

“Lazarus, Come out”

Friends, on this Fifth Sunday of Lent, our Gospel is John’s story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

But before we start reflecting on Lazarus’ story, Liturgy invites us to contemplate Ezekiel’s vision. He sees a vast field of dried bones, that represents the low morale of the people. The Lord breezes his spirit upon them and they receive flesh and raise as a mighty army. This is symbol of ‘God reviving Israel’, when Lord says: “I will open your graves and have you rise from them”.

We are all haunted by death, the fear of death. Whatever you have achieved in your life, no matter what we accomplish in this life, it all will be swallowed up in our death. In reality, we experience as if, the death has the final say. But does death have the final say?

It is here that we listen the Lord saying: “I will open your graves and have you rise up”. Here, the true God, the God of Israel is speaking to us. God, who does not think that the death has the final say. The fear of death broods over the whole of our life. But the God of Israel has the Lordship over all powers of death, because he is the *God of the living and the dead*. He does mean to bring us out of our graves, and back to life again, life that is indestructible.

In today’ gospel, we see the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy. Jesus told his disciples: our beloved friend Lazarus is sleeping, but I am going to wake him up. Those who are around know, Lazarus is dead, but by saying this, Jesus is actually relativizing the power of death. He is saying: Sleep is not the finality, not the end. Death is like a sleep, from which he will wake us up. No matter, how final we think death is, God is more powerful. Martha comes and tells: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died”.

Friends, in this phrase, can we not hear an overtone of what everybody would be saying at some point in their life to God, when someone they love dies? It is the broken human heart, in the presence of death of some loved ones, painfully questioning. Lord, why did you allow this to happen, why did you permit this?

Jesus answers Martha: “Yes, your brother will rise again”. Martha tells the Lord: I know he will rise in the resurrection of the last day. Well, then Jesus affirmed: “I am the resurrection and life”; to which she responds: “Yes Lord, I have come to believe that you are Christ, the son of God”. Friends, here we see, the movement of her soul toward deeper and deeper faith in the power of God over death.

Friends, don't think of our God only in philosophical principles. At the tomb, we see a strong emotional distress of Jesus. He is deeply moved into tears. We never read in the bible that Jesus laughed. But, at the death of his friend L, Jesus is heartbroken. Those around him commenting: See how much he loved him!

The God of bible is the one who entered our life of suffering. Particularly, into the anguish at the experience of death. The tears of Jesus are tears of God. His heart is broken when our heart is broken. Jesus calls out “Lazarus, come out”. God's words are not just descriptive, it is creative. It makes things happen. He comes out. Untie him, let him go free- says Jesus. Here, we see the liberating power of Christ. Yes, *“I will open your graves and have you rise up from there”*.

Are we not often tied up by many things? Things that frighten us; above all the fear of death. One day, we all will hear the same voice that Lazarus heard, calling forth to come out and have us rise from there. The Christ who wants to liberate us from all our bondages, all that ties us down, forever. This is the hope Lazarus story brings us.