

I am the Resurrection and the Life

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Fifth Sunday in Lent) is John 11:17-27, 38-53. This text has three narratives: Jesus' dialog with Martha at the death of her brother Lazarus, the rising of Lazarus and the plot to kill Jesus.

As Jesus was nearing Jerusalem leading to his death on the cross, he got word that his friend Lazarus was very ill. In fact Lazarus had died and Jesus told his disciples as much. On arrival to Bethany Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. When Martha heard that Jesus had come, she quickly approached him. Her confidence and trust was centered on Jesus the miracle worker who might have prevented Lazarus' death. Jesus moves her to seeing

him as the Savior of the world and the resurrection and life of eternity. Jesus further changes Martha's faith in him as the Son of God and redeemer of the world.

In the second segment of our text, we see Jesus going with the family and the crowd to the tomb which was a cave. When Jesus urges that the stone be removed, Martha again shows her lack of understanding of Jesus the Savior come to redeem the world. She points to the fact that the body would now give off an odor. Jesus, again, reminds Martha that she would see the glory of God soon.

Jesus was increasingly patient with Martha as she tried to get her head around what Jesus was trying to teach her. She like her fellow Jews was looking for an earthly savior who would take care of all kinds of physical ailments and worldly situations. Too many times, we can fall into a pattern of seeing God as our human dispenser of things that make our daily life better.

But in our text Jesus shows Martha and us that he has much better things (spiritual blessings) for us here on earth and in eternity. Verse 41 tells us that he "*lifted his eyes.*" Jesus prays, making clear that this act is a work given him by the Father who sent him. Affected through the Word of Christ, this miracle, as well as his own resurrection, most vividly portrays the glory of his Godhead.

What comes from above in the form of earthly and heavenly godsend is to our utmost benefit both here on earth as well as the blessings of eternity.

We are told: "*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*" (Hebrews 4:12). This is illustrated in the third part of our reading. His miracles and teaching strengthened the faith of many but also offended those who wanted God to be what their minds desired. And so our text ends with "*they made plans to put him to death.*" His death would bring the greatest boon to those who have faith in Jesus the resurrection and life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, draw me ever closer to you through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen. (TLSB)