

What a Change!

Welcome

Hello everyone

Peace be with you.

What a change! Things have changed dramatically for us all.

Things changed dramatically for Jesus, when his friend Lazarus friend became ill and died.

I'll share a shortened version of the story with you, but the full version can be found in the Bible in John 11: 1-45

A shortened version of John 11: 1- 45

Lazarus lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. One day, Lazarus became ill. Although Jesus was their good friend, and he received a message to say that Lazarus was very ill, he delayed visiting, and stayed where he was. The last time he had been to Judea, people had tried to stone him!

After two days, Jesus said, 'Lazarus has fallen asleep. I'm going to wake him.' His disciples were confused. 'Why go to such a dangerous place just to wake him up? He'll wake up without you.' So Jesus spelt it out. 'Lazarus is dead. I didn't go when he was ill, because through him, many will see God's glory.' Hearing this, Thomas * said to the others, 'Let's follow him. If he's going to be stoned, we should die with him.'

Lazarus' sister Martha * came out to meet Jesus. She said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' Jesus said, 'Your brother will rise again.' 'I know,' answered Martha, 'at the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live and never die. Do you believe this?' 'Yes, Lord,' said Martha, 'I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God.'

Then Martha's sister Mary * ran out to meet Jesus. She knelt at his feet crying, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' **Jesus wept with Mary.** He asked, 'Where is his tomb?' A crowd of mourners followed Jesus to the cave where Lazarus' body had been laid. Lazarus had been dead for four days, but Jesus asked for the stone * to be rolled away.

Jesus prayed aloud, so the crowd would hear him and know that God had sent him. Then he shouted into the cave, 'Lazarus, come out!' Incredibly, Lazarus walked out of the tomb, wrapped in burial cloths. *

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Jesus said, 'Unwrap him and let him go.' And many people who saw this believed in Jesus.

A Reflection

Isolated

When I was little girl I used to ask my mum who switched the sun off at night? I didn't understand that the sun was always there, even if I couldn't see it. As christian I continue to grow in faith that God is always there, whether I acknowledge God or not. Whether I feel close to God or not. God is always there.

Mary and Martha probably felt desperately **isolated** and worried as they cared for their sick brother and later devastated when he died. I wonder if they asked where was Jesus, when they needed him? Had Jesus forgotten them? I think perhaps he was praying and planning how to get to them. Things at this time we're getting really difficult for Jesus. He was a wanted man! To go the region of Judea would have put him and his disciples danger. Imagine Jesus torment when the news came to him that Lazarus was ill.

God is love and desires individuals communities and nations to flourish. Following Government directives is challenging for all of us as we learn to live differently. People in isolation may ask where are you God? But I believe with Jesus there is always another perspective, because even if things are tough he has not given up on us. And with Jesus there is always the possibility of change..

Transformation You are not alone. God is with you!

By the time Jesus got to Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for 4 days. Mary and Martha's feelings were raw and they didn't hold back in sharing their anger, disappointment and grief with Jesus.

Suddenly they were no longer alone. Their friend Jesus whom they pinned their hopes on was now with them.

And Jesus response...? **Jesus wept**. What a transformational moment. Jesus is not distant, remote and unfeeling. His grief erupts. And that is the new perspective Jesus initially brought to Mary and Martha's situation. You are not alone I am with you.

God weeps with us. In Jesus we see God who weeps with us in our anger, despair and deepest grief.

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I believe that right now as we weep, get angry and frustrated God weeps with us. God understands. God is with us in our current struggles and we can share exactly how we feel. This can be transformational.

Imagine right now we could sit with Jesus. What we would tell him? Honestly tell him. I am worried about Corona virus. I am worried about getting ill. There stuff I need to sort out in my life. I don't like staying at home and I miss my friends, family and church. All perfectly natural feelings!

Jesus cared so deeply about his friends that he wept with them. Jesus takes us seriously too and cares about all our worries and hopes. Let's not keep them to ourselves, but tell God. And imagine God's reply to us. "I know the world is hurting. I know you are hurting but I am here. I love you. Come and tell me how you feel any time. I love you".

I pray that God will reassure that we will know how deeply God loves us.

Community hope that things will change

When things were most desperate Jesus did something extraordinary. Jesus performed **a very public miracle**. I imagine the community almost holding their breath as Jesus shouted for Lazarus come out of the tomb. We are asked right now to work together for the good of the nation to save lives and protect the vulnerable. So what can we do together as community who believes in God, but can't be physically be together? Well perhaps it's an opportunity for us to use the time to learn more about God? Why not start with reading the full version of the bible story? I wonder what you make of it?

God invites us to keep trusting and believe something extraordinary will happen. I am praying daily, that God will bless the scientists with miracle breakthroughs. Let's in faith trust in God **as a community of hope**. Let's imagine that day when restrictions will be lifted and we too can come out of homes and be together again. Now that really will be something to shout about!

God bless you all. May God bless us with protection, healing, courage and hope. Amen

What a Change!

Prayer

Loving God

Thank you for the beautiful world which you created.
Clear blue skies, blossom on trees, spring flowers and sunshine
We praise you!

Loving God

We share our feelings with you about living with Government restrictions.
We may feel angry, frustrated and frightened.
Forgive us when we have been unkind or irritable with others

Loving God

We pray for your miracle breakthrough in finding a vaccine for Covid-19, Please
bless the scientists with perseverance and inspiration.

Loving God

We thank you for everyone keeping the country going
NHS staff, teachers, supermarkets, drivers, post office, delivery services and
people working from home.
Please protect them and bless them with strength and courage.

Loving God

We pray for ourselves, our families, our friends and church communities.
Please keep us safe, please reassure us that you are with us. You weep with
us and you laugh with us. You love us and have not forgotten us.
Please give us strength each day.
Please give us hope that life will change in the future

Amen

A song to reflect on:

Let love be real STF 615

I really like the words from verse 2

“Let love be real and make us brave to be what we might be”