

Lenten Devotional Reflection

29 March 2020 (Lent 5)

Scripture: John 11:1-45 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹ Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴ But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." ⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶ after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰ But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." ¹¹ After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." ¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." ¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

²⁸ When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice,

“Lazarus, come out!”⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

Message

I have recently travelled to Ephesus in Turkey, and heard a story in the House of Virgin Mary.

A group of priests were retreating in the House of Virgin Mary. One day, they found that both hands on the sculpture of Virgin Mary had disappeared. None of them knew what was happening. Soon, they found the lost hands in a grove nearby and took them back, planning to fix the sculpture later. On the next day when they woke up, the pair of hands disappeared again. They thought: the person who played the prank was going too far! Then, they found the hands on a path near the creek after searching for a few days. They took turns to watch over the hands when they returned, in order not to lose them for the third time. Surprisingly, the hands were gone again on the next day.

They were very confused, for they knew it was not a prank made by men. They believed God was trying to reveal something to them. They then decided not to waste time searching for the pair of missing hands. Instead, they committed to spiritual practice through studying the bible and praying, praying that the revelation of God or Virgin Mary would come to them.

One night, many of them met Virgin Mary in their dreams. Some even recalled their conversations with Her. She said, “Go and tell others who trust in the Lord that I have finished my work on earth, and therefore these hands are no longer needed. From now on, those work will be passed onto you. You are my hands. You, my hands, should continue to work for the Lord.

I believe many of you are familiar with the story of Jesus raising Lazarus to life, what do we actually have to see before we decide to believe in Him?

I have been to the place mentioned above, since photos are prohibited, I can't prove to you how the hands of the sculpture look like. But here is my challenge to you: go and visit that house. It is definitely a decent place for doing individual or group spiritual practice. You may search online, to see if the hands of Virgin Mary are present. If you can still see the hands, it may imply that Mary thinks you are not diligent enough, so she cannot cast her burden yet but has to continue to work. If you can't see her hands, then congratulations! You must be her chosen one to continue with her work. Then, please do her work, and do your best to serve and love. I invite you to go and visit the House of Virgin Mary one day!

Reflection

1. In John 11:45, “Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.” What do we expect to see, before we decide to believe in Him?
2. On your journey of faith, are there any changes “before” and “after” have believed?
3. You have believed and changed. What is the next thing to do?

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