

STEP BY STEP THROUGH YOUR LENTEN JOURNEY BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Week Six: Rise, Come Forth

Resurrection of Lazarus

In a survey conducted a couple of years ago, Americans voiced their fears. Among them were things like public speaking and visiting the dentist, however, one of the top fears was death. People have been fascinated and afraid for death since the beginning of time and this is because it is one thing we are all destined to experience and yet it is the unknown.

Read John 11:1-44.

What do you think?

1. Jesus decides to stay where He is when He hears that Lazarus is sick. He does this so that Lazarus will die. What do you think the disciples were thinking? How would you react?
2. Martha believes that her brother will rise at the resurrection on the last day, but Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life". What theological and pastoral statement is Christ making?
3. The shortest verse in the entire Bible is John 11:35, "Jesus wept". Why do you think He wept? What does His weeping teach us?
4. All of us have prayed for someone who is sick to be healed, but that person ultimately dies. We may feel like our prayers were not heard or ignored. Is that the case? What can the raising of Lazarus teach us?
5. The final commandment Christ gives with Lazarus is, "Loose him, and let him go" (verse 44). Naturally, Christ is speaking about the burial shroud around Lazarus, but what else could He be speaking about? How can that help us in our spiritual life?

Christ, though, comforts us with the truth that death should not be feared, because He is life and resurrection. The raising of Lazarus is a testimony for all humanity because it teaches us that though people may die, it is not the end, but through Christ, they will live again. He is the *resurrection and the life and whoever believes in Him will never die* (v. 25). This powerful statement teaches us that death is not the end, but the beginning of eternal life and eternal life is not a spiritual realm, but with physical bodies. We often forget that there is life after death and that all of us will be resurrected one day.

At Lazarus's resurrection, he was called out of the tomb by name (for His voice and commands are so great, that without specifying whom He is speaking to, all the dead would arise). Lazarus comes out and Christ orders that the burial shroud be removed because it is holding Lazarus back. The same command is given to all of us. Those burial shrouds symbolize sins, addictions, grudges, anger, and the fear of death which hold us back and prevent us from having new life. **What is holding you back?**

New life in Christ means letting go of what holds us back and not returning to that again. Much needed to note that Christ does not tell Lazarus to remove the shrouds that bind him, but asks those who are around him. Often, we must be the ones that help others remove bondages, so they may live freely and abundantly (John 10:10), and often it means we mustn't be "nice" as many think that Christians should be. Helping others see the truth is not an easy task. It starts from our own willingness to let go of those bandages. It is a challenge we all must face to walk in the light of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Great Lent has been a time for us to free ourselves from those things that have been holding us back from Christ and from living abundantly. This freedom does not end when Great Lent ends, but it is the beginning of a new life in Christ.

St. Gregory of Narek prays it best in his Book of Lamentations:

"May you sever, with the omnipotent sword of your commanding word, the tied ribbons of my burial cloth, the bonds that confine me to hell and Release me from the strangling knots that brutally demand my soul, delivering one like me, deserving death, to the liberation of unending bliss on high by your life giving and divine word." (Prayer 58C)