

Sermon Theme

At Lazarus' tomb, Jesus speaks life into death and calls people forward from what binds them. Lent reaches its tension point here, naming grief, delay, and fear, while declaring that resurrection power is already at work, even before the cross.

Big Idea

Jesus does not stand far off from grief and loss. He enters it, weeps in it, and then speaks life into what seems final. His call to Lazarus, "Come out," is also a word for us when fear, sorrow, shame, or despair have wrapped themselves around our lives.

Key Truths from the Passage

Jesus loves Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, yet He delays coming. His delay is not indifference. Faith can still ask hard questions. Martha and Mary both tell Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here..." Jesus does not rush past sorrow. He sees, He feels, and He weeps. Jesus does not only teach resurrection. He is the resurrection and the life. When Jesus calls Lazarus out, He shows that death does not have the last word. After Lazarus comes out, the community is told to unbind him. New life is God's gift, but the people of God help one another walk in freedom.

Where the Sermon Begins

This story opens with a sick man, two worried sisters, and a Savior who does not come when they want Him to. That is where the tension begins. Most of us understand that kind of tension because we know what it is to pray and wait. We know what it is to believe Jesus loves us and still wonder why help feels delayed.

John makes a point of saying Jesus loved this family. Then Jesus stays where He is two more days. That detail matters because it tells us God's delay is not the same thing as God's absence. It may not feel that way in the moment, but this passage reminds us that Jesus is still at work even when we do not yet understand what He is doing.

A Word About Grief

Mary and Martha both say the same thing to Jesus: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Those words are full of faith and pain at the same time. They still call Him Lord, but they do not hide their hurt. That is one of the gifts of this passage. It gives believers permission to be honest. Jesus does not correct their sorrow. He does not shame their questions. He does not tell them to stop crying and be more spiritual. Instead, He meets them in their grief. He listens. He stays present. He weeps.

That shortest verse, "Jesus wept," carries enormous weight. Jesus knows He is about to raise Lazarus, and He still weeps. That means He is not detached from human pain. He is not cold or removed. He enters sorrow with love and compassion. He does not stand at a distance from the tombs in our lives.

The Heart of the Passage

In His conversation with Martha, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." That is the center of the chapter. He does not simply promise that resurrection will happen someday. He says resurrection is standing right in front of her. Life is not merely an idea or a future event. Life is found in Him. That matters because our hope is not built on everything working out quickly. Our hope is not built on avoiding grief. Our hope is not built on our ability to explain God's timing. Our hope is built on Jesus, who is Himself the resurrection and the life.

At the Tomb

When Jesus comes to the tomb, everything feels final. The stone is still in place. Lazarus has been dead

four days. The smell of death is already part of the conversation. No one standing there expects anything to change.

Then Jesus says, “Take away the stone.”

It is such a plain command, but it requires trust. Before Lazarus walks out, somebody has to move the stone. Before the miracle becomes visible, there is an act of obedience.

Then Jesus cries out, “Lazarus, come out!”

And Lazarus comes out, still wrapped in grave clothes but alive.

That is the moment this sermon turns on. “Come out” is more than a command for one man in one tomb. It is the voice of Christ speaking into every place where death has tried to settle in.

Come out of despair.

Come out of fear.

Come out of bitterness.

Come out of shame.

Come out of hiding.

Come out of whatever has convinced you that nothing can change.

Jesus still calls people by name, and His voice is still stronger than the grave.

What Still Binds Us

Lazarus comes out alive, but he is still wrapped up. So Jesus says to the people nearby, “Unbind him, and let him go.” That part is important. Jesus gives life, and the community helps remove what still clings to a person from the tomb.

That is part of the church’s calling. We do not raise the dead, but we do walk with people whom Jesus is bringing to life. We help one another leave behind fear, shame, old wounds, old lies, and old patterns. We do not do that with judgment. We do it with mercy, patience, truth, and love.

Lenten Connection

This is why John 11 fits Lent so well. Lent tells the truth about grief, fear, weakness, and death. It does not pretend everything is fine. But Lent also keeps moving us toward the cross and toward resurrection hope.

John 11 stands right at that tension point. The sorrow is real. The delay is real. The fear is real. But so is the power of Jesus. Before the cross, before Easter morning, resurrection power is already at work.

Questions to Reflect On

Where have you struggled with God’s timing?

What feels sealed shut in your life right now?

What grave clothes are still clinging to you?

What might Jesus be calling you to come out from today?

How can we help unbind one another as the body of Christ?

Takeaway

Jesus does not avoid the tomb. He goes there. He does not dismiss grief. He weeps. He does not surrender to death. He speaks life into it. And He still calls people forward from what binds them.

Key Verse

“I am the resurrection and the life.” — John 11:25