

Opening slide

Hope exhumed March 2020.mp4



Hope exhumed
John 11:17-44

▶ 1:42 / 11:51

CC ⚙️ 📺 🔍

Ice Breaker



Ice breaker (5 minutes)

- Life in lockdown is creating a wealth of memes, social media posts and updates from people via telephones and letters to local newspapers. What does your life in lockdown look like at the moment? What are the top three things and the worst three things?
- 4-days can feel a little longer in the current climate than usual. What would 4-days at this point in the week usually look like for you in the pre-CoVid climate? What does it now look like?
- If the government announced that lockdown would end in 4-days time, what would you most look forward to and why?

Link

- **Lazarus had been in the tomb for 4-days**
- **This is significant because, by Judaeo culture and beliefs, this meant that Lazarus was way beyond the realms of life (many Jews asserted the belief that the soul left the body after three days)**
- **To all intents and purposes, Lazarus was dead and was behind the locked tomb with any hope that his life on earth could continue**

Context - Read – John 11: 17-44

Jesus Comforts the Sisters of Lazarus

¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than two miles^[a] from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” ²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now

Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then 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?"

Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Area of Focus 1: Go back to who Jesus is



Re-read – John 11:20-26

.²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

Discuss

- Why do you think Martha goes out to meet Jesus. What is her motivation?
- If this had been you, would you have responded like Mary or Martha? Why?
- Jesus reminds Martha of who he is. If you were trying to explain this phrase / response to somebody that was a new Christian – how would you explain its meaning?
- In her grief, Martha may have struggled to understand and appreciate this promise. What other promises from Jesus, in the current climate, are you struggling to grasp or accept?
- Take a moment to re-read the entire passage. Note down as many promises or statements that Jesus offers about himself. Which stand out to you the most and why?

Key takeaways

- ✓ Jesus reminds the sisters in their grief of his uncompromising status and identity
- ✓ For Jesus, his promise stands true to both Lazarus (the dead) and to the sisters (in pain) and to everybody else who will have witnessed this discussion
- ✓ Jesus is uncompromising in his statement. He is the life and the resurrection. His promise reminds us of our mortality but also in our assurance of faith and salvation.

Area of focus 2: Remove the stone



Re-read: John 11: 37-39

³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said.

Reflection: Examine the picture

Notes: The New Testament sheds some light on Jewish burial practices of the first century C.E. Jesus' disciples took his body, bought a great quantity of myrrh and aloes, "and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury" (John 19:40). There was a delay in completing the preparation of the body for burial because of the Sabbath (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56). Luke (7:11–17) gives a vivid picture of the simple funeral of the poor; the body of a young man of Nain is borne out of the city on a pallet, clothed but without coffin, followed by the weeping mother and "much people of the city." ***Why do you think tombs were used in this way? What impact do you think tombs had on families, communities or individuals affected by a person's death?***

Discuss

- In the sermon, Sean surfaced the idea of hope being behind the stone in the tomb. What are the areas of life you are struggling to remain optimistic about at the moment?
- There have been some uplifting stories shared in our world from recent weeks. Have you heard of any? Which have stood out to you and why?
- The Renshaw family (a family from Holy Trinity church) produced a thankful board, listing things that they are thankful and appreciative for. This can help to maintain some optimism in the current climate. What would go on your wall / board? Why?
- Jesus instruction is to 'remove the stone'. Which stones are in the way of your hope at the moment? (e.g. negative media, social media feeds with horror stories of the current CV issues, particular difficulties being faced in your family / friendship circles)

Area of focus 3: Remove the grave clothes



Activity

Read the following article

<https://www.positive.news/society/media/separating-fact-from-deadly-fiction-the-london-team-factchecking-the-coronavirus/>

Summary: find out about the team(s) of people having to work hard to fact and sense check media reports regarding the current CV outbreak. This team are keen to ensure that audiences have facts about the current issues and don't get lost in the panic and negativity that can impact the wellbeing of our world right now.

Discuss

- Re-read Jesus' instructions to remove the grave stone and grave clothes. Why do you think Jesus was so intent on others helping Lazarus in this way? He could have simply empowered Lazarus to do it – so why didn't he?
- What was the impact on others for Jesus to perform the miracle in this way?
- On Lazarus?
- The sisters?
- The community?
- The other disciples?
- In what way does Jesus need us to remove the stones/ grave clothes from others in the current climate? (Namely those things that may be killing / infecting peoples' hope)
- What do you need help with in the current climate and where can you access this support?
- Perhaps Jesus is reminding us in this story that faith is one part of the resolution; there are practical steps we must also take as believers to navigate difficult times of grief, pain, loss and discouragement. What might these steps be?

Take a moment to reflect on these links and the practical steps you could take as individuals and as a group:

- ✓ [Mental health and wellbeing tips – staying safe in the current climate](#)
- ✓ [Mental wellbeing whilst staying at home](#)
- ✓ [Lots of free resources here for CofE groups and individuals to help navigate the current issues many of us will be facing](#)