

# Encounters: Two Grieving Sisters

John 11:17-44

3/19/23

## Discussion Questions

### Preparation

In times of grief, which of the two comforts you the most: The ministry of truth or the ministry of tears?

### Passage

*17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles<sup>[b]</sup> from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.*

*21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."*

*23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."*

*24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*

*25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

*27 "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."*

*28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.*

*32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

*33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked.*

*"Come and see, Lord," they replied.*

*35 Jesus wept.*

*36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"*

*37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"*

*38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 "Take away the stone," he said.*

# Encounters: Two Grieving Sisters

John 11:17-44

3/19/23

*"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."*

*<sup>40</sup> Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"*

*<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> 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."*

*<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> 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."*

1. Are you comfortable going to a funeral or a visitation time in order to comfort people who lost a loved one? What thoughts go through your mind while you are on your way to visit the person(s)? How do you feel?
2. How do you read this statement made by both Martha and Mary: *"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."* (vss. 21 & 32) Do you read it as a rebuke, a regret, or a statement of faith? Do you think Martha meant it one way and Mary meant it another way?
3. Have you ever lost a loved one? What emotions did you experience while going through grief?
4. In times of loss, what brings you the greatest comfort and what annoys you the most?
5. What did you learn from Jesus' encounter with Martha and Mary about comforting others?
6. When it comes to offering comfort, do you tend to give the ministry of tears or the ministry of truth or both pending the situation?
7. Share at least one of your favorite passages that offer give you comfort and/or hope.
8. What do you think about Dylan Thomas' belief as to how to handle death and dying? *"Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage, against the dying of the light."*
9. What does our culture tell us about how to view and cope with sickness, death and the grave?
10. What hope do you cling to the most in times of loss, sickness and death?
11. What did you hear in the message that was new to you?
12. Why can't God just put an end to evil and as a result obliterate its cohorts: sickness, disease, death and the grave?

## Encounters: Two Grieving Sisters

John 11:17-44

3/19/23

13. Read: *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and first earth had passed away...He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."* Revelation 21:1, 4 Does it bring comfort to you in the here and now?

14. Until God does stop time and put an end to evil, what does Christ offer us and does it help you deal with sickness, disease, pain and suffering and death?

15. Does this passage offer you any consolation when it comes to the delay of Jesus' return and the continuation of suffering in the world?

*"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night."* 2 Peter 3:8-10

16. Share how your week went and any prayer requests that you have.