

5th Sun Lent A
Life Giving Power... Lazarus

Introduction...

Today's Gospel continues the stories of Jesus' miracles in John's Gospel. John wants us to know that in Jesus God has walked among us. Jesus is the human face of God. Jesus assures us and shows us that God is on our side and wants us to flourish... Let's take a look at this.

Refrain...

I Last Several Sundays

Let's review the past couple of Sundays as the Gospel of John presents the healing stories of Jesus.

Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

He brings her true refreshment,
the life-giving waters of grace,
which well up within her thirsty heart,
as she proclaims Jesus to her fellow villagers as "the Messiah" – God's anointed,
who would bring God's gracious salvation and healing to God's people.

For what do you thirst:
peace of mind,
rest from weariness,
encouragement during a tough stretch on your journey,
help and healing for a loved one who is suffering?
What thirst do you take this day to our gracious Jesus,
our Messiah?

Last Sunday we met the man born blind.
Jesus brings light into his darkness...
The light of God's compassion and healing,
and a dawning awareness of God's presence in his life and of who Jesus really was...
the enlightened man now says, "I do believe, Lord,"
and he falls on his knees and "worships" him.

Is there any "darkness" in your life?

Into what darkness do you need the light of Jesus' gracious healing power to shine?

Perhaps it's an envious heart which leads to resentment and even anger...

Why don't I have what they have?

With such sentiments we are blinded to God's blessings in our own lives and to the gratitude we should show for God's blessings.

Do anger and cynicism cast dark shadows over an awareness of God's love and presence in our lives?

Perhaps an addictive behavior brings the darkness of guilt and shame because it seems to hold us in bondage.

Let me give one simple example of the latter.

Our American culture supports a 2 billion dollar a year industry of pornography.

It's everywhere – in hotels, on our TVs, on the Internet. It supposedly "doesn't hurt anyone."

But what darkness does it bring into the hearts of so many men in our culture who begin to treat women as "boy toys" and who can only look upon women as "bodies" to be rated.

Before my beautiful niece was married she stopped going to "night spots." She said she felt like a piece of meat being inspected?

Women are hurt by porn.

And some women think that they have to dress seductively so that they will be noticed.

And we men are hurt because our ability to relate to women as precious people is wounded.

This is darkness.

What darkness in our lives do we need loving Jesus to enlighten with his healing power?

Refrain...

II This Sunday's Gospel

In today's Gospel Jesus enters the world of death and grieving.

He walks side by side with those who grieve.

Jesus himself "began to weep," as he joins those whom he loves at Lazarus' tomb.

Imagine that – our God weeps!

But then something awesome happens.
Jesus assures us that our loving God is stronger than death and grieving.
Jesus shows us that grieving and death are not the last word, the final curtain, the end, period.
Jesus raises his friend Lazarus.

Jesus himself goes further...
loving Jesus will undergo suffering and even death because of sin...
but our gracious God will raise Jesus from death into a new dimension, a new creation – promise of what awaits us after our death.

St. Paul, Jesus faithful Apostle, could then proclaim with the early Christians...
O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?...
Thanks be to God who has given us the victory thru our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1 Cor 15:55,57)

Refrain...

III Drawing Close to Jesus in Prayer

Can we today draw close to Jesus?
Can we take our thirsty hearts to him for refreshment?
Can we take our darkness to Jesus for the light of his gracious healing?
Can we be encouraged that loving Jesus has himself walked amidst grief and suffering... and even death... and that he brings life?
Can we trust that our gracious God is stronger than our fears and even stronger than death?

I believe that we must be people of prayer to have this kind of trust in Jesus.

This challenges us to be people of prayer,
who each day lift our minds and hearts to God.

Blessed Mother Theresa described prayer as "making room for God in our hearts."

That's not always easy... we are so busy with our own agenda, our own worries, our own successes, our own fears.

I believe we need to make time for Jesus every day...
it's called prayer.

***Jesus wants to abide with us,
to bring his refreshing light and life giving power into our lives each
day.***

Can we let Jesus do this?

Or are we too busy?

Are we too busy to pray but not too busy to watch TV?

Can we say a morning prayer each morning?

***Can we say meal prayers, thanking God for the blessing of food and
sustenance each day?***

***Can we thank God each evening for the day,
asking forgiveness for any faults,
and blessing God for the kindnesses done to us that day?***

If we are spending time with Jesus and getting to know Jesus each day...
and allow his light and life giving power to bath our lives each day,
something begins to happen within our hearts...
within our lives...
we begin to change...
how we view life changes,
how we react to situations changes,
how we treat people changes...

As the light and life giving power of Christ dawns in our lives each day, it
heals our thirsts, our spiritual blindness, and any fear and grieving we carry
in our hearts...

- We are not so self-centered and self-pampered... because life is not just about us...
- We realize that we don't always have to prove ourselves... because we are loved by God...
- We don't always have to be perfect and have the right answers...because we are not god, but we *are* God's beloved...
- We aren't so burdened by worries and fears so much... because we begin to realize that we are not in charge... God is.

- We become more aware of our own addictions and sinfulness... but now bathed in the healing light and life giving power of Christ's love.
- We begin to have more peace of mind and heart.
- We become more aware that Jesus, our Good Shepherd, is present at our side each step of our journey, every day.
- Maybe Psalm 23 takes on more meaning for us...

The Lord is my Shepherd...

we might even start off our day with that Psalm.

- How we act each day can also begin to change... not necessarily drastically at first, but with little steps, in small ways...

Jesus refreshes our soul.

Jesus heals our own blindness.

Jesus brings life into our deadened hearts.

Refrain...

Conclusion...

At this Eucharist today let us ask Jesus to come into our hearts.

As we receive Jesus into our hearts at Communion...

Ask Jesus to refresh our thirsty hearts.

Ask Jesus to enlighten our darkened hearts.

Ask Jesus for his life giving power to be in our hearts this day.

And pray...

Refrain...