



Illustration: Resurrection of Lazarus

A Devotional for the
Week of Septuagesima* Sunday.

I am the Resurrection and the Life. – John 11:25.

Now, that Passover drew nigh when Jesus was to suffer and die. He was in Perea, east of the Jordan, several days' journey from Jerusalem. In Bethany, near Jerusalem, Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, lay at the point of death. The sisters sent word to Jesus, saying: "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick. But Jesus, who loved Lazarus and his sisters, remained two days in the same place where He was. Then He went to Judea with His disciples, to raise Lazarus, who, meanwhile, had died.

– When Martha heard that Jesus was near Bethany, she went to meet Him and said to Him: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." Saith Jesus: "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha saith: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Saith Jesus: "*I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall lie live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?*" She saith: "Yea, Lord; I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the world."

– Now Martha went and called Mary secretly, saying: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Quickly Mary came to Jesus and fell down at His feet, weeping and saying: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Many Jews had come along and wept also. Jesus was troubled and said: "Where have ye laid him?" They said: "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. And they came to the tomb, the entrance of which was closed with a stone. Jesus saith: "Take ye away the stone." Martha saith: "Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days." Jesus saith: "Said I not unto thee that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" Then they took away the stone. But Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they

may believe that Thou hast sent Me." And He cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth." And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them: "Loose him and let him go."

(John 11:1-44.)

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world. He is the Resurrection and the Life. He has given His life into death for us. He has arisen and lives. He that believes in Him, receives Him in true faith, shall live though he die. And he that lives and believes in Him shall nevermore die, shall never know what death really is. Do you believe this?

PRAYER. – I believe this, my Lord and Savior. Jesus, I believe in You. When my last hour comes, I will, trusting in You, laugh at death and see life. When I rise, I shall see You, and exult in the glory of eternal life. Grant this, O Conqueror of Death, O Prince of Life, O merciful Savior. Amen.

Hymn 544, 11.

Then death may come, or tarry yet,
I know in Christ I perish not,
He never will His own forget,
He gives me robes without a spot.
My God, for Jesus' sake I pray,
And peace shall bless my dying day.

MONDAY.

It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.. – John 11:50.

Many of the Jews who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus believed in Jesus. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and Pharisees gathered a council and said: "What do we? – for this man doeth many

miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them: "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." And this spake he not of himself; but, being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather into one, the children of God that were scattered abroad. The latter are God's elect, whom God's eye seeth. So from that day forth they took counsel together that they might put Jesus to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence to a country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, between Bethel and Jericho, and there continued with His disciples. – And the Jews' Passover was at hand. (John 11:45-55.)

Yes, indeed, it is expedient that the one Jesus should die for us all, and that we all perish not. Indeed, according to the counsel of God, Jesus should die for all men, and gather together a blessed congregation of God's children. Indeed, Jesus has died for us, and we who believe in Him shall live through Him. Believe, O believe in Him, Christian!

PRAYER. – I believe in You, my Savior. Help me always to believe in You. You have died in my stead, and have procured salvation for me. Help me to seize on Your salvation. Help me into heaven, help me into eternal life, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Hymn 530, 3.

For my sake He went before me,
And His death is now my gain;
Peace and hope He conquered for me;
So without regret or pain,
Yea, with joy I'll quit earth's sadness
For the beauteous heaven of gladness,
Where I shall eternally

See the holy Trinity.

TUESDAY.

Behold the Lamb of God! – John 1:36.

Now came the Feast of the Passover. Jesus now arose and went with His disciples from Ephraim to Jerusalem by way of Jericho. And on the road between Ephraim and Jericho He took the twelve disciples apart and said to them: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him; and on the third day He shall rise again." And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. (Matt. 20:17-19; Luke 18:31-34.)

Before the vision of Jesus all that should happen to Him in Jerusalem was clearly unfolded. And willingly He went to suffer all. For He knew that He was the Lamb of God that should suffer all these things for the salvation of mankind, by the eternal and determinate counsel of God, and according to the prophecies and types of the Old Testament. But at that time His disciples could in no wise comprehend this.

If you would truly know Jesus, you must know Him in His death and resurrection. You must know Him to be the Lamb of God that takes away and – conquers your sin and that of the whole world. This is the true and saving faith.

PRAYER. – I thank You, Lord Jesus, O Lamb of God, that You so willingly did atone for my sin through Your bitter suffering and death, and did so utterly abolish the same through Your victorious resurrection, so that it can in no wise harm me any more. Give me, I beg You, Your Holy Spirit, that I may truly know this, comforting myself with You, and in faith pleading You before God to be the real sacrifice by which my propitiation has been effected. Amen.

Hymn 191, 3.

“Yea, Father, yea, most willingly
I’ll bear what Thou commandest;
My will conforms to Thy decree,
I do what Thou demandest.”
O wondrous Love! What hast Thou done!
The Father offers up His Son.
The Son content descendeth!
O Love! O Love! How strong art Thou!
In shroud and grave Thou lay’st Him low
Whose word the mountains rendeth!

WEDNESDAY.

She is come aforehand to anoint my body for the burying.
– *Mark 14:8.*

Six days before the Passover, on Saturday, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, who had been dead, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper. And Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who should betray Him: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and carried what was put therein. And the other disciples were persuaded to agree with him. Then said Jesus: "Let her alone; against the day of my burying hath she kept this. She is come aforehand to anoint my body for the burying. For the poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always." (John 12:1-8.)

Jesus went to meet His death most willingly. That is seen from this story. And I think that Mary, ever a silent, thoughtful listener of

Jesus' Word, knew more of Jesus' impending sacrifice in death than all the others. And her great and fervent love for her Savior moved her to do as she did. And her Savior would not let them chide her. – Surely, you, O Christian, know what your Savior did for you, how He loved you, and still loves you. Do you love Him! Do for Him as your love bids you do. He will take pleasure in it. It will please Him most if you surrender yourself wholly to Him, that He may bring you to eternal bliss.

PRAYER. – O my dear Savior Jesus Christ, who of Your great love did give Your life into death for me, and do love me now and always with a boundless love – I love You. But it grieves me sorely that I cannot love You as I should. But what is it You ask? You wilt have me, poor sinner, and save me. That is the reward You demand for Your love, O merciful Savior. So, then, take me, and bring me to eternal salvation, where I shall surely love You truly and fully. Amen.

Hymn 191, 5.

Lord, all my life I'll cleave to Thee,
Thy love fore'er beholding.
Thee ever, as Thou ever me,
With loving arms enfolding.
Yea, Thou shalt be my Beacon-light,
To guide me safe through death's dark night.
And cheer my heart in sorrow;
Henceforth myself and all that's mine
To Thee, my Savior, I consign.
From whom all things I borrow.

THURSDAY.

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!. – Matthew 21:9.

The following day, on Sunday, Jesus arose to go to Jerusalem together with His disciples and a great number of people from Bethany. Bethany was situated on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, and this was immediately east of Jerusalem. And when they approached the hamlet of Bethphage, still on the east side of the mountain, Jesus sent two of His disciples, saying: "Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them and bring them unto me. And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them."

All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass.'" And the disciples, went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and set Him thereon. And a very great multitude that had come to meet Him from Jerusalem spread their garments in the way: others cut down branches from the trees and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" And when He came into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying: "Who is this?" And the multitude said: "This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. (Matthew 21:1-11.)

It was Jesus' will, before His suffering and death, to be publicly proclaimed the Christ by and before all the people that had come to the Passover at Jerusalem from all the ends of the earth. And so it was done. But soon the Hosannas were turned into "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

You, however, in constant faith, hail your Savior, who has come in the name of the Lord to save you through His suffering and death.

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, I, a poor sinner, praise and magnify You

that You have presented Yourself a sacrifice also for my redemption and salvation. You are, indeed, the Savior of the world, promised since the world began, eagerly expected of so many a believing heart. Open – I beg You – my heart and lips, by Your Holy Spirit, that I, too, poor sinner thought I be, may join in the praises of Your people whom You have redeemed. Amen.

Hymn 136, 1.

O LORD, how shall I meet Thee,
How welcome Thee aright?
All nations long to greet Thee,
My Hope, my heart's Delight!
O kindle, dearest Jesus,
Thy lamp within my breast,
That I may know what pleases,
Thee, Lord, my heav'nly Guest.

FRIDAY.

My house shall be called the house of prayer. – Matt. 21:13.

On the morning after His entry into Jerusalem, Jesus, with His disciples, went from Bethany – for there He spent the nights of His last week on earth – to the temple at Jerusalem. And what did He behold? The spacious courts of the temple resounded with the noisy tumult of a public fair. Those who yesterday had cried hosanna were now bartering and jollifying – all "for the good of the cause," as is said in our day on similar occasions. And Jesus, in righteous indignation and irresistible majesty, cast out all those that bought and sold in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of those that sold doves, saying to them: "It is written, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer'; but ye have made it a den of thieves."
– And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple; and He

healed them. And the children hailed Him, singing: "Hosanna to the Son of David." But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and heard the children crying in the temple, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were sore displeased, – the hypocrites, who had willingly tolerated the tumult of the fair, and said to Him: "Hearest Thou not what these say?" And Jesus said unto them: "Yea; have ye never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise' ? " And He left them, and went out of the city to Bethany; and He lodged there.

(Matthew 21:12-17.)

All who name the name of the Savior, and who hear His Word and worship Him, must do so seriously and with the simplicity of a child, and not combine worldly and carnal attractions therewith. The Church of Christ must be truly desirous of salvation, and must assemble to hear, to pray, and to praise. The Lord who came to his temple at Jerusalem is present in our assemblies also. And when we do carnal things under the pretense of serving Him, He beholds with grief and indignation that our heart desires Him not.

PRAYER. – O my Lord and Savior, that I, a poor lost sinner, may desire You truly for my only Savior. Graciously help me to seek and embrace You and Your salvation in Your Word, for there, and there only, will You be sought and found. Grant that I may prize Your Word above every treasure, and account no obstacle or cost too great to have Your Word. Grant me grace to praise and magnify You in the congregation with newness and singleness of heart. Amen.

Hymn 99, 5.

O my Savior, help afford
By Thy Spirit and Thy Word!
When my wayward heart would stray,
Keep me in the narrow way;
Grace in time of need supply,
While I live, and when I die.

SATURDAY.

The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. – Matthew 21:42.

On Tuesday morning Jesus returned to the temple, and preached to the people assembled there the Gospel, the good tidings that He, Christ, their Lord and Savior, had now come. Then the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him and said: "By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?" And Jesus answered and said to them: "I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you in what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or of men?" And they reasoned with themselves, saying: If we shall say, From heaven, He will say unto us, Why did ye not, then, believe him? But if we shall say, Of men, we fear the people; for the people regarded John the Baptist, who had testified that Jesus was the Lamb of God, and the Son of God, as a prophet. And they answered Jesus: "We cannot tell," whereupon He said to them: "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." They plainly did not want to believe in Him, and were hardened in their enmity against Him. This very thing He told them in strong terms and in parables and said: "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." And furthermore He said: "Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." And they sought the more to kill Jesus. (Matthew 21:23-46.)

Indeed, they, the builders of Israel, were hardened. They rejected Israel's Messiah, the Savior of the world. But the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner of God's eternal temple, the congregation of the redeemed. Today, also, countless builders of the Church reject Jesus, their Savior. But you – build your faith on Him, and you shall obtain salvation.

PRAYER. – O Lord Jesus, grant me Your Holy Spirit, that the contradiction arising against You a thousand-fold on the part of chief priests and the elders within the Church may not shake my faith and lead me astray, but rather build my faith on You, and through You obtain salvation. For You alone are the Lord and Savior, and You have given Your life for me. Amen.

Hymn 312, 1.

Now I have found the sure foundation,
Where evermore my anchor grounds!
It lay there ere the world's creation,
Where else, but in my Savior's wounds?
Foundation, which unmoved shall stay,
When earth and heaven pass away.

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Note:

Septuagesima means seventieth. *Septuagesima* Sunday is seventy days before Easter.

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).

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