

Raising the Dead, or Just Waking Up the Sleepwalkers?

Introduction: The Great Sleeper

Have you ever tried waking someone up from a deep sleep? I'm talking about the kind of sleep where the person's drooling on their pillow, sprawled out like a starfish, and when you finally get them to open their eyes, they mumble, "Five more minutes!" before rolling over.

That's us, spiritually speaking. And this Sunday's Gospel (*John 11:1-45*) is a wake-up call louder than an alarm clock with a megaphone. Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is more than a miracle. It's a divine slap in the face saying, "*Wake up! You're more alive than you think!*"

But the principle being denied today? It's *Faith in the Resurrection*. It's the belief that God can bring life from death—not just at the end of time, but here and now. And if you don't believe me, just ask Lazarus.

I. St. Augustine's Perspective: Sleepers in the Grave

St. Augustine had a field day with this Gospel. He pointed out the humor in Jesus saying, "*Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up.*" (*John 11:11*). The disciples respond like concerned parents, "*Lord, if he is sleeping, he will recover.*" (*John 11:12*). Translation: "*Why bother waking him? Let the man nap!*"

Augustine chuckles at the irony: "*They were thinking of the rest of the body, but the Lord was speaking of the rest of the soul.*" In other words, the disciples were clueless. They thought they were dealing with a snooze button, not a resurrection.

But here's the punchline: We often act the same way. We underestimate the power of God because we're too busy making excuses for why miracles don't happen. We rationalize death, despair, sin, and brokenness instead of expecting God to do something about it.

St. Augustine said, "*Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.*" Too often, we want to see before we believe. We want Lazarus walking before we trust that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

II. The Moral Principle Under Attack: Faith in the Resurrection

Today, faith in the Resurrection is more contested than ever. Oh, we might say we believe in it—but do we live like we believe it?

St. John Chrysostom had something to say about this: "*Why are you afraid of death? What you fear is not death, but the loss of what you have in this world.*" We cling to worldly things, thinking they're our true life. We act like Lazarus's tomb is more real than the Lord who stands outside it.

Modern culture worships the *status quo*. Anything miraculous, supernatural, or beyond human control is dismissed as fantasy. People believe in science but not the One who created everything science studies.

The Pharisees, who should have known better, refuse to believe even after Lazarus is raised. "*If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him.*" (*John 11:48*). Their problem wasn't evidence

—it was a refusal to accept the truth. They preferred their cozy graves of power and control over the resurrection Jesus offered.

III. The Practical Lesson: Unbinding Ourselves

When Jesus finally shouts, “*Lazarus, come out!*” (*John 11:43*), Lazarus emerges looking like a mummy fresh from a discount costume shop. Jesus says, “*Unbind him, and let him go.*” (*John 11:44*).

St. Cyril of Alexandria notes that this command is more profound than it seems. The community had to *participate* in the miracle by unbinding Lazarus. Just as today, we are called to help unbind one another from sin, despair, and unbelief.

Here are some practical takeaways:

1. Stop Making Tombs Out of Your Problems:

How often do we bury our dreams, hopes, or even our faith under a rock and call it “*being realistic*”? St. Teresa of Avila said, “*Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things are passing; God never changes.*” We need to remember that the impossible is not impossible for God.

2. Participate in the Miracle:

Notice that Jesus asked the people to roll away the stone. He could have snapped His fingers and done it Himself, but He *invites them to cooperate*. St. John Chrysostom said, “*God does not take away our free will; He invites us to work with Him.*” Are we willing to help unbind the Lazaruses of our day? The broken, the lost, the discouraged? Or do we just walk by their tombs muttering, “*That’s someone else’s problem.*”

3. Speak Life, Not Death:

How often do we speak words of death over our situations? “This will never work.” “I can’t change.” “My faith is weak.” Jesus *spoke* life, and it happened. St. Francis de Sales reminds us, “*Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength.*” When we speak words of hope and faith, we participate in the power of the Resurrection.

IV. Saints Who Laughed at Death

The saints weren’t immune to the seriousness of death, but they sure didn’t fear it. St. Lawrence, roasted alive, said, “*Turn me over, I’m done on this side.*” Now that’s someone who didn’t see death as the end!

St. Philip Neri would deliberately act silly to keep himself from taking life too seriously. Once, when asked how he could be so joyful, he said, “*The cheerful are the true saints. They do more good than the learned.*”

If our faith in the Resurrection is real, we should be the most joyful people in the world. Why? Because we know that even death is not the end—it’s just a nap.

V. Conclusion: Wake Up and Live

When Jesus said, *“I am the Resurrection and the Life”* (John 11:25), He meant it. But too often, we live like He said, *“I am the Interesting Theory and the Good Moral Teacher.”*

Lazarus was dead—truly dead. But Jesus raised him to prove that death is not the final word. And the funny thing? Lazarus didn't even get to keep his grave clothes. Jesus made sure the community helped him out of them, just like He calls us to help each other find freedom.

So, do we have faith in the Resurrection, or are we just sleepwalking through life? St. Augustine said, *“Faith is believing what you do not see; the reward of faith is to see what you believe.”*

Let's not be like those who sleepwalk through faith. Let's roll away the stones, unbind one another, and live the Resurrection *now*.