

Over and over each Lent

God is seeking an opportunity

An opportunity to shed his mercy, love and forgiveness into our lives

It is not about our penitential practices

It is not about our sacrifices

It is about His mercy and compassion

For all His children

Saints and sinners alike

We all need a savior

We all need to hear His word

Calling us from death into life

In our readings today

We see that life is more than a physical life

There is also spiritual life

Eternal life

And we see death is not just our physical death

There is also the death of a nation

And there is a spiritual death

But over all of this we see the power of God's word

At His word death is defeated

And life is created

In our first reading we hear from Ezekiel

The Israelite nation has once again been disobedient to their covenant

And they find themselves in exile

Far from the Holy Land

Slaves to a pagan nation

Ezekiel is in a grave yard

And 3 promises are made

The graves will be opened

Those who are dead will rise

And the exiled will return home

This is similar to God's creating word

When he formed man from the dust of the earth

Breathing life into it

He will breathe upon those in the grave

And bring them to life

God's word is absolute

And He has power over life and death

Destruction and restoration

I have promised

And I will do it, says the Lord

We see in our Gospel Jesus' power over death as well

A dear friend has fallen asleep

His sisters send word 'Come quickly'

And Jesus remains where he is for 2 more days

The family is dealt a double blow

Their friend does not respond immediately to their call

And they watch their brother die

Similar to his response to why the man was born blind

It is to show the glory of God

This illness is not to end in death

But is for the glory of God

In the depths of despair, the sisters called out to Jesus

Thinking this was the end

How similar to what we will hear next week

When Jesus calls from the cross

My God My God

Why have you abandoned me?

These first words of the 22nd psalm reflect what these sisters are experiencing

Calling out to God

And it seems he is not listening

But then he arrives

Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died

His absence caused as much pain as the death of their brother

They knew he could have done something

Yet he remained absent

And now this promise

Your brother will rise

Martha and Mary have come to believe in the resurrection

I know he will rise at the resurrection on the last day

But the resurrection is not a future event

It is a person

I am the resurrection and the life

Show me where you have laid him

He speaks: Lazarus, come out

God speaks in Genesis

Let there be light

And there was light

At God's command, all things that exist come into existence

This continues to our own day

When we hear the words of Christ

Spoken through a priest

I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

A new creature comes forth from the water

A child of God is born through the power of the word of God

Your sins are forgiven

Go in peace

We are cleansed in confession

And a new creation leaves the confessional

The power of the word of God

Do this in memory of me

And the bread and wine becoming a new creation

We receive his body and blood, soul and divinity

By the power of His word

Lazarus come out

Life is created

The dead Lazarus walks from the tomb

The burial cloths still clinging to him

The effects of sin are there

But he is alive

Not resurrected

Lazarus will taste death once again

But for now he is alive, a new creation

Untie him and let him go

How similar to us

When sin binds us

When we are in the tomb of separation from God

He calls us forth into union with God

When we are in the tomb of a private spirituality

He calls us forth in the sacrament of Confirmation

To a public expression of our faith

From the tomb of isolation and being alone

He calls us to communion with Him and with each other

From anxiety or illness

He calls us in the sacrament of Anointing to join His redemptive work

From self-absorption and egoism

He calls us into a life of service and self-sacrificial love

From the tomb of addiction, obsession, pornography

False gods, blasphemy, gossip, defamation and indifference

He calls us to come forth

Not someday in the future

Come forth today

By the power of His word

He calls us from death to life

I have promised

And I will do it, says the Lord

When he speaks to our heart

Lazarus: 'Come out'