

Our Sunday Readings

EZEKIEL 37:12-14
 PSALM 130:1-8
 ROMANS 8:8-11
 JOHN 11:1-45
 (or 11:3-7,17,20-27,33b-45)

I Am the Lord

EZEKIEL 37:12-14

1. For whom is Ezekiel prophesying?
2. What all might the graves represent?
3. How do you think Ezekiel felt about proclaiming this to the people?
4. What are all the ways the people might have reacted to this prophesy?
5. Are there ways this prophesy could have changed how people lived?
6. How do you respond to this prophecy?

THE FIRST READING

New life in those old bones

God called Ezekiel to prophesy when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Jerusalem and deported Israelites from their homeland, making them live in Babylon. The terrible events surrounding the Babylonian Exile crushed the hope and faith of God's people.

Ezekiel has a vision of God's people as scattered bones (37:1f). God vows that one day he will raise the people up, reunify them, and restore them to their homeland.

*"I am the resurrection
and the life..."*

PRAYER

Father of Life,
 Lord of the living,
 just as your Son called Lazarus forth from the tomb, so he calls us to step out of everything that confines and destroys us.
 Revive our sense of evil
 so that we will confess the ways
 we are bound by sin.
 Call us forth to proclaim your saving power,
 and command us to rise above all that wounds,
 corrupts, and kills.
 Liberate all who are entombed
 by fear and despair.
 Enliven our desire for justice, healing, and
 peace.
 Free us from the death-dealing power of sin
 so that we may lead new lives in Christ.
 Amen.

JOHN 11:1-45

Reading closely

1. What relationship does Jesus seem to have with this family?
2. Why do you think the sisters send word to Jesus that Lazarus is ill?
3. What does Jesus say will happen?
4. Why do you think Jesus waits for two days?
5. What are the disciples worried about?
6. How do the disciples misunderstand Jesus?
7. Why do you think Mary doesn't go out right away to greet Jesus?
8. What all might Martha be thinking and feeling?
9. What does Martha seem to believe about Jesus?
10. How does Mary greet Jesus?
11. Why do you think Jesus wept?
12. What might people have thought and felt when Jesus commanded that the tomb be opened?
13. How would you have reacted when Lazarus emerged from the tomb?

Living the word

14. What part of the story most resonates with you? Why?
15. Imagine Jesus calling you forth from the tomb.
 - a. What does your tomb represent?
 - b. How did you become entombed?
 - c. How does Jesus call you forth?
 - d. Do you want to come out of your tomb?
16. Have your Lenten promises loosened your bonds of sin?

THE GOSPEL READING

The last sign

The raising of Lazarus is the last and greatest sign that Jesus works before his crucifixion and resurrection. The one who is living water (Jn 4), bread of life (Jn 6), and light of the world (Jn 9) here restores physical life, thus revealing in the clearest, most unmistakable way yet that he is eternal life for all who believe.

Returning to Jerusalem (vv. 1-16)

Toward the end of John 10 people tried to arrest Jesus while he was in Jerusalem. By returning there, Jesus knowingly faces death. Ironically, by bringing

Lazarus back to life, Jesus provokes his enemies to put him, the life-giver, to death (11:46f). Thomas doesn't yet understand that Jesus offers eternal life, but he believes enough to follow Jesus into death (v.16).

Glorifying God (v. 4)

Jesus loves Lazarus, but he doesn't hurry to his friend because he wants to glorify his Father. After Jesus brings Lazarus back to life, more people will believe that Jesus is God's Son, sent by God to offer eternal life to all who believe in him (vv.4,45). This is the *work* Jesus has come to do, and it's more important than sparing his friends a time of grief (vv.5-6).

Day vs. night (vv. 9-10)

Those *who walk during the day* are people who live in the light, which is Jesus. Those who reject this light stumble about in the darkness of the night. These people remain subject to sin and death.

Meeting the mourners (vv. 20-40)

Jesus breaks the power of sin and evil while bringing people to a clearer understanding of who he is. Martha believes Jesus is *Lord, Messiah*, and even *Son of God*, but she thinks Jesus will bring people to new life at some point in the future; she doesn't yet understand that Jesus brings people into eternal life right now. Mary as well as some of the Jews who've come to console Mary and Martha think similarly.

Waking Lazarus (vv. 41-44)

Jesus received life and power from his Father and obeys God in everything. Therefore, Jesus only has to thank his Father for the work entrusted to him; he doesn't have to ask for anything. Because Jesus perfectly obeys his Father, he knows God will do whatever he asks.

Lazarus is wrapped in burial cloths. Jesus will also be wrapped in such cloths after his crucifixion. Lazarus, however, needs help to become free from them. Jesus needs no such help because he has power over sin and death (Jn 20:6-7).