

“If You Had Been Here”

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John 11.1-45

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Westby & Viroqua UMC

Arriving at the height of Lenten time and approaching the annual commemoration of Holy Week, the Church's liturgy proposes for us today an approach to the reality of death and the return to life, in anticipation of the great celebration of the Easter of the Lord, to which Christians are united by baptism. This approach is carried out in a complementary way, although different, by the three texts that we have heard.

In the first lesson, the prophet Ezekiel tells us about that vision he had, in which God took him to a "valley of dry bones" and asked him about the possibility of bringing them back to life. The prophet witnesses, firsthand, how this is carried out, how the bones are joined together and are covered with flesh, sinew, and skin, to conclude by giving them the breath of life that revived them. At the end of the story, it is God himself who explains to the prophet that he will do the same with the people of Israel who feel lost and without hope; he will bring them back to life and take them back to the land from which they were taken.

The feeling of being lost and hopeless is more common than we think: many of us have felt that the efforts we make have no reward; sometimes the things we project don't turn out as well as we planned; we can feel frustrated by an unfair, violent and unequal social environment; others of us are powerless in the face of the merciless devastation of the environment. Despite all this and more, the Lord reminds us today of the promise of life, encourages us in hope and shows us the way with his light, so that we do not feel lost and move on with our own lives, also helping to change the lives of others and the entire world. On this day the Lord invites us to keep in mind that those difficult moments that we live are the occasion for him to show his glory in us; that we do not have to feel hopeless because if he carried out great works in the people of Israel, he will also carry them out in us and, above all, he will make us means so that this world is transformed by his redeeming love.

The apostle Paul, for his part, presents death to us as contrary to life and peace, and these as consequences of the actions carried out by individuals. Those who allow themselves to be guided by the breath of life, that is, by that Spirit of God who is capable of reviving dry bones, belong to Christ and will be led to life and peace; while

those who allow themselves to be guided by weak nature will be led to death. We could, perhaps, carry out an examination of conscience in the personal and social spheres to identify what motivates our actions, if the Spirit or weak nature. If it is the Spirit we will carry out works of life, which will be evidenced in the respect for the other, their property and their ideas, in the availability to offer help to those who need it, in the tendency to always do the right thing even when there is no one. I watched; On the contrary, if our actions are guided by the weak nature, we will avoid any effort, we will not respect the other, his property and ideas, we will not be willing to help but we will try to take advantage of others and we will only do the right thing when we have someone to help. our side watching our actions.

Finally, the Gospel of John presents one of the best-known stories in all of Sacred Scripture: Jesus brings Lazarus back to life. It is worth starting here from a difference. It is not the same thing that will happen with Jesus. While Lazarus, thanks to the miracle worked by Jesus Christ, comes out of the tomb and continues his mortal life until finally, and by the normal cycle of life, he returns to death, in the case of Jesus, he returns to the life of perfect form, defeating death once and for all, and that is why death no longer has power over him, who will return as Judge of all human beings, both the living and the dead. In this way, we could say that, in the case of Lazarus, there is a "resuscitation", a return to life that will complete its normal cycle when he dies again, but in Jesus, there is the Resurrection, the definitive victory over the death, the eternal life of which we Christians participate through baptism.

The case of Lázaro is particular, he is a friend of Jesus, very loved within his community, like his sisters Marta and María. It was expected that Jesus, upon receiving the news of his friend's illness, would immediately go to attend to him, however, as the text narrates, Jesus did not go to meet him while he was still alive. The illness and subsequent death of Lazarus were the occasion for God to show his glory by bringing him back to life, thus demonstrating a fundamental reality in Christianity: death is not something definitive before which one must fear because it is definitive, but God, made man in Jesus, is capable of destroying sin and also death.

Having a deep friendship with Jesus does not mean that we are not going to have difficulties, on the contrary, we are going to have them and much more to the extent that, guided by the Gospel, we try to do things in the best possible way; however, we must bear in mind that this also implies that these difficulties will be an occasion for God

to show his glory in us, they will be a means for God to act with all his power, they will be the possibility for us to shine by acting as Christians .

In the final stretch of this Lent, let us ask the Lord that while we advance along the path of this life waiting for eternity, we may be builders, with our actions, of works of life and peace, in such a way that, when celebrating Easter later, let us show the Spirit of God that lives and acts in each one of us. To that extent, it will be worth being a Christian because God acts and lives in us.