

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent, March 26, 2023

Text: John 11:25-26

*Jesus Wept.*

*"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" – John 11: 25-26*

Teaching children or youth about dying is probably one of the hardest concepts to do in church, overnight camp, or youth retreats. The task is to instruct while not frightening young people, who feel they have their whole lives before them. The truth is, most of us do not like to talk about dying, whether we are young or not, yet the Bible is full of very complicated stories about death, from babies to young adults to the very old. And, is it not also full of complicated stories of resurrection and life?

This week's readings are all about death and how God is able to breathe new life into dry bones, as in Ezekial 37, and to call Lazarus from the grave, as in John 11. We read here that "Jesus wept." To understand death is to understand the heartache that accompanies death. Recently, I watched a close family member fight against death and struggle until the end, and I am struck by how Mary and Martha must have felt that Jesus was not there to assist Lazarus when he was alive and struggling. Weeping comes with loss, and to hear Jesus say their "brother will rise again," after being in a grave for four days, where there would surely be a stench in the air and a decay of body, must have been more than these sisters could bear. Yet, when Jesus commanded Lazarus to "come out" and "take off the grave," he did!

Let us remember that as we weep, Jesus wept, too. We are commanded to believe in Jesus so that we may never die. Adding everlasting life to lessons about dying takes out the fear and calls us to see the glory of God.

Prayer: God of everlasting life, when we begin to fear death, even as we weep during a loss, strengthen us with the reassurance that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. For those who believe, we shall never die. – AMEN



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