

Life-Changing Encounters with Jesus

John 5 – 12



At the Pool of Bethesda
Nathan Greene, Contemporary Artist

John 5:1-18

Narrator: Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie – the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him,

Jesus: *“Do you want to get well?”*

Lame Man: *“Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”*

Jesus: *“Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”*

Narrator: At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed,

Jews: *“It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”*

Lame Man: *“The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”*

Jews: *“Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”*

Narrator: The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him,

Jesus: *“See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”*

Narrator: The man went away and told the Jews it was Jesus who made him well. Because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. Jesus said,

Jesus: *“My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”*

Narrator: For this reason the Jews tried all harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is your reaction to Jesus asking the paralytic man, *“Do you want to get well?”*

NOTES: A Life-Changing Encounter with a Paralytic (John 5:1-18)

Truths revealed by this encounter:

1. Jesus honored the obligations of Jewish faith and worship (John 5:1). Three Jewish feasts were considered feasts of obligation – *Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles*. Every Jewish male was legally bound to attend them (*Deut. 16:16*). John reminds us that Jesus obeyed the obligations of Jewish faith.
2. Jesus honored the race, religion, class, sexuality, and condition of all people (John 5:3-4). The lame man was marginalized by the Jewish community because of his illness. However, just as John says that Jesus previously engaged in conversation with a Samaritan woman and a Gentile Royal Official, so too do we now read that Jesus engaged with an individual who others ignored and disregarded. John wants us to know that, although Jesus knew and respected Jewish Law, he refused to observe laws that were not just and that denied God’s compassion and grace for all people.

3. Jesus honored the freedom of people to choose; to possess free will (John 5:6-9). It might seem like Jesus' question to the man was unsympathetic, "*Do you want to get well?*" On closer examination, the question was not silly; first, because it acknowledged that Jesus never forced himself on anyone. Every person needs to decide what response we give to him. God does not bully us into believing in him. Secondly, the question was good because Jesus knew (and still knows) that sometimes people want to remain the way they are, no matter how bad their condition might be.
4. Jesus revealed the power of God to work at any time, in any situation, in any way, on any person (John 5:11-18). Rather than celebrating the new life Jesus gave the lame man, the Jewish religious leaders were offended that he had ministered to the man on the Sabbath Day. Jesus, however, as the "*Word*" in flesh (i.e. as God), is always at work. The miracles in the Gospel of John are "*signs*" that point to Jesus' revelation of God's compassion, God's grace, and God's power extended to all people. Although the lame man denied knowing Jesus, and seemingly even betrayed him to the religious officials, still the invitation to believe in his forgiving and life-giving power is extended to all people everywhere.



The Feeding of the 5,000
Attributed to Ambrosius Francken the Elder (1544-1618)

John 6:1-22; 25-35

Narrator: Sometime after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee, and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Feast was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip,

Jesus: *“Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?”*

Narrator: He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Philip: *“Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”*

Narrator: Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up,

Andrew: *"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"*

Jesus: *"Have the people sit down."*

Narrator: There was plenty of grass in that place and so the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated, as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples,

Jesus: *"Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted."*

Narrator: So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say,

People: *"Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."*

Narrator: Jesus, knowing they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching, walking on the water; and they were terrified. He said to them,

Jesus: *"It is I; don't be afraid."*

Narrator: Then they took him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading. The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. . . . When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him,

People: *"Rabbi, when did you get here?"*

Jesus: *"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."*

- People:** *“What must we do to do the works God requires?”*
- Jesus:** *“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”*
- People:** *“What miraculous sign then will you give us that we may see it and believe you? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”*
- Jesus:** *“I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*
- People:** *“Sir, from now on give us this bread.”*
- Jesus:** *“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

Questions for Reflection

1. What is most surprising to you about John’s story about Jesus feeding the 5,000?

NOTES: A Life-Changing Encounter with a Hungry Crowd (John 6: 1-22, 25-35)

1. The Gospel of John has some of the most beloved images to illuminate who Jesus is and what he represents in the lives of believers. John tells us Jesus said about himself: *“I am the Living Water,” “I am the Bread of Life,” “I am the Light of the world,” “I am the Good Shepherd,” “I am the Vine, you are the branches.”* Jesus did not say he is “similar” to bread, or “sort of like” light, or can be “compared” to a vine. His claim is absolute! The words “I AM” are dramatic. “I AM” is what God called himself to Moses in the Book of Exodus. Jews regarded and still regard the divine name of God as sacred and not to be spoken by human beings. Only God can speak these words, which is Jesus’ point when he uses them. Jesus is the Word made flesh who “makes God known,” the one in whom God’s identity is revealed.
2. There is only one miracle Jesus performed that all four gospel writers include in their accounts of Jesus’ ministry: *the feeding of the 5,000*. Each of the versions of the event is different, but they all agree on that fact that *one day when a crowd congregated around Jesus – to see him, hear him teach, and no doubt hoping to witness a miracle or two – a lot of hungry people got fed at dinnertime with just a small amount of food*. Matthew, Mark, and John link this miracle with Jesus’ evening walk across the Sea of Galilee. John, then, in his account links the feeding of the 5,000 to Jesus’ discourse with the crowd in which he identified himself as the Bread of Life, the true bread from heaven who gives life to the world. The message John wants to convey is this: **In Jesus is the power to nourish and sustain human life and to satisfy the deepest hunger that lies in every human heart, the hunger for God.**

3. It is the reaction of the crowd that John wants us to note. The Jews were waiting for the prophet they believed Moses had promised when he spoke, as recorded in Deuteronomy 18:15: *“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren – him you shall heed.”* After having received their fill of bread and fish in a miraculous way, the people were willing to accept Jesus as that prophet and make him their king. Jesus, however, recognized their real interest was in another free lunch! He knew what people wanted were material blessings and earthly glories. He draws a distinction between “food that perishes” (like manna or the 5 barley loaves and 2 fish) and “food that endures for eternal life.” Jesus alone can satisfy the hungers of the human heart.



Christ Healing the Blind
El Greco, 1570

John 9:1-12

Narrator: As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him,

Disciples: *“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”*

Jesus: *“Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”*

Narrator: Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes.

Jesus: *“Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam.”*

Narrator: So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked,

Neighbors: *“Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?”*

Narrator: Some claimed that he was. Others said, “No, he only looks like him.”

The Man: *“I am the man.”*

Neighbors: *“How then were your eyes opened?”*

The Man: *“The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.”*

Neighbors: *“Where is this man?”*

The Man: *“I don’t know.”*

Questions for Reflection:

1. What do these verses tell us about the blind man?
2. What do these verses tell us about the disciples? What do they tell us about Jesus?
3. Do you think the link between misfortune and sin is still alive? Can you cite instances when the question, “Who sinned?” has been asked to make sense of human suffering?

John 9:13-34

Narrator: They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight.

The Man: *“He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and now I see.”*

Pharisees (Men): *“This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.”*

Pharisees (Women): *“How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?”*

Narrator: So the Pharisees were divided among themselves. They turned again to the man,

Pharisees (ALL): *“What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.”*

The Man: *“He is a prophet.”*

Narrator: The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents.

Pharisees (ALL): *“Is this your son? Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”*

Parents: *“We know he is our son and he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.”*

Narrator: His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.” So, a second time the Pharisees summoned the man who had been blind:

Pharisees (ALL): *“Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner.”*

The Man: *“Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know, I was blind but now I see!”*

Pharisees (ALL): *“What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”*

The Man: *“I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?”*

Pharisees (ALL): *“You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from.”*

The Man: *“Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”*

Pharisees (ALL): *“You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!”*

Narrator: And they threw the man out!

Questions for Reflection:

1. What does the gospel writer John want us to know about the Pharisees?
2. What do you think of the parents’ role in the story? How do you evaluate their response to the religious authorities?
3. Did the healed man make a confession of faith in Jesus to the Pharisees?

John 9:35-41

Narrator: Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said,

Jesus: *“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”*

The Man: *“Who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him.”*

Jesus: *“You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”*

The Man: *“Lord, I believe.”*

Narrator: And he worshiped him.

Jesus: *“For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”*

Narrator: Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?”

Jesus: *“If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.”*

Questions for Reflection:

1. With whom do you most identify: the blind man, the disciples, the neighbors, the Pharisees, or the parents?
2. Have you ever come to a deeper understanding of God through the process of moving through conflict and confrontation?
3. The early church found in this story of the man born blind a symbol of Christian baptism. The story is depicted frequently in frescoes in the Roman catacombs as an illustration of the meaning of baptism. Do you see connections between this story and the sacrament of baptism?

NOTES: A Life-Changing Encounter with a Blind Man (John 9:1-41)

1. One of the most vivid images that Jesus uses to speak of who he is and what he represents in the lives of believers is the image of light: *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life”* (8:12). The image conveys his role as revealer – the one through whom God’s light shines, and the one who illumines the meaning and purpose of human life. Our response to the light of God in Christ has implications for how we live our lives. Light can illumine our path, or if we refuse to recognize its power, blind us. These possibilities find expression in one of John’s most dramatic stories: the healing of the man blind from birth. At its beginning, Jesus claims: *“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world”* (9:5). Then, in demonstration of this role, he opens the eyes of the blind man. As the story unfolds, it provides a study of spiritual sight and spiritual blindness, inviting us to examine the state of our own vision.

2. To make sense of human suffering, people of faith in Jesus' day (as well as still today?) linked tragic misfortune and sin: "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" (9:2). Perhaps, the question springs from the anxiety to assure themselves that they live in a predictable and orderly world: if an avoidable cause (or sin) can be identified for misfortune then they (and we) can rest easier. Jesus refocuses their attention (and ours) on the real issue at hand, which was not (and is not) a theological discussion about the moral question of sin and suffering, but rather getting on with the business of healing ("*We must work the works of him who sent me*"). Too often we evade action to relieve human suffering by arguing about the theological implications of getting involved.

3. John 9 has been part of the church's reflection during the Season of Lent. The story of the healing of the blind man invites us to examine the state of our vision. With whom in this story do you most identify?

4. Like the man healed of his blindness, have you ever come to a deeper understanding of God through the process of moving through conflict and confrontation? "*What is significant about the blind man's progressive enlightenment is the circumstances under which it develops. He reaches deeper understanding, not in a reflective encounter with Jesus . . . but in the process of confrontation with the Pharisees. . . . The blind man's understanding of who Jesus is emerges from his struggle with those who would invalidate the experience of his life. And this is the model that John holds up to his community: let what has happened to you bring you into conflict with the rulers, with Moses himself if need be; for in this process your enlightenment will be completed, and at its end you will meet the one who granted you your sight and know him for who he is*" (David Rensberger).



The Raising of Lazarus
Rembrandt, 1630

John 11:1-16

Narrator: A man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, *“Lord, the one you love is sick.”* When he heard this Jesus said,

Jesus: *“This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”*

Narrator: Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. Then he said to his disciples,

Jesus: *“Let us go back to Judea.”*

Disciples: *“But Rabbi, a while ago the Jews tried to stone you, yet you want to go back?”*

Jesus: *“Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world’s light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light. Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”*

Disciples: *“Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.”*

Narrator: Jesus was speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

Jesus: *“Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not here, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”*

Narrator: Then Thomas said to the rest of the disciples,

Thomas: *“Let us also go, that we may die with him.”*

Questions for Reflection:

1. Is it surprising that Jesus did not go immediately when he heard of Lazarus’ illness? What does this tell us about Jesus? Is Lazarus’ death the result of Jesus’ delay?
2. What do you make of Thomas’ statement? Does it convey courage or exasperation?

John 11:17-37

Narrator: On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

Martha: *“Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”*

Jesus: *“Your brother will rise again.”*

Martha: *“I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”*

Jesus: *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”*

Martha: *“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”*

Narrator: And after she had said this she went back and called her sister Mary aside,

Martha: *“The Teacher is here and is asking for you.”*

Narrator: When Mary heard this she got up and went to him. Jesus had not yet entered the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house comforting her noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn. When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him she fell at his feet and said,

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 along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. Then he asked,

Jesus: *“Where have you laid him?”*

People: *“Come and see, Lord.”*

Narrator: Jesus wept. Then the Jews said,

Jews: *“See how he loved him!”*

Narrator: But some of them said, *“Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”*

Questions for Reflection:

1. Although the story is traditionally referred to as “the raising of Lazarus,” the description of the event occupies little space. Jesus takes his time to reach Lazarus, stopping for extended conversations with Martha and Mary. What is the similar statement each sister makes when they come face-to-face with Jesus? Is this a statement of complaint or confidence in Jesus?
2. What do Martha’s and Mary’s conversations with Jesus teach us about friendship with Jesus?
3. What is Jesus’ response to Martha and how does she receive his words?
4. What does “eternal life” mean to you? How does Jesus’ promise inform our understanding of “eternal life”?
5. How do you understand Jesus’ response to Mary’s statement?

John 11:38-54

Narrator: Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. He said,

Jesus: *"Take away the stone."*

Martha: *"But Lord, by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."*

Jesus: *"Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"*

Narrator: So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said,

Jesus: *"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."*

Narrator: When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice,

Jesus: *"Lazarus, come out!"*

Narrator: The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them,

Jesus: *"Take off the grave clothes and let him go."*

Narrator: Therefore, many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

Pharisees: *"What are we accomplishing? Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."*

Narrator: Then one of them, name Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up,

Caiaphas: *"You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."*

Narrator: He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. So from that day on they plotted to take

his life. Therefore, Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead, he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

Questions for Reflection:

1. It has taken 38 verses for Jesus to finally arrive at Lazarus' tomb. Martha, then tries to stop him from having the stone removed from the tomb's entrance. Then, before calling Lazarus out, how does Jesus divert people's attention away from him and why does he do this?
2. What are people's responses to the raising of Lazarus from the dead? What is your response to this miracle?

John 12:1-11

Narrator: Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas, who was later to betray him, objected,

Judas: *"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."*

Narrator: He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

Jesus: *"Leave her alone. It was intended that she save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me."*

Narrator: Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Interestingly, Lazarus does not say a word in this story. What do you imagine he might have said? Is there anything you would have liked to discuss with him?
2. What do you make of Mary's act of washing Jesus' feet with costly perfume?
3. There are many "tombs" that can imprison us and deaden our spirits well before the grave. What "tombs" keep you or persons you love from fullness of life in the present?

4. When Lazarus emerges from the tomb, Jesus directs the friends and family gathered to “unbind him and let him go.” Are there friends and family in your life who played a role in some unbinding experience in your life, enabling you to embrace life more fully? How can we assist in the unbinding of others that they might experience fullness of life in Christ?
5. When you wake in the morning, what are you thinking about: the past, present, or future? Why? What does John 11 contribute to your reflection on this question?

NOTES: Close Encounters with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (John 11)

1. According to John, throughout his public ministry Jesus performed seven wondrous works. Though fewer in number than those recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they are more remarkable. The illnesses he cured afflicted persons longer: 38 years in one case, the longest illness on record in the Gospels; and in another case, a man blind from birth. Jesus also worked marvels with nature, as evidenced by his transforming water into vast quantities of choice wine. The most dramatic miracle of all, however, was the raising of Lazarus from death. Like the six before, this one too is a “sign;” pointing beyond itself to truths about God and life that find expression in Jesus. John treats this final sign of Jesus as his most representative one. It epitomizes who Jesus is and what he has come to give all who believe in him: the gift of life.

2. *“Lord, he whom you love is ill” (John 11:1-16)* – This family holds a special affection for Jesus. Knowing this, it seems odd that upon hearing of Lazarus’ illness he delayed going to visit him. He who healed strangers in the past did not extend the same mercy to a close friend, and by the time he goes, Lazarus is dead. Martha and Mary’s expressions of reproach remind us that faith is not without feelings of anger in times of crisis. *“It is important that in John 11 Jesus gives no sign that he expects Mary and Martha to relate to him as passive, obedient, little children. Martha and Mary are Jesus’ adult friends. They are not in the least afraid of him. They are not sullenly, silently angry with him. They do not accept what has happened as the will of God. They tell him they are angry with him, and why. As for Jesus, Jesus does not simply tolerate these uppity women. He values them. He chooses them for his closest friends. He trusts them in their anger with him, and he trusts them with his life”* (Roberta Bondi).

3. *“I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:17-27)* – These words bring us to the heart of John’s Gospel. Jesus is the one who brings fullness of life in relationship with God, both now and in the future. On the one hand, Jesus affirms a future promise that believers who die will continue to live through resurrection. On the other hand, Jesus affirms that believers have eternal life long before they reach the funeral home – *“everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”* In the midst of everyday reality, a rich quality of life is experienced in relationship with God, simply by believing in Jesus. He came that we *“may have life, and have it abundantly” (10:10)*. Death is but a transition that does not break the bond between the believer and God. We experience fullness of life NOW when we believe in Jesus.

4. *“Lazarus, come out!” (11:38-54)* – At long last, Jesus called for Lazarus to come out. If actions speak louder than words, Jesus could have provided no more radical demonstration of his power to give life. The aftermath of this sign, however, suggests that the world finds Jesus’ power to give life a threatening thing, for *“from that day on they planned to put him to death.”*