

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

LOOK

Share a story about losing a loved one. What stands out for you? What did you learn about your faith? How did your life change because of this loss?

BOOK

John 11:32-44

³²When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.

³⁴He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵Jesus began to weep. ³⁶So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the

sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

- 1) Common belief in biblical times was that the spirit hovered over the body of the dead for three days before departing. What is the significance of Lazarus having been dead for four days? Why the earthy details about stench?
- 2) Jesus wept. What does this tell us about the humanity of Jesus? About his divinity?
- 3) What is the significance of Jesus asking the community to unbind Lazarus? Does Jesus need the crowd to finish the miracle?
- 4) In the passage immediately before this one, Jesus asks Martha if she believes him when he says that he is resurrection and life. Martha says she believes in resurrection at the last day. How does Jesus respond? Does Martha understand what Jesus can do? Do we?

TOOK

- 1) This story shows us that grieving is a natural and loving response to loss. However, scripture warns us not to grieve "as those who have no hope". How does the hope of resurrection inform our grief without negating it?
- 2) Each week we profess our belief in the 'communion of saints'. How do you understand the communion of saints? How does our Eucharist connect us with saints past and future?

- 3) "Death ends a life, not a relationship." Discuss.
- 4) How does our living reflect our belief in our resurrection?
- 5) What part of you, or your life, or faith, might be in the tomb? What part seems dead or beyond repair? What part is stinking? How might God be ready and able to bring new life?
- 6) Jesus requires the help of community to unbind Lazarus once he is raised. How do we help one another become unbound in our covenant community? Roll away stones? Remove grave clothes? Witness to the restorative power of Jesus?

Dearly Beloved,

Grace and Peace to you.

I praise the Saints who have graced us:
the Great Saints, Francis and Teresa and the gang;
but especially the Lesser Saints, those who have humbly, perhaps unknowingly, shed light in our lives.
I am grateful for the people who have blessed you—yes, you, dear reader, who have loved you more than necessary, who have taught you and forgiven you

and shown you what love is possible.
I give thanks for those who endured silently
and those who showed you how to rise up and shout.
I bless those who didn't yell at you, and showed you a new path.
I thank God for the saints whose brokenness,
whose imperfections, faults and failures
showed you what a glorious light can shine
in a cracked lantern.
For all who have helped you know your belovedness
I give thanks, because now you, dear one,
are sanctified, too: chosen as Love's vessel,
no more deserving or adequate or worthy than others,
but loved, and chosen as Love's vessel.
May you know with certainty that you can't know
who you have blessed, but that, like all Saints,
you have.

Deep Blessings,
Pastor Steve

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Unfolding Light
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