

Focus reading: John 11:1–45 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=450426657>)

Other lectionary readings: Ezekiel 37:1–14, Psalm 130, Romans 8:6–11

Theme: Conversations that Unbind Us

This week's reading is filled with conversations and raw emotions. It begins with Mary and Martha sending word to Jesus that the friend whom he loves, Lazarus, is ill. Rather than going immediately to his friend in need, Jesus waits two days. During that delay, Jesus has conversations with his disciples about what is ahead for him, for them, and for Lazarus. In the meantime Lazarus dies and people gather to grieve with his sisters. Tense conversations follow as Mary and Martha tell Jesus that if he had come sooner their brother would be alive. Jesus talks about life and death, telling Martha he is "the resurrection and the life" (verse 25). Jesus asks where Lazarus is buried and weeps as he makes his way to the tomb. Sometimes tears speak more than words. As mourners point more accusations at Jesus, he has a conversation with God. Then Jesus commands Lazarus to come out of the tomb and tells the bystanders to unbind him. Jesus has spoken to death with words of restoration and liberation.

FRIENDS SHARE THEIR SADNESS

Sisters Mary and Martha and their friends were together, openly expressing their sadness when Lazarus died. Jesus cried as well. When friends or members of our church family are sad, we share their sadness. Can you think of people you know who may be sad? Send them a card or visit them. When you are sad, who can you talk to? Who can you share your sadness with?

THE MIRACLES AS SIGNS

John writes about these miracles as "signs" that will show people who Jesus really is. Children may share the sisters' frustration that Jesus was slow in arriving. How did the delay contribute to the sign?

TELL ME A STORY

Children who hear their families' stories about overcoming loss and dealing with challenges are better able to handle their own challenges. When have you or members of your extended family felt hopeless? How have you experienced liberation, restoration, and new life?

PRAYER

All-powerful God,
There are things that make us sad and frightened.
We give thanks for friends and families who share our sadness.
We give thanks that you have power over all things, even death itself.
Amen.