

**Dialogue Sermon with Kathy Baltuff** (*based on John 11:1-45, questions formed by Pr.*

*David Lose*)

- 1) One of the more difficult aspects of the gospel text today for many of us, myself included, is Jesus' decision towards the beginning of the chapter. It disorients us, I think, because, frankly, it comes across as bad pastoral care. Why is he slow in responding or acting in their time of need? When Jesus is informed of Lazarus' illness, he "...stayed, or tarried, two days longer in the place where he was." So Martha and Mary, and everyone else, end up waiting for him. "When have you felt that God is tarrying? What has helped you hold onto your faith" in those times of waiting?
- 2) Another image we are given of Jesus in this gospel text is one that is likely less distressing, but rather more comforting. After encountering Mary, and witnessing her and those with her weeping, his own body expresses the emotions stirring within him in the form of tears. "What does it mean to you to know that God weeps with us and for us?"
- 3) While we often focus on the momentous act of raising Lazarus, Jesus has been acting throughout this situation and in a variety of ways, even if we don't always understand. "Where have you seen God act in your life or in the world recently?"
- 4) Towards the end Jesus not only commands Lazarus to come out, but he instructs the others, those who are witnessing this work of God, to "unbind him, and let him go." In other words, Jesus is calling them, and us, to participate, to be his partners, in his ongoing work of renewal and restoration. "Where do you feel called to unbind and set free? What difference does it make to know that God regards you as a partner and co-creator in God's work to care for neighbor and world?"

March 26, 2023      Kathy Baltuff

Dialogue Sermon based on John 11:1-45

1. I have only told a few people what I am going to share now-

At age 36 I learned I had my family genetic kidney disease. In 1996, I was activated with the National Kidney Foundation for a kidney transplant. January of 1997 at age 46, I received my call offering me a kidney. After several in depth medical tests I matched to a deceased young woman and had my first transplant. My matching test results were so positive my doctors said it's as if my donor was my twin sister. So this was very hopeful for me. After my surgery, I felt awful physically and it was very difficult to hear my doctors share with me that my transplanted kidney had not started to function. I could not sleep which is not uncommon due to the high doses of necessary medications given to a patient. As the many hours passed, I recall being extremely exhausted from the lack of sleep and as I laid in my hospital bed praying with my burning eyes from tiredness, tears ran down my cheeks that I swabbed with a wash cloth.

At one point, I felt a wave of calmness come over me and I felt that someone was in my hospital room beside me.

Yes indeed, IT WAS GOD....with my eyes closed I thanked him from sparing me of not needing to start kidney dialysis and for giving me a new chance on life with my transplant. Daily for 3 days, I could feel God's presence and comforting touch on my arm that radiated right down to my toes. God remained and stayed at my side until late the third day in the hospital when my doctors shared the fabulous news that my transplanted kidney had started to function.

This kidney served me well for over 26 years until I had my second transplant August 2022.

This unforgettable, remarkable experience of God tarring with me, strengthened my faith!!

2. God sincerely cares for all of us, so when we are sad he is as well and weeps with us. God wept for Martha losing her brother. To know that God weeps with us and for us...makes me feel blessed to be so deeply loved.

3. In regards to God acting in my life...with my many years of family health issues and difficult times God gave me strength to support my Father who passed at age 49, my Sister and only sibling who passed at age 47 after being on dialysis for over 14 years and had two unsuccessful kidney transplants and my Niece who recently passed at age 51 while waiting for a kidney on the National Transplant list. My Grandfather on my Father's side passed at age 38, so unfortunately I did not get to meet him. All my family members passed of complications due to the family kidney disease. At a young age I learned and witnessed life is precious.

I have been doctoring for over 36 years now with kidney concerns and I am so very blessed to be the longest living in my family. Honestly, if I did not have my faith, husband Terry, Family and Friends support I am not sure how I would have endured my many years of difficult times. I am sincerely thankful for all my support.

4. We should all partner with God with his ongoing work of renewal and restoration. Reach out to family, friends, neighbors close and all around the world struggling whether it be financially, physically or emotionally. A good start can be a simple phone call to a homebound or recovering person, a visit can help the lonely or depressed or mail a card or send a note to someone distant. Perhaps set a personal goal that once per week, reach out to someone in need and it will not only make your day but the individual's day very special to be remembered.