

From Sadness to Joy

(based on John 11:1-45)

Mary and Martha had an urgent message for Jesus: The one you love is ill. They were referring to their brother Lazarus, who was a good friend of Jesus. Jesus and his disciples had visited in their home in Bethany, not far from Jerusalem.

When Jesus got the message, and that could have taken several days, Jesus said, "Lazarus isn't dying. Whatever happens will be for the glory of God." So Jesus didn't go to Bethany. He stayed right where he was along the Jordan River where John used to baptize people.

Two days later, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

Some of the disciples looked at Jesus. "Teacher, are you sure you want to go there? Some of the Jewish leaders want to kill you."

Jesus responded with some strange words about stumbling in the dark, and then he said, "Lazarus is asleep and I am going to wake him up."

"Teacher, if Lazarus is asleep, he will wake up on his own. You don't need to put yourself in danger."

"I mean that Lazarus is dead. We are going to him."

Thomas said to the disciples, "This is all strange, but we must go with him, even if it means that we die, too."

By the time they got to Bethany, Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. The house was full of Jews from Jerusalem who had come to comfort Mary and Martha. When Martha heard that Jesus was in Bethany, she ran to meet him. "If you had come earlier, my brother wouldn't have died. But I know God will do anything you ask," she told Jesus.

Tenderly, Jesus said, "Your brother will live again."

"I know that he will be alive on the resurrection day," said Martha.

"I am the resurrection and the life. Believe in me and you will live," Jesus told her.

"I believe," said Martha.

Martha went to the house and told Mary to go out to Jesus. The people in the house followed Mary. Mary fell at the feet of Jesus and cried, "If you had been here, Lazarus wouldn't have died."

When Jesus saw that she and all those with her were crying, he asked, "Where is his tomb?" Then Jesus began to cry too.

At the tomb, Jesus told some of the men to remove the stone covering the entrance. Martha said, "It's been four days. It will stink terribly."

As they removed the stone, Jesus prayed, "Father, thank you for hearing me."

Then he shouted, "Lazarus, come out!"

Lazarus, wrapped in white cloths, stumbled out of the tomb. After that, many of the people who had come to comfort Mary and Martha believed in Jesus. But some returned to Jerusalem to tell the Jewish leaders what Jesus had done.



Puppet Faces

