

### New Life Now

Near the end of his Gospel, St. John explains why he has written this book, "... so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life ..." (20:30,31) Life, specifically new life now through faith in Jesus, is John's purpose in writing and the central theme of his Gospel. John tells us at the very beginning that in Jesus "was life, and the life was the light" for all.

The last great miracle, or sign, John records in his account is the raising of Lazarus from the dead. We are introduced to the story through Jesus' dialogue with Lazarus' sisters Martha and Mary. Jesus tells Martha "I am the resurrection and the life." A relationship with Jesus, belief in Jesus means new life right now, not just at the last day, not only at the end of physical life.

A couple of chapters after this story, John tells us about another conversation. This time it is after the "Last Supper," after Jesus washed the disciples' feet, after Judas has left the room to betray Jesus. Thomas is anxious about the days ahead. All the disciples are confused about Jesus' prediction of his passion, his death. Jesus tells them, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the father, but by me ..." (14:6)

Next Sunday, we begin considering the way, the truth, the life of Jesus passion and glory, the cross and empty tomb. Today we consider how this life changed Lazarus' life, brought him back from the dead. This sign of God's love also became the final event leading the chief priests and Pharisees to gather the council, the Sanhedrin.

John describes the meeting, "(They) said "What are we to do? This man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation ... Caiaphas, the high priest ... said to them, " ... it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation should not perish ... from that day on they took counsel how to put (Jesus) to death." (11:45-53)

Restoring life to a man dead for 4 days is certainly a miracle. Jesus healed others who had died, including the 12 year old daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue in Galilee, and the son of a poor widow in a town called Nain (Luke 7:11-16) When John the Baptist asked his disciples to find out if Jesus is really the Messiah, Jesus tells them "the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised up..." (Luke 7:22)

So John uses this miracle to prepare us to consider how we can experience new life through our faith in Jesus. Our Lenten preparation, for some, including the Monday night series, has focused us upon The Five Marks of Love: Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform, Treasure. These five actions lead to new life. They are signs of new life in our world, now.

Some are preparing for Confirmation, Reception, Reaffirmation, and Holy Baptism. These are sacramental and liturgical celebrations of new life now. All of us are trying to make sense of the world we live in at this precise moment of history.

God is calling us to new life knowing who Jesus is, what he did and the difference Jesus makes in the world today – the world as it is, and the world as it could be. New life through our faith leads us to experience change, growth, renewal. Today is "Opening Day" for major league baseball. Jesus offers us many "opening" days in the course of our lives.

As we move closer to the cross, can we see this new life, can we grab hold of it? It may mean change; it may call for change; new life usually comes only after some pain, some suffering, some death.

During this lent, in our Gospel lessons from St. John, we have seen Jesus offer Nicodemus this new life. We have read how the Samaritan woman experienced new life. The man born blind regained sight and came to believe Jesus to be the Son of God. Today, Lazarus lives. Jesus tells his sisters, "Unbind him, and let him go." New life means freedom. This can be God's gift to us also.