

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

March 29, 2020

The Fifth Sunday of Lent

Ezekiel 37:12-14 † Romans 8:8-11 † John 11:25-26

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There's More to This Than Meets the Eye

Jesus did much of his teachings through stories and parables. The parables are designed to communicate a prophetic message. He disturbs his listeners; there are no pat answers.

In today's story, Lazarus has died. Martha and others believed that had he arrived on time, Jesus could have prevented Lazarus's death or raised him up immediately. Martha expresses what the gathered community was thinking. "If Jesus brings eternal life, why are believers dying?"

John's gospel gives some challenging responses. Jesus, raising Lazarus up after four days in the tomb, stirred admiration in some. Others who had come to be with Martha and Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. Some saw how Jesus loved Lazarus. Others (mainly the chief priests and Pharisees) felt this was the last straw. From that day on they planned to put him to death. There are many levels of understanding.

Martha represents the gathered community with real but inadequate faith when she asks, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus corrects this misunderstanding. Jesus is indeed "the resurrection and the life," but resurrection does not mean restoring life to a corpse, it entails a **transformation of life**. Jesus asks Martha, "Do you believe me?" Martha responds for all believers, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, coming into the world."

Just as Ezekiel promises believers to open their graves and raise them up, Jesus promises that death is a passage way to a transformed life, one of communion with God forever. No need to fear.

