

Sermon - done on Zoom - live-streaming!

29th March

John 11: 1-45

Lazarus

Its 2 weeks before the passover
Or it could be - John's chronology is not the same as the other gospels

And Jesus is lying low, trying to avoid being arrested, sneaking into Jerusalem

And Jesus is told that his friend Lazarus is ill.

And we're told that this Lazarus is the brother of Mary and Martha, the same Mary that poured perfume on Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair..

And Jesus says, its ok, I'll go later, and stayed where he was 2 days.

Then Jesus says - right, lets go see Lazarus - he's fallen asleep
and the disciples are like - well if he's sleeping he'll get better

and Jesus is like - no I meant - Lazarus is dead, but I'm glad I wasn't there, so you might believe...

So when they get to the little village of Bethany, which is just a few kilometres outside Jerusalem, about as far as Fordingbridge or Cranborne. The whole town have come out - and they're saying - Lazarus is dead 4 days.

Martha comes out, but not Mary
and she says - if you'd been here, he wouldn't have died

if only

but Jesus says - your brother will rise again
- this is seriously crazy - the people are saying he's dead, there's the tomb..

and Martha says - well I know he'll rise on the last day - which is quite a big step for her to say - not all jews believed in life after death
and Jesus says - i am the resurrection and the life - if yo believe in me, you'll live

and Martha says - I believe you are the Christ, the messiah.

So John never has Peter's confession - you are the messiah - but he does have Martha - openly confessing - you are the one we've waited for.

So now, Mary is called - the Teacher is asking for you
and Mary gets up and they think she's going to the tomb, but she goes to Jesus
(Johns' point is, she's not going to the place of death, but to the one of life)

and guess what Mary's first words are -

"if you'd been here, he wouldn't have died"

you can tell the sisters have been saying this to themselves over and over in the last 4 days - trying to comfort themselves or just work it out - if you'd been here, he wouldn't have died

And this is when Jesus loses it - he sees his dear friends all weeping, and he weeps with them too.

Then he does the most crazy thing - take away the stone

Lord says Martha, ever the practical one - there will be a smell by now!

and Jesus says - just believe

And then he prays - Thank you for hearing me.. and I'm saying this so that those around can hear it and they can believe.

And then he says - Come out...

its a spine chilling moment. This man has been dead, they've all seen it, what does Jesus think he's doing - it'll ruin his reputation... you've got to be in the moment to feel it...

and then Lazarus comes out - all with bandages on his head and hands and feet... like a mummy!

And Jesus says - take off the grave clothes..

— — —

And if it was Hollywood, or a book you or I wrote - we'd be saying - and there was hugs, and a party and Martha said this, and Mary said that...

but because this is the bible, and paper, or vellum was mighty expensive, and they're not writing this for entertainment or for us to know what Martha and Mary felt like (can you imagine the news reporter - how are you feeling now you're brothers' come back to life?)

its written so that you believe.

so the next verse is - Some saw all this and believe,
but others went to the Pharisees and the chief priests said - its better for him to die, let's plot to kill him.

And I wonder if Lazarus changed his name - if this was written after, perhaps he became know as Lazarus, cos Lazarus means - God has helped - you see - he'd died and God had helped him.

And I just want to end by saying.. here's a story about God's amazing power in Jesus about the most remarkable and unexpected and unlikely thing to happen - someone to come back to life...

its huge - who does Jesus think he is - who is Jesus - that he brings people to life..

could he do that with me? is he really who he says he is.. is there hope, even when I thought it was gone, even when it seemed impossible, as impossible as death...

no matter what is happening - Jesus is alive, and is able, to hear and to answer, and to bring all kinds of life to things.