



Sermon for All Saint's Day 2021 | CWL Sunny Schwarz

We only heard the second part of the Lazarus story in today's Gospel, so let's explore what happened before Jesus met Mary and the crowd four days after his friend's death:

Martha and Mary, Lazarus sisters, had send a message to Jesus that he was very ill. They had reached out to him as a friend and healer and expected him to come and help.

But when Jesus got the message, he was down near the Jordan where John had been baptizing. Not too far from them in Bethany. Actually, really close if your dear friend is dying!

But when Jesus heard it, he said, *"This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."* He saw the far bigger perspective than everyone else who was in a panic that Jesus hadn't arrived. We all know what's coming – but not the family and friends who had waited. And hoped. And prayed. Then suddenly it was too late.

Jesus – a couple of miles away - of course knew that Lazarus was dead and he said to his disciples:

"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." and when they thought he was only sleeping, Jesus told them plainly, *"Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."*

He arrives on the fourth day. The day that is beyond all hope. All through Scripture the third day is the day that God acts. Jesus arrives on the hopeless day, the fourth.

He bears the anger of Mary, *"Lord"*, she says – *"If you had been here, my brother would not have died!"* It reads like a silent sub-text from Mary, *"Where were you when I needed you?"*

The Revd Stan Evans

Camino de las Cuestas 5c | 35572 Tias

Email: chaplain@lanzarotechurch.com | T: +34 928 514241



ANGLICAN PARISH
ST. LAURENCE IN LANZAROTE

And then Jesus himself weeps at his dead friend's tomb...
the fully human Jesus, greatly disturbed and deeply moved.

That phrase from the Gospel:

"See how he loved him."

See how Jesus loved Lazarus.

So human. Just like us, Jesus grieves in this time of bereavement.

When feelings run deep, it shows how the grieving person so deeply loved the deceased. Jesus was not only the Son of God, but also the son of man, fully human, and we can see how he is sharing our grief and our sorrow as he weeps for his dear friend.

We are all familiar with this terrible wait for someone who might never arrive, a change that won't come, or we wait for improvement, for healing or recovery.

What do we do: We pray! We hope and pray.

And then somewhere just after what feels like "the third day" to us, we give up. We lose hope while our disappointment grows. Is it worth to keep praying? Or is it too late?

But Jesus, in the entombed hopeless reality of life's darkness, calls forth life and liberation from this hopeless hole, on the hopeless day, amidst a hopeless crowd.

He calls forth life in the midst of a confirmed, decaying and stinking death.

"Lazarus, come out!" he cries.

The dead man comes out, bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth.

Jesus says to them, *"Unbind him, and let him go."*

God saves. God helps.

Lazarus name means "God helps."

And this powerful sign of Jesus, Son of God, as he helps, is his last public ministry in the Gospel of John, and it happens on the eve of his own passion.

The Revd Stan Evans

Camino de las Cuestas 5c | 35572 Tias

Email: chaplain@lanzarotechurch.com | T: +34 928 514241



ANGLICAN PARISH
ST. LAURENCE IN LANZAROTE

The resurrection of Lazarus is like an advance narration for the passion of Jesus and his resurrection.

Our Gospel today makes it clear to us that the person who symbolically snatches a person from death, that this Jesus himself finally conquers death on Easter morn. And the women on Easter morning find, besides the empty grave, only the grave cloths.

His resurrection is our life also in the face of death. Jesus is the first of those who are resurrected into eternity. Jesus did not come back into the chaotic world reality but is the door through which we will one day enter that reality for which we long so much.

"I knew that you always hear me", Jesus says.

What a statement of faith!

Jesus teaches us that God, our Heavenly Father, always heard him, and by implication, always hears us as well.

*"But I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that **you sent me.**"*

Jesus was sent by his Father.

In just the same way, we are sent into our little world with a clear-cut mission that we are to be God's ambassadors of love to our world, just as Jesus was God's ambassador of love to his world.

The purpose of all of this is that we may believe...

believe in Jesus and his gift of the abundant life and eternal life.

It's about whether we really can and want to get involved with Jesus with all our hearts.

"Do you believe?" – he asked Martha a while before he met Mary and all who mourned with them. Martha's answer was:

"I believe. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, and that whoever lives and believes in you will never die."

The Revd Stan Evans

Camino de las Cuestas 5c | 35572 Tias

Email: chaplain@lanzarotechurch.com | T: +34 928 514241



ANGLICAN PARISH
ST. LAURENCE IN LANZAROTE

... to believe is nothing else than putting really everything,
all worries and doubts, all questions, all fears and hopes,
into God's good hands ... including our hope for resurrection.

Let us remember Lazarus:

No one else could have helped, but God has helped.

On the fourth hopeless day, God has helped.

Do you believe?

What would our answer be?

I pray that God will give us that quality of FAITH that was
in the heart of Martha so we all can say:

“Yes Lord, I believe that I will never die.”

Now untie me and let me go!

Amen.