

Thursday– We continue our meditation and reflection in John’s Gospel today, again, with the account of Lazarus’ raising. Remembering our reflection from yesterday and the interesting way Jesus responded to Lazarus’ sickness/death. Today we find Jesus arriving in Bethany. Met by Martha and Mary, we see Jesus respond to their despair with strong emotion (read vs 17-38). How would you describe what was taking place in Jesus and why do you think it was taking place. Do you think Jesus was fully aware of what he was about to do and what the results would be? Why or why not?

Verses 40-44 show Jesus at the tomb and he offers a prayer. He makes an interesting qualifying statement (vs 42); What do you think is the purpose of this qualifying statement in his prayer? Are there any personal or practical applications from your reflections today? What are they and how will you apply them?

Friday– Our Week Five Lenten devotional concludes this week with our reading Romans 8:1-14. A suggestion for today is to read the passages from several (perhaps) unfamiliar translations (www.biblegateway.com has many). Suggestions for reading included the following versions: NLT, CEB, MSG, YLT, and/or The Voice). After reading from a few of these translations, answer the following questions:

1. Did you notice anything new/different by reading the different translations/versions?
2. What does verse two mean to you in a practical sense?
3. How does verse nine make you feel?
4. Does verse twelve give you encouragement or does it make you feel despairingly about yourself?

Spend some time after the exercise talking to God about how this reading has impacted you. Imagine God, Jesus, sitting with you now. How does he look at you? What does he say to you? Write out your final thoughts in a prayer to the Lord Jesus.

2017 Weekly Lenten Devotional Guide



Fifth Week of Lent (April 02-08, 2017)

Suggestions for your devotional weeks:

- ◆ Set aside a minimum of 30 minutes to work the reflection exercise.
- ◆ Purchase a small composition notebook to work in and journal your thoughts and prayers.
- ◆ Consider joining a group or starting a small group to work through the devotional exercises together in community.



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Prayer for the week: You may wish to begin and end your devotional time with this prayer.

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Scriptures for reading and reflection this week:

- Ezekiel 37:1-14
- Psalm 130
- John 11:1-45
- Romans 8:6-11

Daily Reflection Questions and Exercises:

Monday— There are opinions, speculation, and differing views over what the “best” interpretation is for Ezekiel’s vision in the Valley of Dry Bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14). While many interpretations may prophetic meaning and more immediate historical context, there might also be a close and personal application from this remarkable experience shared through the prophet’s eyes. Today’s exercise will require two steps: (1) Perform your due diligence; what might you determine this event meant to the people with whom Ezekiel might have shared it with first? You will likely need to do some research using a study Bible, commentary, or search from various sources on the internet (try to vet your sources on the basis of their authority and reliability). (2) Finishing step one, imagine from your own life experiences, what this account of Ezekiel and the Dry Bones could mean for you personally. Once you have an idea, make a comparison to your original study and determine what your application will be.

Tuesday— Psalm 130 is another *Psalm of Ascent* (remember Psalm 121 from a couple weeks ago). Consider again how this psalm may have been prayed and sung. Pilgrims were converging on Jerusalem, in some cases to make atonement for their sin, which in this day, could only be done by a priest and through temple sacrifice. They might have been holding the weight of their sin for a long time. Consider yourself one of these pilgrims, looking for absolution, waiting a long time, feeling the burden of guilt and shame, fearing possible repercussion if a sin is left unforgiven—and now you approach the place of forgiveness. As you imagine this scene with these emotions, spend a few moments in silence as you allow the Holy Spirit to examine your own heart and mind. Now, take notice, is there anything God uncovers that you would like to bring to Him. Remember these words (Psalm 130:7-8), *Hope in the LORD; with Him there is unfailing love. He will redeem you from every kind of sin.*

Wednesday— The account of Lazarus’ death in John’s Gospel (chapter 11) contains more troubling inferences, as have some of our previous gospel readings. In verse four, Jesus says Lazarus’ death happened for the glory of the Lord. Then, verse five, informs us Jesus deliberately stayed away from Martha and Mary for a couple more days. While we have the benefit of Scripture and hindsight, Martha and Mary did not. Consider their thoughts and how they may have interpreted Jesus’ actions...especially consider the urgency of their need (Lazarus had been sick, but was still alive—they had witnessed Jesus heal people, but Jesus did not show up. Lazarus died and they were in mourning...still Jesus stayed away). Write down your thoughts as if you were Mary and/or Martha. Now, consider your own experiences (recent or past). Are there any similar events where you may have felt betrayed or abandoned by Jesus? What might Jesus be saying to you now? How do you answer Him?