

A brief reflection on Hope: March 29, 2020

Based on the gospel of John, chapter 11, verses 1-45: The raising of Lazarus.

While this story in John's gospel is called the "raising of Lazarus," it's really the story of Jesus' overwhelming humanity and his true divinity.

There are many sub-plots to this scripture reading:

- There is grief. Martha and Mary's beloved brother Lazarus dies.
 - We grieve too when a loved one dies.
- There is prayer. We overhear Jesus praying to the Father in this story.
 - We pray as well.
- There is faith. Jesus asking Martha, "Do you believe?"
 - Many times, we hear from Jesus just how important it is for us to believe.
- And there is HOPE! And there is LOVE!

Today, we will first focus on Hope—the Hope we have in Christ.

Our Hope begins as we listen to what Martha says to Jesus:

"If you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Martha's sister Mary will also say this to Jesus. They are both grieving the loss of their brother.

But before we judge Martha and Mary too harshly for speaking to Jesus with those words, isn't it true that when we experience grief, we also wonder where God was. We also say or we think to ourselves, *"If you had been here, Lord, this wouldn't have happened?"*

Jesus doesn't answer the "if you had been here" comments. Jesus wants Mary and Martha [and us] to know a higher truth. The higher truth is that Jesus is Lord of all, including life and death.

And here is our Hope.

Jesus tells Martha that Lazarus will rise again. Martha affirms that she does believe in the resurrection on the last day. Jesus reveals His divine nature by saying to Martha that He is the “resurrection and the life.”

By His resurrection, Jesus is saying our future destiny is to be raised and live with Him. By saying He is the life; Christ is saying we don’t have to wait until death. Christ is present with us now, and brings comforts to us now.

Then Jesus asks Martha, do you believe this? And we hear Martha’s incredible confession that Jesus is the Messiah. And then her sister Mary comes to Jesus weeping.

Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, his friends.

Jesus’ humanity comes through in these verses from John. Jesus is deeply moved when Mary is weeping. In that phrase, “deeply disturbed in spirit and deeply moved”—we get a sense of Jesus being shaken to the core. And Jesus begins to weep too. Jesus weeps for the death of his friend Lazarus, but Jesus knows, that in a sense, his own death is not far off. Jesus was shaken and greatly disturbed by the power that death holds over us even now—a power that Jesus overcomes by his own resurrection on Easter morning.

Mary, however, in that moment, was grieving for her brother. When we cry out to God out of the depths of our own grief, it’s okay for us to weep and lament. We have a Savior who loves us, comes to us, and who weeps along with us.

Jesus then commands Lazarus to come out. And Lazarus comes out.



And here is God’s overwhelming LOVE for us!!

I believe Jesus weeps for us today as well.

Jesus weeps for us as we experience this terrible world-wide virus.

As a church, and as individuals, Jesus invites us to pray for the sick, especially those sick with the Coronavirus.

- We pray for a cure and a vaccine.
- We pray for enough food for all.
- We pray for those out of work.
- We pray for all families, especially families with children.

We also pray those who are poor, and those who are hungry.

We ask O Lord, for your help in feeding those who are hungry in our community. This weekend, we will serve our neighbors and protect them from this virus by having a drive-thru food pantry at St. John Vianney. It may not go perfectly well, but Lord, we do this in Your Name, so Your people may be feed. Be with us Lord.

- We also pray for those who are isolated and lonely.
- Lord, direct our paths to call them with words of comfort.

Lord, hear our prayers, both spoken and unspoken. Cut short this time of suffering, O Lord, so that we, Your people, the sheep of Your pasture, can once again gather together in church and then, as a community, praise You and bless You!

O Lord, when this virus is contained and/or eradicated, strengthen us to never forget. Strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit to be better people to one another—more forgiving, more tolerant, more loving, and more like You, O Lord. And strengthen us and teach us to always turn to You, O Lord, in times of crisis and need. For YOU are Our God!

For You sent Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Christ rose again on the third day, so that we can one day have eternal life with HIM!

Jesus is our hope. Always was our hope, and always will be. For...
...Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Jesus is Lord!

Jesus DOES LOVE US. Always has, and always will!

Jesus understands our fears, our worries, our grief, mourning and suffering, and cries along with us.

- Jesus is our comfort now, and is our future destiny.
- Lord, heal us! Never leave us, O Lord.
- Bring us Your Light and Life.

IN YOUR HOLY NAME, WE PRAY.

Amen