

and whoever lives and believes in me
will never die.

Do you believe this?

'Yes, Lord,' she said 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.'

Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?' Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.' Martha said to him 'Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.' Jesus replied 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer.
I knew indeed that you always hear me.
But I speak
for the sake of all these who stand round
me,
so that they may believe it was you who
sent me.'

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, here! Come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.'

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

Longer form, 11:1-45

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Reflections on the Gospel

ETERNAL LIFE

In today's Gospel, Jesus leaves what is for him safe country across the Jordan to go to Judea. He puts his own life at mortal risk in order to give life to his mortally ill friend.

Strangely, of course, Jesus, on hearing the news of Lazarus' grave illness, delays a few days before acting on the sisters' message. In effect, he allows Lazarus to die. This means that he can enter into and address the grief of Martha and Mary, and of all those who subsequently mourn the death of loved ones.

Martha takes comfort in her conventional belief in the resurrection of the dead on the last day. But Jesus majestically proclaims, 'I *am* the resurrection and the life'. For those who believe, 'eternal life' begins now; it transcends the barrier of death.

Jesus in the end restores Lazarus to this present life. But, beyond a kindness to Lazarus and his sisters, this miracle is more importantly a sign and symbol that, in the sense mentioned above, Jesus is 'the resurrection and the life' for all believe.

What Jesus does for Lazarus in fact plays out in miniature the whole pattern of his life and mission. As incarnate Son of God, he leaves the 'safe country' of his eternal dwelling with the Father (Jn 1:1-2) to enter our world and, at the cost of his own life, give eternal life to us all. Each one of us, confronted with the prospect of death, is Lazarus, the friend for whom Jesus will give his own life. We should hear the Passion with this in mind.



Brendan Byrne, SJ