

AS LAZARUS WAS RESURRECTED FOR GOD'S WORKS TO BE DISPLAYED IN HIM,
WE ARE CHOSEN BY HIM TO REVEAL GOD'S GLORY

Fifth Sunday of Lent – 26 March 2023

We have just listened to another story of Jesus's healing and love. In fact, the Word of God drew us to the Pool of Siloam last Sunday to witness Jesus' grace of healing upon the blind man. But, being on the fifth Sunday of Lent, the Word of God takes a little bit extraordinary way of inviting us to witness and ponder the grace of healing.

We all have already been familiar with the story of raising of Lazarus, which is incredible. How wonderful it is to see the joy of Lazarus's return to his family. We have seen many families who shared their joy of the family reunion after the covid restrictions eased, the story of Lazarus is as spectacular as Exodus is.

Nevertheless, we may need to ask about Jesus' location while Lazarus was dying. Jesus would have stopped Lazarus from dying as he had been close to Lazarus' family. But, death came to Lazarus. It is likely that Jesus could not control Lazarus's death. We can certainly sense Martha and Mary's, Lazarus's sisters, disappointment or frustration with Jesus: *"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died"* (John 11:21). Two women's expression of frustration is fairly understandable, and we too regularly express such a sense of disappointment or sadness to God in our prayers.

Today's gospel does not tell us precisely why Jesus was slow to visit Lazarus, but the Word of God gave a hint about the reason for it from the last Sunday's gospel, where we witnessed the blind man's cure at Siloam. Jesus's disciples asked our Lord why the blind man had been born blind. Jesus answered that he was born blind for the works of God to be displayed in him (John 9: 3).

Similarly, Lazarus was chosen for God's works to be revealed. In this sense, Jesus was not absent with Martha and Mary but was present with them to prepare to do God's work.

So, what was the very God's work that Jesus conducted by bringing back Lazarus? As Jesus named "God's work", not "my work" or "Lazarus's work", he prayed to his Father. It was not Lazarus but God for whom Jesus conducted the miracle at the cave. At this point, we are reminded that everything Jesus does is for God the Father. Jesus cured the blind man. Yes, that was for the man to restore his sight and rejoice, but ultimately, Jesus, who is the Son of God, revealed God's mercy and glory.

Next, the Word of God draws us to observe Martha, Mary and the disciples, and their initial response to our Lord's work for God. There seems to be a gap between what Jesus was going to pursue and what they anticipated. The siblings of Lazarus and the disciples were okay with professing their faith. However, they failed to recognise Jesus' intention upon awaking Lazarus. Martha uttered her belief that Christ as the Son of God. Mary had anointed the Lord with ointment as a way of expressing her faith and love towards Christ. The disciples, of course, were following with their full trust in our Lord as Saviour.

However, Martha still held a sense of doubt about Jesus' power: "Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day!" Mary also expressed a sense of disappointment with Jesus. The disciples did not understand what Jesus was going to do. Thomas merely thought Jesus was going to die. They seem stuck with a belief in a small God that keeps them confined to their own ideal God. What made the gap between Jesus and them is that Mary, Martha and all bystanders at the tomb were thinking that Jesus was going to do a kind of miraculous work for Lazarus, whereas Jesus was recognising his action as a mission to reveal God's glory with Lazarus. That is why Jesus prayed to his Father (John 11: 41-42). Even He did not refer to Lazarus in his prayer to God. His prayer was for nothing but the name and grace of God.

To manifest God's glory on earth, Jesus did not try to abolish the natural order of creation, including death. That is why Jesus did not prevent Lazarus from dying, and said that Lazarus was not dead but was sleeping. But Jesus did not forget Martha and Mary's sorrow and ended up consoling them.

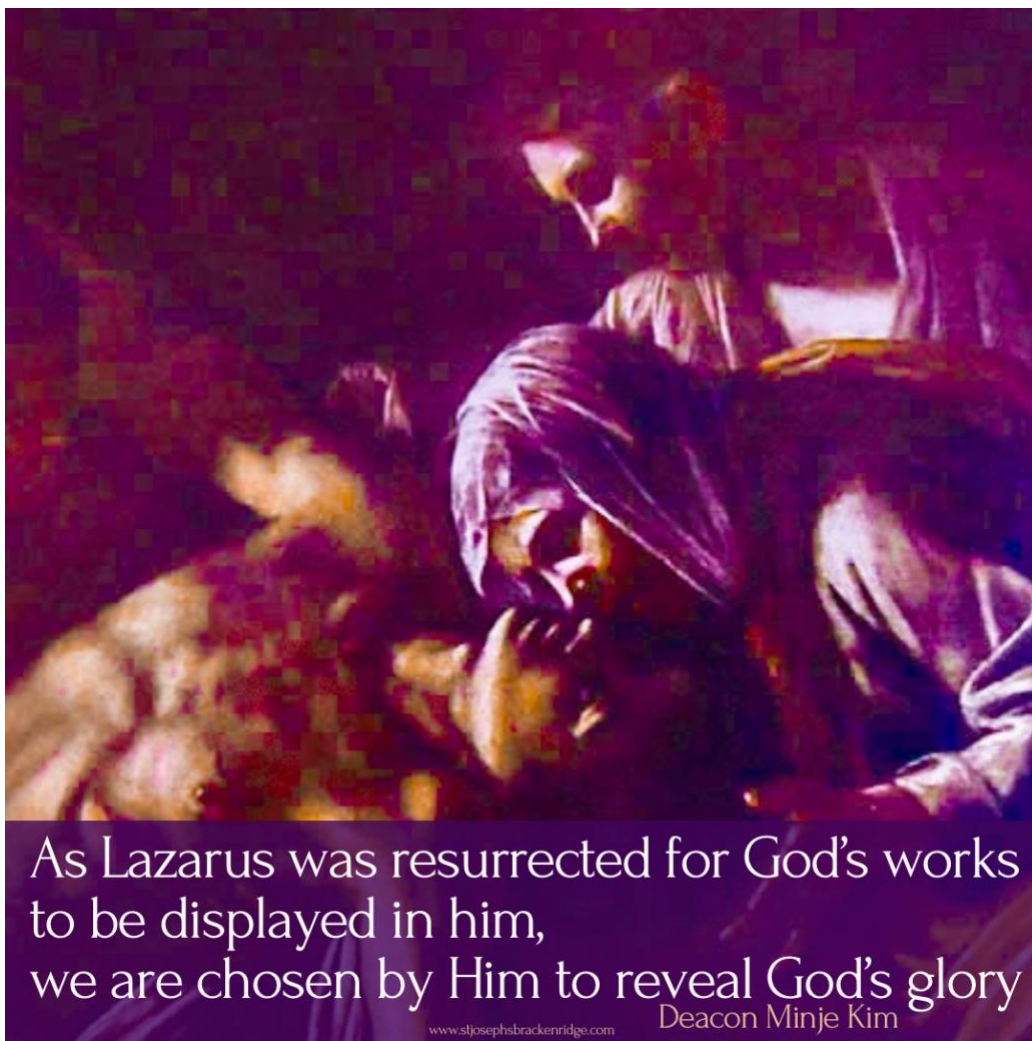
Brothers and sisters of Christ. we are delighted to see that even Lazarus's challenge became a space for God to reveal his glory. As Christ demonstrated the hope of resurrection through

Lazarus, he will also reveal God's glory through us, even amidst our own challenges. We have our own burdens. But where is Jesus? We gather at the Church to offer ourselves to God for God's work. We are here to encounter not our own ideal God, but the true God who reveals his love, hope, mercy and glory in us. As entering into the fifth week of Lent, let us have a time of reflection to see how much we have been open to welcoming the true God, not an ideal or small God that we pursue. Do you want to know Christ? Do you want to see the face of Christ, who raises us up through his sacrifice and resurrection? Let us keep our will to accept God's way on our journey of Lent towards Easter.

Peace

Deacon Minje Kim

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032623.cfm>



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