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Year B Ordinary 31

John 11: 32-44

A Grief Shared

John 11:32 Lord, if you had been here

This part of the story of Lazarus' death and return to life, the part which concerns Mary and Jesus gives insight to the way a Christian approaches the grief of bereavement.

There is no doubt from previous knowledge of Mary's relationship to Jesus, that she, like her sister, believed the scriptures; she had a deep love for and faith in the one she had come to call Lord - Master.

But that did not give her immunity from the pain of heart-rending sorrow.

She still has heart-room for the hurt, the doubt, the anger and the frustration which are the companions of grief.

*Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died!
The people are saying that you love my brother yet you are powerless to save him!*

Her interview with Jesus is typical of the Christian's prayer-room meeting with the Lord when facing life's darkest hours.

*When they met she fell at Jesus' feet
and poured out her heart and her mind - all the hurt, the questions, misgivings, doubts*

BUT still honouring him as Lord
which enables her to be open with him
and in doing so she discovers confirmation of that he is deeply moved by her sorrow
- he weeps with her tears
- he understands and accepts her hurt - her not understanding his ways of bringing glory to God

At his feet she is able to respond to the challenge to trust him
to believe that she will understand
that she will see the glory of God

The glory of God

And she did see the glory of God - in an amazing miracle

Not just the raising of a man from the dead
But something even more wonderful

She saw the glory of God
In Jesus - sharing her sorrow and pain
- giving her faith and hope
- deepening her love for her Lord

And even more!

Jesus encouraging the faith of all the mourners and friends at the grave
I thank you Father that you listen to me .. I say this to convince the people here ...

It was a big, big miracle which happened in Bethany that day.
and happens still for the Christian in the prayer-room of bereavement.

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Year B Ordinary 32

Mark 12: 37b - 44 [Watch for Religion](#) [Search for Life](#)

Mark 12: 38 and 43 Jesus said, watch out for the teachers of the Law. Look at this poor widow.

I like to think that Mark placed these two incidents together to make Jesus' point about REAL religion - or better still - REAL life in the Spirit of God

Thomas Merton wrote: What is important today is not to get man to accept religion as a human or cultural value, but to let him see that we are witnesses of Christ, of the new creation, of the Resurrection; that goes far beyond the phenomenon of religion.

In the Temple - at the heart of religious life - surrounded by a large crowd of hearers - Jesus is compelled to make his point, knowing that he is fuelling the fire which will lead to his death.

Watch out

Don't be deceived by the outward expression of religious faith

It should be noted that he is not here condemning religious practice. It has meaning and purpose. But watch that it does not become an end in itself; a means of self-aggrandisement and over-bearing piety - open to hypocrisy.

Jesus alludes to the religious leaders who walk around in long robes; who love to be greeted with respect when they walk in the market place; who crave power and authority; who expect to be given seats of honour in synagogue; who make sure they are observed when making long prayers ...

The reality is that SOME of those people abused their position - like receiving favours from widows whom they assist with their practical matters, even though they are not allowed to charge for such services.

It may not be difficult to make comparisons about false religious practice, but far better to look for the alternative. Which is what Jesus did ..

He called his disciples together and pointed out the poor widow, putting all she had into the offering bowl

Hers were just a couple of the smallest coins,
while rich men ostentatiously drop in their large amounts
BUT IN REALITY The widow has put in all she had
The others had given some of their 'leftovers'.

She had made a total commitment of life to God
They had begun by reckoning up what they think God is worth!

The motive for the gift is more important than the amount

That is true of our whole Christian life
Real Life in the Spirit Worship. Mission. Service all flow from that total commitment

Where do we stand?

It is not a question of giving but of living
Not religion but LIFE Resurrection life in Christ
Giving all for him who gave All for me



Year B Ordinary 33

Hebrews 10: 11 - 25

Forgiven Sinners

Hebrews 10. 12 Christ offered one sacrifice for sins .. and offering that is effective for ever ..

Sinners All

The apostle Paul assures us, *we have all sinned.*
If we did not know that we would not be here seeking the Lord

But we are not speaking here of *sins*. Rather, *of sin*.

The writer of this letter is speaking to a largely Jewish audience who would know the importance of regular sacrifices for a multitude of sins. Each sin demanded its own sacrifice for forgiveness.

But Jesus has changed that
His sacrifice for us - his death and resurrection cover all sins for all time

BECAUSE they are for SIN
Sin being our failure to fulfil the basic commandments
to love God with all heart, mind, soul and strength
and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves

That is total love for God and for others
To fail in this leads to a multitude of wrong thoughts, actions, words
which are denial of our total love

Our Consolation

is here
Jesus sacrifice reconciles us all to God - once and for all
What is required of us is to believe and accept it
and to live as God's forgiven sinners! Lives of holy love.

Working not for forgiveness but FROM for forgiveness

Added Blessings

That is a tall order but there the writer of this letter tell us there are added blessings to make it possible

- We have free, anytime, access to the holy presence of God through Jesus
- A sincere heart and sure faith together with a clear conscience bring us closer to God
- We have hope, trusting in God's promises, and we can hold firmly to that hope
- We have loving concern for each other and are encouraged by the Christian fellowship as together we live in preparation for the day of the Lord's coming

An amazing life in and through Christ!

Not yet perfect

- sometimes feeling a long way from it
- but living in the knowledge of God's forgiveness
- to be made real through our penitent trust in Jesus and his Cross.

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Year B First before Advent

John 18: 33 - 37

A new King and a new Kingdom

John 18: 36 and 37 Jesus answered Pilate 'My Kingdom does not belong to this world.' Pilate asked him, 'Are you a king then?'

Ultimate Question

For Pilate it was an academic and political question.

For Jesus it was a question not for debate by rulers and their empires, but to be addressed to every person.

Jesus is speaking of the Kingdom of God in the hearts and lives of his people
The kingdom which is that spiritual dimension
without which earthly kingdoms have no hope of success

*He said My Kingdom is not a worldly kingdom. If it was my disciples would be in arms
I am speaking of that kingdom which has (in the world's eyes) up-side-down values*

The Kingdom where TRUTH empowered by LOVE is paramount

How little Pilate could understand of it

The Kingdom which was underlain

with truth - the words of Jesus' teaching of which Pilate no doubt had knowledge

with love - the sacrificial love of God - to be seen in the suffering of Jesus on a cross - the event in which Pilate was about to be instrumental.

with right and righteousness - living in obedience to God and in harmony with his holy purposes - a way of life available to Pilate as it is to every individual

We may not be sure that Pilate was totally uncomprehending when Jesus said

I came into the world for one purpose - to speak about the truth - God's Word

BUT if he did understand it would have made humanly impossible demands on him to exchange his Kingdom for Jesus' Kingdom

It still does make demands for all who ask of Jesus

Are you a King? and then: *'Will you be MY King?'*

John makes it clear at the beginning and end of his Gospel record:

The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son. To those who believed he gave the right to become God's children.

These words are written in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah (the King), the Son of God, and that through your faith in him you may have life ..

That is Life in his Kingdom

Life with the King

There is no more wonderful experience than to travel through life at the side of the King of all kings