

# JESUS MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

LENT 2023 | DIOCESE OF ATLANTA

## WEEK 5: JESUS AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

These reflection guides are designed to supplement the videos, for use in a small group Bible study. They are created for the leader's ease of use, and with links to free web-based resources.

### REFLECTION

If anything really dies in this story, it is four things: the fantasy that faith in Jesus means we are exempt from being mortal; that in sickness in death we are abandoned by God; that death and resurrection are in perennial competition as equals; and that death means there is an absence of resources for God to work with.

The transferrable vitality of this story to us is that God does God's best work with sick, despairing, and dying things!

We may not be Lazarus, but Jesus still makes all the difference between life and death

~Bishop Wright

### SCRIPTURE

**Read John 11:1-45.** Jesus purposefully delayed coming to Bethany, and Lazarus died. Mary & Martha already knew Jesus could heal, but this experience of grief and loss invited them to know Jesus better, that he could bring new life!

**Read Ezekiel 37:1-14.** In Ezekiel's vision, dry bones come back to life. Not just a 4 day old dead body, but the driest, most completely dead bones. Ezekiel's message was for a people in Exile, a people who had lost everything, including their imagined future. But God's message through Ezekiel was that God can do anything. It harkens back to the Genesis creation of humankind. God can still create life out of anything.

### DISCUSSION

- Share a "resurrection" story: a time when something you thought was dead (a relationship, a possible future) came alive in a new way, a time when loss and grief gave rise to new life. How did experiencing that transform you or your faith?
- Which of the four things that "die" in this story (see Reflection quote) resonates most with you? Share an experience where you saw one of those untrue beliefs die in your own life. How were you changed?
- What is your response to the image we see in this story of Jesus walking towards us in grief and loss? What do you experience as you think about that?
- What source of grief or loss are you currently facing? What is your prayer in this time?

### ARTICLES

#### For Further Reading:

More ideas and background about who Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were:

<https://margmowczko.com/martha-mary-and-lazarus-of-bethany/>

### PRAYER

*Merciful God, you look with compassion on all who grieve and suffer loss. Remember us, O Lord, in mercy, nourish our souls with patience, comfort us with a sense of your goodness, lift up your countenance upon us, and give us peace until we see new life and resurrection through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

~Based on BCP 831 no. 55

### TAKE-AWAY

**Listen**, (Reflect, Pray):

- "Come Alive (Dry Bones)": <https://youtu.be/uF6HlhGy3LM>
- "Graves into Gardens": <https://youtu.be/YihKbG8-X3U>

**Watch:** Observe nature. Look for places of new life and new growth. Think back and imagine what these plants and animals had to go through this winter to come to place they are now. What is the Spirit saying to you through your observations of creation?

**Plant:** Plant a seed. Reflect on the idea that it might seem like a burial, but in fact, new life is beginning.