

Daily Devotional, August 24, 2020 Unwrapping the Old Life

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." John 11:41-44 (NIV)

This is a most powerful moment in Jesus' ministry while here on earth. The Lord asks God, His Father to confirm to this crowd of people gathered at the gravesite of Lazarus, that He was in fact, the Messiah. This moment displays the power of God over death and His willingness to intervene in the events of our lives in ways that exceed our ability to comprehend. Jesus was brought into this world most especially to redeem us from our sin and to offer us everlasting life through our belief in Him, but also to reveal to us how much God wants to be an active part of our everyday existence. The moment when water became excellent wine, the children of both Jairus and the Roman Centurion are raised from death, the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dumb speak and the lepers are cured - with a touch, or a command—even from a distance—all of these are examples of God wanting to draw close, and to draw us even closer.

There is a most important picture that is being painted for us here in this story, and it is very easy to miss. Jesus prays and calls Lazarus to come out of the tomb. Martha had warned Jesus that her brother had been dead for four days and his body would basically reek, since it would already be decaying. Lo and behold, Lazarus indeed walks through the opened doorway of the tomb, still bound in the strips of cloth he had been wrapped in for burial.

If we could for a moment try to see these cloth wrappings as our old sin-stained life and Lazarus' resurrection as the moment of *our* salvation. Our old life no longer has any power over us. We are free from the tomb, yet it still burdens us. It refuses to simply fall away and leave us. I want you to notice: Does Jesus walk over and unwrap Lazarus? No. Jesus commands *those around* Lazarus to unwrap him. Through our encouragement and aiding of those who struggle with their belief, we can help to remove those old grave clothes that bind them, in the same way that other believers and mentors have helped us. And we can remain confident that the Holy Spirit is also there to guide us in the unwrapping.

Taking this a step further, think of those whom this Covid-19 pandemic has wrapped up in its grip. As fellow Christians, we are called to do what we can to help unbind them from the anxiety and doubt that they are wrapped up in.

We have a calling in this - encouraging each other and following the leading of the Spirit as we walk this walk. Over time, wrappings of the old life that have bound each of us will begin to fall away as we all walk a little closer with Jesus. Let us help to guide those who most need our help. And remember that patience and love go a very long way. Think about that.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for the amazing gift of salvation. We are raised to new life as we answer Your call to come just as we are to serve you. Help us to be patient with others and ourselves as we listen and learn how to guide them through these times of anxiety and darkness that they need to be unbound from. In the freedom that we experience in your holy name. Amen.