

**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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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’**