

Rev. Derek Fairman

5th Sunday of Lent A

Put yourself into the scene that we have heard in the Gospel today. Imagine watching Martha or her sister Mary. They loved their brother Lazarus very, very much. You can see in their eyes the anguish of losing him. You can hear in their weeping the pain of missing him. The gloom that penetrates the atmosphere of their home you can feel on your very skin. What is going through their minds? Where do they find solace and hope?

There are two things that I would like to focus on from this Gospel. The first is that the raising of Lazarus is the last of seven signs found in the Gospel According to John. A sign is a miracle that points to who the Lord Jesus is. Last week, we heard about the man born blind, and how the Lord Jesus gave him his sight. The authorities had tried to explain this away. This week we hear about how the Lord raised Lazarus from the dead. The authorities could not explain this away. The Gospel continues after this reading to remark that the raising of Lazarus is what prompted the authorities to take counsel to put the Lord Jesus to death.

This reminds us in some ways about Pharaoh who would not let the Israelite people go from Egypt. There were nine plagues that the Lord brought to the land of Egypt, but after each plague the Pharaoh remained obstinate and would not let the people go. Sometimes he explained things away because of the sorcerers of Egypt. Only after the tenth plague, the death of the first-born of the Egyptians, did Pharaoh finally let the people go. Actually, Pharaoh not only gave his permission, but he drove the Israelites away.

The authorities in the time of the Lord Jesus would not believe in the Lord Jesus. They had found ways of not believing the miracles that He had performed. They had a counterargument to what He was teaching. Raising someone from the dead was not easily explained. Instead of believing in Him, however, they determined to get rid of Him. They could not defeat Him any other way.

These past three weeks we have heard Gospels that have to do with faith, and they are read whenever there are adults who wish to join the faith. First, we heard that the Lord Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well. Then we heard about how the Lord Jesus opened the eyes of the man born blind. Finally, this Gospel recounts the Lord Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. We might wonder what the Lord raising Lazarus from the dead has to do with faith.

