

***In the name of + JESUS +***

The Gospel Reading for today is long and complex. We'd better get down to business... and that's precisely what Jesus does. "Lazarus, come out!" He yells out in a loud voice. And that's what happened, just like that! The dead man came out of his grave!

Jesus has been "getting down to business" over these past few weeks as we've followed Him through the Gospels. He called for child-like faith from a theologically-trained smart guy named Nicodemus, bringing him from the stone-cold deadness of law-&-order faith, to the freedom of the greatest news of all time: *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life!"*

And He got down to business with a Samaritan woman at a well of water—a lady parched and drying up inside even as she drew water. Tattered and tossed about by so many people who could care less about her, bent and broken to the point where she had no more self-respect and no more hope. Jesus got down to business with her. He gave her the water of forgiveness—drenched her in it! And it flowed forth within her to everyone she met thereafter!

Last week Jesus got down to business with a man who couldn't see and with religious leaders who thought they could see but were like blind umpires in a baseball game. He gave sight to this guy born blind, shedding the light of His glory and saving power into the blinding darkness of know-it-all, self-righteous hearts.

Wherever He is, Jesus gets down to business — including today, as in the Gospel Reading He turns to His disciples and announces that they're going back to Judea to see about good friend, Lazarus. The disciples, though, were alarmed. The area around Jerusalem is by this time **a danger zone!**

Only a few days before they were in Jerusalem, and Jesus' detractors were so upset with Him that they were going to stone Him! Now—of all things—Jesus decides to return, but He isn't afraid. No concern in the least! After all, what can they do to Him? Kill Him? Well...yes...and **they will**, but **HE** is in control of the timing of that. They will not take His life from Him. He will lay it down. The threat of death has no power over Him.

Jesus gets down to business, though from the Mary and Martha side of things—as often from our side as well!—Jesus sure does seem to take His sweet time. If He had just been there when He should have been... Have you ever said that?

But Jesus gets down to business in His time AND in His way. “***This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory,***” He says when He hears about how gravely ill His good friend, Lazarus, is. Yet...” ***It is for God’s glory.***”

Lazarus was, indeed, dead and gone—now four days and reeking in his grave. But Jesus was about God’s business, and God’s business is always the show-stopper — the unmistakable action that causes people to shut up and take notice - looking away from themselves and their own hot-shot ingenuity and their own righteousness. Jesus gets down to business, and **it is for God’s glory.**

**GET THIS:** Even in the middle of His own sense of deep loss and gut-wrenching sorrow Jesus expresses in the tears He sheds, nonetheless, **HE GETS DOWN TO BUSINESS.** Nothing—absolutely nothing!—will get in His way: not the timetable we think He ought to keep, not the powerful emotions that come with numbing tragedy and loss, not even the threat of re-entering the very center of personal danger and destructive consequences. Jesus gets down to business: “***Lazarus, come out!***” Just what He is commanding leaves no room for schwaflle or doubt! God’s business happens—in His time and in His way. It happens! The dead man comes out, **ALIVE**, still sporting his grave-wear.

Jesus gets down to business, and although this business is the “*straw-that-breaks-the-camel’s-back*” as it puts the screws to the religious leaders and forces their hands to the point that they’re reaching for hammer and nails, Jesus will NOT be stopped.

Jesus has come from the Father to do the Father business—the business of declaring the kingdom of God’s reign in no uncertain terms, the business of taking His dear friend’s death and using it for God’s glory, the business of taking the full weight of our deserved punishment for sin and nailing it to His cross, the business of suffering...and dying...and being buried away in a tomb, as dead as Lazarus, but being raised by God’s power on the third day, declaring God’s business complete. **FINISHED.** IT IS FINISHED: “***Death has been swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O grave, where is your sting?***”

“Let’s get down to business,” Jesus says to us today as we’ve huddled together around Him, listening and watching. He wastes no time on small talk nor is He distracted by all that distracts us these days—coronavirus included. He listens to us as we return to our Baptism, speaking words of confession and repentance. They’re not “just words” to Him. He knows our hearts—our thoughts, our attitudes, all our words, and our deeds. Jesus knows. He has come just in time—in God’s time!—to rescue us, speaking the words that the Father would have us hear in ear and heart: “***My son, my daughter, be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven you!***”

That’s the way it happens again today. Jesus gets down to business, calling us to a brand NEW LIFE — to life risen in His triumph over our sin and our death, life that lives in the boldness of child-like trust in Him alone, life that’s flooded with the Living Water of His presence and peace, life that holds tightly to His promises and sees His gracious

leading even in the pitch-darkness of death. ***“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me...”***

By the way, Jesus has more business to conduct. As the risen, ascended Lord, He will come again in all His great power and glory. It will be like all the other times He shows up: in God’s time (“*no one knows the day/hour...*”). But He will come—and He will call forth all who are in their graves.

***“Lazarus, come out!*** Mary, come out! Dave, come out! Erik, come out! Christine, come out! Sue, come out! Larry, come out! John, come out! Liz, come out!”

That’s the Lord’s last bit of business that He will finish up. Dead bodies, like Lazarus—like yours!—will come forth. The Lord of Life is calling. He’s not mincing words nor dilly-dallying around! His words are **truth** and they are **life**.

You will surely recognize His voice...the voice with which He has called you by name in your Baptism...the voice with which He daily forgives you all your sins...the voice with which He welcomes you time-and-time again to His Table...the voice with which He cries with you in all the losses of your life...the voice of His healing comfort, of His, ***“Peace, be still,”*** and of His final, ***‘WELCOME HOME, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT!’***

And then...His business is done. It’s finished.

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**SOLI DEO GLORIA!**