

“Do you believe this?” (Isaiah 25:6-9; John 11:32-44)

Jesus’ question to Martha extends to all believers.

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The gospel reading for All Saints Day, from the raising of Lazarus, aligns with themes of resurrection and hope for both the living and the departed. The extended passage, John 11:1-45, is also assigned in Lent, underscoring resurrection and new life as central motifs anticipating Easter.

This narrative vividly illustrates Jesus’ profound love and authority over death. The text highlights Jesus’ deep affection for Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, while the mourners recognize Jesus’ compassion as he weeps in solidarity with those grieving Lazarus. The evangelist John seeks to convey to his audience—and to us—that Jesus is intimately present in our grief. Although Jesus knows he will raise Lazarus, the visible sorrow of those mourning evokes a genuine empathetic response, leading him to weep alongside them. His love, tears, and the restoration of life exemplify his deep compassion.

Jesus does not visit the home of Mary and Martha to offer traditional condolences. He seems uninterested in the ritualistic aspects of Jewish mourning, fully aware that death will not have the final say over Lazarus. Notably, Jesus is not alone in stepping outside traditional norms; Martha also deviates from customary mourning practices by leaving her guests to meet him directly. Her urgency to see him and express her grief override the cultural expectations of mourning.

For Martha and Mary, their grief is compounded: they have lost not only their brother but also their male protector and provider, leaving them particularly vulnerable in a patriarchal society. The raising of Lazarus mirrors the narrative in Luke 7:11-17, where Jesus resurrects the son of the widow of Nain, moved by compassion for her loss of her sole male protector.

In her conversation with Jesus, Martha professes her belief in the resurrection on the last day. Jesus responds with the profound declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26). This statement does not suggest physical immortality but rather liberation from the power of death. Jesus does not promise Martha a miracle but rather a new life grounded in faith and trust in him.

Jesus' question to Martha extends beyond their immediate context and is directed at all believers. Every Christian, when confronted with the death of a loved one, must grapple with this same question. Martha responds by affirming her faith, acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God—a confession that stands as a foundational element of the church's faith. Her proclamation aligns with the central purpose of the Gospel of John: to lead others to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and to find life in His name (John 20:31).

After the stone is removed from the cave, Jesus prays out loud, expressing gratitude to the Father for having already heard him—implying that he has previously prayed for Lazarus, possibly in silence. This prayer recalls the intimate relationship between Christ and us, where he intercedes on our behalf (Romans 8:34).

With a commanding voice, Jesus cries out, "Lazarus, come out!"—a declaration infused with life-restoring power. Jesus does not address Lazarus as one who is dead but as one who merely sleeps. Lazarus then emerges from the tomb, still wrapped in burial clothes. John's phrase "the dead man came out" carries an element of irony, highlighting Jesus' victory over death.

Jesus instructs those present to remove the grave clothes—the shroud—symbolizing that the garments of death are rendered obsolete, for the one who was dead is now alive. This act echoes the prophecy of Isaiah 25:7: "And He [God] will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples." Although Lazarus is raised, he will accompany Jesus to Jerusalem—where he will face death again alongside Jesus

(John 12:9-10).

John seeks to reassure his audience and us that what Jesus did for Lazarus, he will do for all believers.