frankly, for Jesus and His disciples, too. Lazarus was a significant supporter of Jesus’ public ministry, and of the movement. The Twelve must have been thinking, if Jesus is now going to the Jerusalem suburbs when Lazarus is already dead, in spite of the danger to Himself and them, why didn’t He go immediately and just heal him? Mary and Martha were also no doubt wondering why Jesus had not yet come. Sometimes Jesus just didn’t make sense. Jesus gave the Twelve a hint: ‘Hey, fellows, be glad—I am—that I wasn’t there when our friend died; God has a plan that you will see, that will strengthen your faith.’ Back to the text, verse 17:**

***Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.***

***Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to***

***Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “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. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”***

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***When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The***

***Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”***

**As Jesus and His men approached Bethany, we learn what Jesus had already pronounced, Lazarus’s time of death; he had been in his cave-tomb for four days. Keep in mind the Jews did not embalm a corpse; they with sweet-smelling spices. Within hours of a death, burial took place, followed by a seven-day period of mourning. At their estate Martha and her younger sister Mary were daily receiving guests, including some of the Jewish leaders from Jerusalem. Their presence is evidence of the prominence of Lazarus and his family. No doubt some Pharisee spies had been in the crowd on the first day or two in the event Jesus would show up, since He was known to be close to the family. But by the fourth day there seems to be no indication of violently hostile parties still hanging around. Jesus sent a messenger to the oldest sister, who excused herself and literally sneaked away to meet Jesus outside the village. Mary remained to receive the guests and their consolation. Martha is no longer a woman whose mind and heart are distracted by earthly matters. Her faith is strong and her doctrine true. She is disappointed that Jesus did not heal Lazarus, but she fully submits to God’s will. She confesses her belief in the very deity of Jesus the Messiah. She confesses her belief and confidence in the resurrection of the dead. She is compliant with the divine will of the Father in heaven, yet she in faith boldly reminds Jesus that she knows that whatever He would ask of God, because of Who He is, God would grant it. This is the amazing faith, that in a time of great crisis and loss, God in His amazing grace, gives to His people to enable them to shine.**

**Martha is rewarded by being the sole recipient of one of the greatest truths and promises Jesus gave to the world: *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*. Martha slips back home and privately informs Mary that Jesus has come. Mary, then, tries to sneak away, but some of the visitors in the house, follow her, thinking she is going to the tomb. Mary leads them to Jesus; she comes to Him and falls at His feet. Her question is the same as her sister’s, but her faith is as strong. Jesus shows no concern toward the crowd following her; His focus is now fully on His purpose. He is preparing the sisters for the miracle that will bless them beyond imagination, and reveal to everyone present that He is undoubtedly God in the flesh. Verse 33:**

***When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept.***

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**This is where today’s Gospel reading ends; as you know, this is not where the story ends. But one week away from Palm Sunday, it is a great place to press the “pause” button. That’s what was forced on Jesus during the last week He would spend in Jerusalem.**

**The Greek word for Mary’s weeping, and her fellow mourners’ weeping is the word for the customary loud lamenting that was tradition for the Jews. The word for Jesus’ weeping is a different Greek term. Edakrusen.**  (E-dock-ru-zen) **It indicates genuine grief, but it also has an edge of irritation and restrained anger.**

**And within this one word, and within this shortest sentence and verse in the Bible—*Jesus wept*—is our lesson for today. When you and I hurt, no matter whether it is what others would judge is a little deal or a huge crisis, whether others would deem it self-inflicted or victimization, our Heavenly Father through His Son Jesus, cares for us with genuine and sincere care. He is sorry for us and has mercy on us with divine agape love. In our times of need, He comes to us to be present with us, especially in the means of such grace that He has instituted for this very purpose, in His Word and in the Sacraments. We, like these two sisters, are asked to trust Him in His timing and in the manner of His help and care. He will not let us down.**

**And Jesus shows us that perfect love in that He weeps for us. He weeps for you.**

**Edakrusen. It is a weeping with edginess that sees the terror and the destruction of sin, of death, and of the devil, and is just as angry towards it as when it first appeared in the Garden of Eden. It is comforting to know that God despises at His core all the things that harm His children. It is also a weeping that fully empathizes with us, and knows what is best for us, and has already devised the rescue and salvation that lifts us above it, preserving us for eternal life.**

**Yes, truly, guaranteed, absolutely. . . Jesus weeps for you. Amen.**



Lazarus, four days dead and buried, resurrected by Jesus, back to this world

[Reverend William R. Marler, Fifth Sunday in Lent, *anno Domini* 2020]