

3/22/26
5th Sunday in Lent
For Group Meetings from March 15th – March 21st

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:

Share: How did last week's scripture (John 9:1-41) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: John 11:1-45

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What message do Mary and Martha send to Jesus about Lazarus?
2. How does Jesus respond when he first hears that Lazarus is sick?
3. What statements does Jesus make about himself in this passage?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. When have you been frustrated by the feeling that something important needs to happen and yet nothing seems to be happening? Who or what was helpful during that time?
2. When have you seen grief and hope exist at the same time?
3. When have you had to trust Jesus even when circumstances made it difficult?

Memorize this verse: "Jesus began to weep." (John 9:35) Where or how have you witnessed the power of vulnerability lately?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 130. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

The familiar story of Lazarus has three major movements. The first is heartache. Not just the heartache of Lazarus' death, which was undoubtedly significant, but also the particular heartache of Jesus' delay. Whatever his motives, Jesus' delay intensifies the pain of Martha and Mary, both of whom begin their interactions with him by sharing their distress and perhaps even accusation using the exact same words: "Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died". This is pain, disappointment, and hurt is something that every single one of us has experienced at some time in our lives. The second element of this story is miracle. It comes first as a promise, though only later does the force of that promise take hold. When Jesus initially declares that Lazarus will be raised, Martha assumes he is speaking about the promised resurrection of all at the end of time and she gives her affirmation in words that sound like they come out of a first-century creed: "Yes, Lord, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection of the last day." But Jesus means something more, something immediate, contending that the life he offers is not merely an end-times promise but something that makes a difference here and now. And that promise provokes from Martha the confession that Jesus is Messiah reserved only for Peter in the other gospels.

The miracle promised earlier in the story comes to fruition when Jesus comes to Lazarus' tomb. One detects that he is not necessarily a welcome presence. Not only did both sisters confront him with their disappointment, but the crowd also voices their belief that if Jesus had cared more, he would have come sooner and thereby averted this tragedy. Yet in the very midst of this disappointment and doubt, Jesus surprises them all, first with his command to remove the stone to Lazarus' tomb and, second, with his call for Lazarus to come out. And Lazarus does. Interestingly, that miracle provokes different reactions. Many of those present come to believe in Jesus. But in the verses that follow, this same miracle prompts those who oppose him to plot his death. I find it striking that even something that would seem as clear-cut as raising someone from the dead is not unambiguous. It demands interpretation, and while some are comforted and spurred to faith by Jesus' miracle, others are threatened and hardened in their opposition. Further, I've wondered if this is always the way it is with God's activity. That is, simply because God's activity will change us, it will comfort some and threaten others. Even the promise of new life comes only as good news to those who recognizes that the old life is not enough and only threatens or upsets those who don't want to change.

It would be tempting to end here, if only because there's a lot to unpack in Jesus' life-changing but disruptive miracle. But the passage goes on to one further move: invitation. That is, even while the action to raise Lazarus from the dead is clearly and decisively Jesus', he invites those around him to participate: "Unbind him and let him go". I will confess that this is the part of the story that really grabbed my attention this week. Jesus did not have to issue that command. He might have gone over to Lazarus himself and unwrapped him, then given him a heartfelt and congratulatory smack on the back on his return from the dead. But rather than linger in the limelight of his miracle, Jesus invites those around him to get involved, to play a part in seeing this miracle move forward. I think the same is true with us. We are not only called to be witnesses of God's action in our lives, but also to be changed by what we see and thereby invited into the ongoing reality of what God is doing. God does the miracle, but God also gives us a part to play as it unfolds in our life.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen