

THE FIRST READING IS FROM THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

Thus says the Lord GOD:

Behold, I will open your graves  
and raise you from your graves, O my people.

And I will bring you into the land of Israel.

And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves,  
and raise you from your graves, O my people.

And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live,  
and I will place you in your own land.

Then you shall know that I am the LORD;

I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.

*The word of the Lord*

THE RESPONSE TO THE PSALM IS

*With the LORD there is mercy,  
in him is plentiful redemption.*

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;  
Lord, hear my voice!

O let your ears be attentive  
to the sound of my pleadings.

*With the LORD there is mercy,  
in him is plentiful redemption.*

If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,  
Lord, who could stand?

But with you is found forgiveness,  
that you may be revered.

*With the LORD there is mercy,  
in him is plentiful redemption.*

I long for you, O LORD,  
my soul longs for his word.

My soul awaits the Lord  
more than watchmen for daybreak.

*With the LORD there is mercy,  
in him is plentiful redemption.*

More than watchmen for daybreak,  
let Israel hope for the LORD.

For with the LORD there is mercy,  
in him is plentiful redemption.

It is he who will redeem Israel  
from all its iniquities.

*With the LORD there is mercy,  
in him is plentiful redemption.*

THE SECOND READING IS FROM THE LETTER OF ST  
PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and Sisters:

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit,  
if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not  
belong to him.

But if Christ is in you,  
although the body is dead because of sin,  
the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,

he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

The word of the Lord

*THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION*

Glory to you, O Christ, Son of the living God.

I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord.

Everyone who believes in me shall never die.

Glory to you, O Christ, Son of the living God.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING  
TO JOHN

**NARRATOR**

A man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it he said,

**JESUS** '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.'

**NARRATOR** Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples,

**JESUS** 'Let us go to Judea again.'

**NARRATOR** The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?'

**JESUS** 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him. Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.'

**NARRATOR** The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.' Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly,

**JESUS** '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.'

**NARRATOR** So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them

concerning their brother. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.

**MARTHA** said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.’

**JESUS** said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’

**MARTHA** ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’

**JESUS** ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’

**NARRATOR** She said to him,

**MARTHA** ‘Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.’

**NARRATOR** When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private,

**MARTHA** ‘The Teacher is here and is calling for you.’

**NARRATOR** And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, She fell at his feet, saying to him,

**MARY** ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’

**NARRATOR** When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept.

So the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’ But some of them said, ‘Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?’ Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said,

**JESUS** ‘Take away the stone.’

**NARRATOR** Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him,

**MARTHA** ‘Lord, by this time there will be a smell, for he has been dead four days.’

**NARRATOR** Jesus said to her,

**JESUS** ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?’

**NARRATOR** So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said,

**JESUS** ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.’

When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out.’ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them,

**JESUS** ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’

**NARRATOR** Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.

**THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD**

## THE REFLECTION

Martha asks in her question the most difficult of all questions to a believer; ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ Why does God not intervene when innocent suffering happens. Jesus makes the point that Lazarus must be dead when he goes to visit his family, knowing he would raise him from the dead. He is moved and caught up in the grief of Martha and Mary when he encounters them. His miracle beyond all others foretold his own resurrection. This story only appears in John’s gospel as the disciples were keen to keep his identity secret. Writing much later John can reveal his name and in the next chapter tell us the Jews wanted to kill Lazarus too.

Martha’s implied question does not have an answer accessible to us. God is so far beyond our imagination we cannot comprehend his actions. In the book of Job in the Old Testament, Job wants God to explain himself and God replies Can you call the Sun at the dawn, tell the stars to shine? No, like St Augustine's dream of a boy digging in the sand and filling the hole with water to empty the sea, when Augustine says he can't the boy replies and you can't understand everything. St Augustine tries to point out the limitedness of man by saying “If you think you know God that isn't God.” Some things are just hidden from us.

Martha shows the only answer that works for us; she believes he is the Son of God who is to come into the world. The only gift we can give to God is our faith and trust in him. Only by living with trust in God can she come to an understanding of what has happened to her brother. Our faith is founded on the Resurrection; Jesus strengthens our belief in God who can give us new life. The story of Lazarus enriches our hope that he can and will raise us up. We can only wonder at the mystery of it and our imagination gives us a hint of what is to come.