

# Jesus's Raising of Lazarus From the Dead

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The readings for mass today are very powerful, beautiful and profound. Other than Jesus' own passion, death and resurrection, there is no other story in the gospels as profoundly beautiful as this account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. The other readings for mass today pale in comparison to the gospel. How can anything else compare to the account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead? Mankind had never seen someone come back from the dead, especially after four days in the grave.

At the very beginning of today's gospel, Saint John began his account of this story, by telling us that Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha. It says that "Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with

her hair.” This one sentence is worth pausing to think about for a moment, for many reasons. When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about this beautiful and loving act, he told them to leave Mary alone, the expensive oil she had anointed him with was to prepare him beforehand for his burial. You can’t help but wonder if Jesus remembered Mary’s beautiful act of love for him, when he learned that Lazarus was gravely ill, and realized that he would soon die?

The gospel said that, “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.” Evidently, Jesus had a close relationship with their family. That’s pretty amazing, given the fact that Mary was labeled a great sinner by the Pharisees, and probably was not part of the main stream Jewish community. Christ chose this “great sinner” who lived on the fringes of society, to be close friends with, and included Mary’s sister Martha, and their brother Lazarus. This was not a superficial relationship. Jesus’ friendship with this family should give us all hope that we do not have to be perfect, or without any sin, in order to enter into a deep friendship with Christ. Our past does not matter to Jesus, but our hearts do. If we have turned from the things of the past and seek Jesus, we too, can enter into a deep and personal relationship with him.

Throughout the rest of the gospel, Jesus’ humanity and divinity are so interwoven. Jesus already knew that Lazarus had died and that he would raise him from the dead, and yet the gospel said that he became perturbed, deeply troubled and wept. Jesus saw Mary weeping and the Jews who were with her weeping, and the human side of him was deeply affected. Why do so many people blame God for their suffering? There are people who lose their faith in Jesus because they think he doesn’t care about them, or their suffering, but today’s gospel very clearly demonstrates otherwise.

The gospel says that Jesus was perturbed again when he arrived at Lazarus’s tomb. He didn’t hesitate though. Jesus told them to take the stone away. Jesus never even had to touch Lazarus in order to raise him from the dead. But, did you notice that the very first thing Jesus did, was to pray to his Father? Jesus did this many times in the gospels before a major miracle, a simple meal, or before he made an important decision like choosing the twelve apostles, or before he accepted his suffering and death during the agony in the garden. Prayer was such an integral part of his life. So many times we charge off and do whatever we feel like is right,

without ever even consulting God. Jesus always sought his Father's help, support, and guidance and we should too, before we make any major decision in our lives.

The miracle Jesus performed in raising Lazarus from the dead was not just for the benefit of Mary and Martha though. Jesus' miracles were for the whole community to know that he really was the son of the living God, and that God's true presence was among them. The gospel said that after this miracle, many of the Jews who had come to be with Mary and Martha, and had seen Jesus perform this miracle, came to believe that Jesus truly was the son of God.

Can you even begin to imagine what it must have been like to see Lazarus walk out of his tomb? If Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead, and conquer his own death when he rose from the grave on Easter morning, there is no doubt that Jesus will raise us from the dead one day as well. He has power over life and death, and we need not fear death as long as Jesus is by our side.

Death is but a doorway into eternal life. We need not fear the other side. Jesus is waiting for us there. He proved to all of us that there is life after death, by bringing Lazarus back from the dead and by rising from his own grave on Easter morning. This is the Good News that all of mankind longs to hear. Death does not have the final say. Jesus Christ does.