

# Monday of Holy Week

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## Introduction

Jesus gave Lazarus life. He retrieved him from the darkness of his cavern tomb and brought him out into the light again. Those who saw, believed but there were some who immediately reported Jesus to the authorities. Threatened by Jesus, they plotted to kill him and Lazarus.

Having been brought back to life, in this passage, Lazarus seems to disappear. It is easy to fixate upon Jesus, as the plans to end his life are made in the background. It is easy to be distracted by the actions of Mary or the indignation of Judas. Yet just as the great crowds came to see Jesus, they also came to see the risen Lazarus. Pushed to the side, I wonder how Lazarus would tell his story. This imaginative reflection suggests ways to fill in the gaps. What does this change of perspective draw out of the story? How do you think Lazarus would tell his story? In the conflicts you experience, whose perspectives are being assumed without questions being asked?

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## Text

### John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

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Every morning when I wake up, I pinch myself. I can't believe it's true. I have woken up, I'm alive! There are no cloths around my head and no stone over the entrance to the tomb. It's a miracle! I am a living miracle! I'm alive!

No-one could believe it. My sisters have been fussing around me since it happened. I've noticed crowds gathering wherever I go and the pointing...well, I'll never get used to that. Or the staring for that matter. I've always been used to being in the background. You have to – having a sister like Mary. Not that she means to take centre stage. It just happens. She's always gone with the flow, followed her heart before her brain engaged. She doesn't care about convention: the have-tos and should-dos. She does what she wants and the possible consequences don't bother her. Martha and I have always been left to pick up the pieces in Mary's wake.

'Martyr Martha,' as Mary and I call her, she always finds some work to do...and someone to listen to her complaints about being left to do it. We try to help but it's never right, never to her high standards. She is good at hospitality but she misses out on so much. The conversations, the jokes, even the arguments can be good entertainment. She doesn't really get to know people. It's such a shame.

They can't believe I'm alive again. I can't believe it either. I've got a second chance. An opportunity to do things differently or the same again. It's my choice.

Everyone thinks I should be really excited and grateful and I suppose I am. I should be ecstatic and raring to go but I'm sitting in a corner of this crowded room and after all the pointing and staring and questions, no-one seems to have noticed that I've retreated. I've had my fifteen minutes of fame and now it's all about the others. I don't want to be in the spotlight but what am I supposed to do with life part two?

Nobody tells you about that part. I feel so much pressure to get it right. Am I destined to live out the rest of my days with the label, 'Lazarus – the man Jesus raised from the dead' plastered to my forehead? Do I have to prove that it was worth Jesus taking the time to perform the miracle of raising me from the dead? Or am I just 'Lazarus – the brother of Martha and Mary'? What about me?

Does anyone know anything about me? Has anyone ever asked about my passion or my goals in life? No. I mean, did you know that when I was a child, I had a talent for juggling olives then catching them in my mouth one after another? Or that I work at a potter's wheel for hours every day so that Martha can play hostess and Mary can play? Or that I dream of being one of Jesus' disciples travelling around with him and hearing him teach? No, the only time I matter is when I'm the living proof of a Jesus miracle.

They're out to get me, or so I heard. Some of the people pointing and staring want me dead. I am so scared. I don't want to die again, not yet, but right now, people are more scared that Jesus might be killed.

I'm going to sit here for a while. I wonder if anyone will notice I'm still here.

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## Response

- Consider how either Martha or Mary would tell the story. What differences would there be from her perspective?
  - Sit with Lazarus for a while. Think about a time when you felt like you had disappeared in a crowded room. Watch out for others who retreat in other circumstances you find yourself in and reach out to them.
  - Gather together some items to reflect upon this story through your senses: bread, perfume/oil, coins, cloth. See, taste, smell, hear, and touch the story and as you do, reflect on how this makes you feel
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## Prayer

“What was the point in raising me from the dead if I’m just to be ignored?”  
“Why am I always working?”  
“I can’t believe he is going to die.”  
“He makes me so angry letting her off the hook like that! That money could have been mine.”  
Lord, we ask for your forgiveness,  
for the times we have missed the point  
or forgotten to think about others.  
Help us to have the ability to see another’s perspective  
so we can learn to be gracious  
or to graciously teach others.

Amen.