

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. 3So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." 4But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." 5Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, 6after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. 7Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." 8The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" 9Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. 10But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." 11After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." 12The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." 13Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. 14Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. 15For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

17When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, 19and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. 20When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. 21Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." 23Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." 28When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." 29And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. 30Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

33When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. 34He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35Jesus began to weep. 36So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" 38Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." 40Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" 41So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. 42I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." 43When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

45Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

I opened Newsweek this past week to see their pictures. Sixteen 5 and 6 year olds, shot down like rabbits in the hunter's sights. The words of the principal at the school in Dunblane –

“A great evil has visited.” And beside them in the magazine was the picture of the man who killed them.

Somehow I did not expect evil to look like that. His face might be seen on any street and I would not notice him. "Hi, how ya doin?" I might ask.

The parents, how they must be suffering! Their children were safe at school in a safe part of the world, loved, protected, but in their last moments here on earth screaming and running and crying.

If we are going to go back in time nearly two thousand years this morning, we must take all of them with us, the children who have died, and their executioner, and all who knew and loved those children: parents, grandparents, neighbors, teachers, friends.

Jesus' friend, Lazarus, was sick. Mary and Martha, his sisters, sent for Jesus. Jesus said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Then Jesus waited two days before setting off to see his friend. And before setting off he told his disciples that Lazarus was already dead and that Jesus was glad he was not there for his disciples' sake.

As Jesus approached Bethany, the village of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, Martha came out to meet him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him."

Angry, but hoping. How many of the parents must have cried out, "Where were you, God?" "Please save her, Lord." "How could you let it happen, Lord?" "Let me see him in heaven once more."

"Your brother will rise again," Jesus said to Martha.

Martha responded, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Hope, but distant hope - she missed her brother now.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me even though they die will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

Martha believed Jesus. Before anyone had been raised from the dead Martha believed Jesus.

You know the rest of the story, how Jesus did raise Lazarus, how he came out of the tomb and was freed from his bandages. And many of the people believed in Jesus.

But for others this miracle was an excuse to put Jesus to death. Jesus had promised that all of this would lead to the Son of God being glorified and so it would.

Jesus' glory was not that he could speak and Lazarus would come to life, but that he would take Lazarus' place in the tomb. The glory of God would be that Jesus would take his place in that gymnasium gunned down by the hatred of others. Jesus would be the victim of the great evil, crucified by normal looking folks. The glory of God is Jesus taking all of the sorrow of parents who have lost children, all of the terror of children in the madman's sights, and all the evil of a man bent on bringing great sorrow, Jesus takes all of these upon himself, and into himself, and dies. Evil heaps everything upon Jesus, but the love of God is not broken, will never broken - not in Jerusalem, not in Scotland, not here. Jesus lives.

“Those who believe in me even though they die will live and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

In Scotland and here those who believe in him will live, even now, even in sorrow, even in fear. Evil will not win, cannot win.

One more word, though, this morning. The faces were white, eyes were blue, their hair was blond. My heart went out to them.

Their faces are brown and black, they live fifteen minutes from me. One by one they are claimed by evil. I hardly notice. My hardly noticing is a far greater evil than anything that happened in Scotland. How great an evil it is that I might think that it is tolerable for anyone's child to live in the midst of violence, or to die of hunger, or to be neglected.

I know it is not tolerable for Jesus who became one with them on a hill called Golgotha.

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