

March 6, 2022

The First Sunday of Lent

John 11:1-44

Jesus raises Lazarus!

Wow, here we are at the start of another Lent. The first Sunday's reading is about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. I don't know about you, but I find it very ironic that the first Sunday of Lent is about a resurrection and that we will finish Lent with the resurrection of Jesus on Easter morning. This morning I want to challenge you to think outside of the box and maybe ride the edge of heresy! This is a very familiar place for me. I like to push and challenge my faith often. So come along for an interesting and unusual ride.

As Christians we like to talk about how God became human. The incarnation was that time when God sent His son Jesus to earth. He took on flesh and became one of us. All in order to save us from our sin. I sometimes like to think He came to save us from ourselves. We celebrate the incarnation at Christmas. Unfortunately that is where things usually stop and go no further. Many people including theologians and scholars do not like to talk about Jesus's human nature. They do not like to discuss things beyond the fact that He had a human nature.

This takes us to the reading this morning. There is a lot of information about Jesus's human nature in the words and between them. Jesus

shows genuine human emotion by weeping for His dear friend Lazarus. He was sick and shortly died. We find in in verse 35. The passage is very short and to the point. Only two words, Jesus wept. By weeping Jesus shows His sadness, loss and grief. He shows us His human nature and that He is like you and me. By doing this Jesus is making Himself vulnerable and relatable to generations of Christians who read this. I warn you not to equate vulnerability with weakness. There is great strength and power in tears. Unfortunately people in the past saw weeping as a weakness. I suspect that this is why people were cautious or did not explore or talk about Jesus's human nature. People liked to focus on the power, divinity and miracles. Could you imagine the Christianity we would have if our understanding of Jesus's both natures were developed equally.

When we see Jesus's vulnerable, human side, it is something that we all can relate too. Many of us have suffered the loss of a friend or loved one. I would venture to say that Jesus is the fullness of what it is to be truly human. That includes being vulnerable and the full range of human emotion. I would like to think that the teenager Jesus had a crush, or that He and His friends skipped Yersheva every now and then or that He had a playful mischievous side. Unfortunately we like to sanitize the human nature of Jesus. To clean up and remove the truly human parts of His life.

A great part of being human is having good friends. We like to be around people who understand and get us. Lazarus, Mary and Martha were those people for Jesus. They got Him and understood Him. Mary says in verse 35b, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Mary would not say that unless she knew what Jesus was capable of. That would mean they would know who Jesus was and

what He could do. They knew Jesus on an intimate and deeper level than the disciples and apostles. A friend of Jesus made this statement not one of His followers.

This morning we have seen Jesus's human and vulnerable side. There is great power there and not weakness. Knowing this helps us to better come to grips with our human and vulnerable side. We need to own it and internalize it, come to terms with it. Only then can we be truly human. When we realize this then we have taken the first steps to become God-like. Also surround yourself with good friends that get you and understand you.

Lenten Reflection: Acts 2:42a. At this point in the life of the church we are coming out of a two and a half year pandemic. There is a real need to re-establish church and we do that through community. So if you bump into old members let them know we are starting to return to the way things use to be. The early church in Acts did this by gathering and listening to the teachings and stories of the apostles. They recounted the lessons from Jesus's ministry. They also prayed when they gathered. Prayer was the foundation of this new community. Most of the prayers they used came from the book of Psalms until the gospels were written down and available.

Things are not too different from then and now. We still gather to pray and listen to scripture. The important element is that we gather. During the pandemic we were very blessed to be able to gather and have church whenever we could. Depending upon the restrictions. Gathering in the church yard during the summer was the best church experience we could ask for. It highlighted the fact that the church is

the people and where the believers gather. Mind you the building is greatly appreciated when its forty below.

AS we gather in the coming weeks please be respectful to people and their comfort levels. We are all at different places and with different conditions. Treat everyone with love, respect and dignity as we gather. We are all gathering to pray and offer our thanksgiving to God for all the blessings we have received. Not very different from the early church. Only the faces and geography are different. I wish you a spiritual deepening of your faith this Lenten season. That you may draw closer to our Lord and feel His presence in your life. Pastor D