

Lent 5—Sunday, April 7

Isaiah 43:16-21

¹⁶Thus says the Lord,
 who makes a way in the sea,
 a path in the mighty waters,
¹⁷who brings out chariot and horse,
 army and warrior;
 they lie down, they cannot rise,
 they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
¹⁸Do not remember the former things,
 or consider the things of old.
¹⁹I am about to do a new thing;

now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
 I will make a way in the wilderness
 and rivers in the desert.
²⁰The wild animals will honor me,
 the jackals and the ostriches;
 for I give water in the wilderness,
 rivers in the desert,
 to give drink to my chosen people,
²¹the people whom I formed for myself
 so that they might declare my praise.

Psalm 126

¹When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
 we were like those who dream.
²Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
 and our tongue with shouts of joy;
 then it was said among the nations,
 “The Lord has done great things for them.”
³The Lord has done great things for us,
 and we rejoiced.

⁴Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
 like the watercourses in the Negeb.
⁵May those who sow in tears
 reap with shouts of joy.
⁶Those who go out weeping,
 bearing the seed for sowing,
 shall come home with shouts of joy,
 carrying their sheaves.

John 11:1-44

¹Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴But when Jesus heard it, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” ⁵Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” ⁸The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and

are you going there again?” ⁹Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.” ¹¹After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” ¹²The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” ¹³Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” ¹⁶Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

¹⁷When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

²⁸When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³²When Mary

came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵Jesus began to weep. ³⁶So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Questions

Overall Lent Questions:

Before you read today, check yourself -

1. How do you feel about Lent?/How are feeling about this Lenten season?
2. How do you feel walking with Jesus on his journey through this time of his suffering, betrayal, and death? How do you feel walking with those around you on your Lenten journey?
3. What do you want from Jesus this Lent? Be specific.
4. What do you think Jesus wants for/from you during Lent?

Entering the Text:

1. What word/phrase stands out to you?
2. What do these texts say about who God is?
3. What do these texts say about who we are?
4. What do these texts say about our relationship - or lack thereof - with God?
5. What good news do you hear

Digging Deeper:

1. What has your experience with death been? How has that shaped you/your faith?
2. Mary and Martha are on the verge of trusting/believing that Jesus truly is the resurrection and the life. Yet, they are keenly aware that their brother is dead and, understandably, have doubts. What challenges/doubts do you face in trusting/believing that Jesus is the resurrection and the life?
3. When Jesus responds to Martha, he offers her an answer in response to her grief. In contrast, when Jesus answers Mary, he offers her no words and weeps with her in compassion. What answers do you long for? What do you wish Jesus would tell you? How might Jesus be offering you comfort? Which is more "satisfying" to you: answers or comfort? How or when have you experienced the compassion of Jesus?
4. Put yourself in the position of Lazarus. You are bound. What are those rags that bind you and keep you from experiencing the life that Jesus is calling you to?
5. What does it mean to you to be brought back to life?

Prayer of the Week:

Jesus, call me forth from the tomb of my timidity and give me the courage to trust you as the source of all life. I hear your assurances, offering me life, and want to believe. Help my unbelief. Revive my spirit. Revive my belief. Revive my devotion to you until, once again, my heart beats in sync with yours. Unbind me so that I might experience your compassion for my frailties; and allow me to hear your Word of Life in the depth of my being. In Jesus' name, who has come to save and redeem me, I pray. Amen.