

Service for Week 16th -22nd March

2026 Fifth Sunday in Lent By

Chaplain Andy



Our Opening Prayer

Loving God, we pray for those sick in body, or disturbed and troubled in mind. Bring to them your healing touch and renewing grace.

Amen

Say to yourself - The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven

Amen

Bible Reading John 11 : 1-6, 11-16,32-45

Now a man named Lazarus was sick.

He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

In 11:11, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his

disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

11:32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe

that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Therefore, many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.

Holy words, Holy Wisdom,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

In our reading it seems that Jesus deliberately waited until Lazarus had died before going to Bethany to see him. But Jesus had delayed going there for a reason as he told the disciples "I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe." Because of the disciple's weak belief, it was necessary for Jesus to convince the disciples that he really was not only the man they knew and loved but was the Son of God -of God.

Jesus did this through performing what we describe as miracles that went against the natural order. He showed them that he had power over nature when he walked on water and calmed the storm. He demonstrated his power of healing when he caused the blind to see and the lame to walk. And Jesus brought back Lazarus from the dead to show the disciples, and us that through God he has the power and authority over life and death.

These verses from John's gospel are some of my most favorite because of the depth of love it shows that Jesus had for that family of Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha. It is a love that God has for each one of us whatever our circumstances. Even when we may feel that things are hopeless and God has forsaken and given up on us, we know that he never gives up. Mary could not believe that someone who had died four days ago could be brought back from the dead. Jesus was 'deeply moved in spirit and troubled.' He wept when he went to the tomb.

God, through Jesus is moved in spirit when we are in distress and cannot see a way ahead. But he calls us by name and calls us forward like he did to Lazarus. As Paul writes in Romans - I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen

Our Closing Prayer

Living God, when limitations or disabilities make my life especially hard, remind me that you love and value me, not for I can do, but for who I am.

Amen.

Prayer inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett