

Ann Bonner-Stewart  
 St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Newton  
 Lent 5A: John 11:1-45  
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I'll just say it: Lazarus' resurrection confuses me. I don't get it.

It confuses me for a lot of reasons, but we'll just stick w/ the idea that it even happens.

This is not to say I totally understand Jesus' resurrection, but

To me, Jesus is like the number zero.

Zero is unlike any other number. It's in its own little category.

You can't divide anything by it.

It's the only number in the entire universe  
 that's neither positive nor negative.

Zero provides a bridge, the link,

between the positive and negative numbers,

much like Jesus provides a bridge, a link, between humans and the divine,  
 by being both fully human and fully divine.

In my mind, Jesus is zero.

Lazarus? Lazarus is not.

I do find it helpful that Lazarus' resurrection was perceived  
 as extremely strange when it happened.

In fact, in the Gospel according to John,

it is THIS, the resurrection of Lazarus, NOT the temple cleansing,

That leads most directly to Jesus' arrest.

In a culture where being healed was astonishing  
 but apparently believable, resurrection is strange, .  
 out of line, subversive, the final straw.

Now, I do think miracles, which this falls into the category of in my mind, are possible.

The biggest reason I think that is because I know people who,  
 according to their medical prognosis or the kind of accident they had,  
 should be dead, and yet for reasons  
 that defy logic and science they are still not. They are still alive  
 Most of you know folks who fall into this category  
 Even if you don't know you do.  
 Some of us are that person.

So, yes, I think miracles happen sometimes.

And yet miracles are not predictable in that

We don't get to control when or where or to whom they occur.  
 Sometimes we find ourselves, understandably, wondering  
 why so-and-so defied the odds and someone else did not.  
 So, yes, miracles seem to happen,  
 and they are wild, unwieldy, and unrepeatabe.

The wild, unwieldy, unrepeatabe resurrection of Lazarus

takes most of the space in this narrative, so much so that it can be easy  
 to overlook some of Jesus' other actions in this passage.

I don't know,  
 it seems to me that Jesus could have barreled right past everyone,  
 poo-pooing their questions, comments, and concerns,  
 to get to the "main act"  
 if the only point of this passage  
 is the actual raising of Lazarus,  
 however that happened.

But Jesus doesn't rush to fix it, does he?

Jesus stops and listens to Martha's doubts and uncertainties  
when she comes out to confront him.

Jesus holds Mary's sorrow and her accusations.

Jesus allows himself to be moved and disturbed  
by the depth of grief all the mourners.

And Jesus weeps. Jesus weeps, ya'll.

Even more than that, Jesus weeps in John

To be human is to grieve at some point.

When illness comes suddenly,

When we don't get the job or the school admission  
we were absolutely convinced was for us

when a loved one dies,

when the weight of the world impinges

heavily on our hearts & minds.

We often want to know why, understandably.

Today's passage reminds us of the way Jesus also meets people  
in sorrow and pain and suffering and grief

with presence rather a satisfying explanation.

We're mostly fixers and doers, the lot of us.

We want to have good words to say, to cook and bake, to bring flowers.

And all that is beautiful.

And don't underestimate just showing up.

Sitting in the hospital.

Going to the graveside.

It doesn't always have to be dire, either—

Watching the performance.

Connecting when it's awkward.

Showing up bears witness to pain, struggle, grief,  
And often just life in its prosaicness in a way that little else can.  
Being present is a present.

Thanks be to God for a God who knows firsthand what it's like to feel alone,  
to feel disturbed, to grieve and to cry.

Thanks be to God for a God who, though we might not always understand,  
Thanks be to God for a God who gives us and hopes  
that we give one another and others  
the miracle of the gift of presence.

Being present is a present.

Amen.