

**First Fifteen: April 4-8 (Palm Sunday)**  
**Focus Scripture: Luke 19:28-40**

**Monday: John 11:1-16**

**Going Deeper:** There is so much going on in these first sixteen verses in John 11... we hardly know where to focus! I encourage you to follow your heart, where do you find yourself caught up in, or connected to the story? What elements tug on your heart or pique your curiosity with a desire to want to know more. John is quite clear, Jesus loved this family and although he lingered before responding to their request, his intent was to go and be with them. The absence of God is an ongoing struggle for our faith. Jesus' response in John 11:9-10 share an important understanding of this struggle for us... *"Aren't there twelve hours in the day? Whoever walks in the day doesn't stumble because they see the light of the world. But whoever walks in the night does stumble because the light isn't in them."* (CEB) What do you hear Jesus saying? Listen to the wording, he seems to be saying we can or are able to see even within darkness because the light of the world is in us. He is telling us our faith becomes our primary lens for seeing and understanding the events of our world. He is telling us to trust God is good, all the time... especially in those moments when we cannot see the outcome, and even when we can, and it is not the one we desired.

**Prayer:** Jesus you are the Light of the world, shine clearly and brightly today helping me chose the path or paths that will guide me closer to you and help me stay focused even when the outcome is unknown. Deepen my faith and trust that you and the blessings of God are good all the time. Help me see beyond myself, using you as my lens of understanding. Amen.

**Tuesday: John 11:17-27**

**Going Deeper:** As we approach Palm Sunday and Easter these verses lead us to the central message of our faith; God's grace and God's gift of resurrection and eternal life. Obviously, this is not something we can tackle in a paragraph, but we can unpack the implications of this conversation between Jesus and Martha for us. Martha's faith in Jesus trusts he can change the course of our lives. Her faith understands and accepts Jesus' connection and relationship with God, and she sees it as providing life over death. Could this also mean a life beyond the impact and bondage death, or deadening ideas have upon us? She *"knows"* her brother will rise in the resurrection at the end of days, but Jesus seems to be pushing her, and us, when he responds... *"Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"* (John 11:26 – CEB) This is one of those teachings where I wish Jesus left footnotes! What is he asking Martha and us to see and consider? What I have felt drawn to over the years is a belief in resurrection as a transformational truth that happens throughout our lives as our faith grows deeper into God's love and meaning for us. Yes, I believe as Martha did in life after death, but I also believe and trust resurrection in those life changing moments where I overcame ideas and behaviors that were life draining. Can resurrection then also be understood to be found in the transformational moments of our lives where we can see beyond

those ideas, habits, and thoughts that held us captive, and unable to live fully and freely?

**Prayer:** Lord of love and mercy, I believe as Martha did, that you hold the keys to life beyond death. I ask for resurrection hope not merely for tomorrow or when I die, but also right now to enable me to live my life deeply, freely, and fully. Help me sense your life-giving presence with today, in every moment through out the day. Amen.

**Wednesday: John 11:28-37**

**Going Deeper:** Both Martha and Mary greet Jesus with the same expression of faithful sorrow... *“Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.”* (John 11:21 & 32 – CEB) What strikes me in these verses is the divided response of those who were present to mourn with the family and who then witnessed Jesus’ interaction with Mary and Martha. Some saw the depth of Jesus’ love for this family while others questioned Jesus’ absence, wondering why he had not come sooner... *“He healed the eyes of the man born blind. Couldn’t he have kept Lazarus from dying?”* (John 11:37 – CEB) Martha and Mary words seem to indicative this same idea, if Jesus had arrived sooner, he could have kept Lazarus from dying, but their sorrow in loss does not diminish their trust in God’s love and goodness. We always have a choice of how we will interpret what we see and experience in our lives. Will we question our faith and the One in whom we believe, or will we accept the path of our lives... continuing to trust even allowing our faith to deepen on the path of loss and sorrow as we learn to understand this too is a path that leads to life, even life in abundance.

**Prayer:** Lord of abundant love, help me to see your blessings and love in every moment. Help me to allow your wisdom which is greater than mine to guide me, knowing you will always lead me into paths of life, hope, and mercy. In trusting love, I lift my life and all I love into your hands. Amen.

**Thursday: John 11:38-46**

**Going Deeper:** John’s Gospel is the only one of the four that tell this story of Lazarus’ resurrection, we do not know why this is the case, but this story and its events have deep implications for Jesus and the John shares this with us. It begins with Jesus at a tomb sealed by a large stone, although Jesus is on the outside of the tomb calling for the stone to be removed, rather than within it. He reassures those who were both present and those who continue to listen... *Didn’t I tell you that if you believe, you will see God’s glory?”* (John 11:40 – CEB) We assume Jesus is referring to the rising of Lazarus from the dead when he asks this, but I wonder if there is more to his question. In John’s Gospel Jesus’ reference to seeing the Glory of God was connected to his being lifted up upon the Cross, his surrender into God’s love and trusting the outcome... meaning resurrection. The images of Lazarus as he comes forth from the tomb are unlike Jesus’ resurrection, where the linen cloth had already been removed and folded. Here Jesus instructs the crowd to untie, or unbind him and let him go or is it... set him free? I have often wondered who is it that is truly being unbound and set free in these verses, and

how does this unbinding prepare us for our own experience of resurrection? The defining aspect for both is our own surrender into God's love... and trusting the outcome.

**Prayer:** Trusting love my God is not easy, nor is surrender. It requires me to let go of what I love and hold most dear; both the people and things that give me meaning and identity. Help me grow in my trusting love so I can hold all things loosely and in doing so lead me into my truest self and deepest understanding of who and what gives me meaning and identity. Amen.

**Friday: John 11:45-53**

**Going Deeper:** These verses tell us a familiar story about ourselves... about a truth we really don't want to hear. These verses pull back the curtain on power and our desire to hold onto it; they call us to open our eyes to how hard change is, and that most of us are resistant to it... especially when change shifts the balance away from us. What we also see or witness in these verses is the movement of God, the flow of God's love and desire which cannot be thwarted by our resistance or even outright efforts to stop it. The most we can do is prolong it, which really only keeps us from experiencing the fullness of God's love and presence for ourselves. The entire movement within these events call us to move closer into God's love, where we are invited to let go, and surrender ourselves to the power, wonder and experience of resurrection for ourselves. But to do so we must also realize we will experience loss, realizing resistance will arise because both change and resurrection involve what often feels like pain and may appear to be leading us to something that does not look like a blessing, but something we want or feel we must avoid.

**Prayer:** Lord, Palm Sunday is upon us. Holy Week and Easter are near, help me to rest this weekend and be ready to walk with you on your, or is it our journey to the Cross? Help me my Savior to follow you, resisting my urges to retreat, allowing your light and love to lead me to those places where I need to surrender so I too can find my resurrection. Amen.