

## Bible reading John 11:1-45

### Jesus wept

THIS WEEK WE EXPLORE GRIEF, A COMMON HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

In this week's Bible story, we hear about the most amazing miracle:

Lazarus is brought back from the dead – contentious then, and still so today. As we explore how different people in the story responded to grief and loss, what can that tell us about these familiar experiences and emotions in our lives today?



Make a collage of hope. Cut images from old newspapers and magazines that make you feel hopeful or happy. Stick these onto a sheet of paper or card. Add words or drawings of your own to expand your ideas beyond the images you found, and/or to explore or explain the thoughts behind them. You might like to share your finished collage with other members of your household. Or two or more of you could do it together.



Cut out a few tear shapes from card – choose different colours to express different feelings associated with grief (sadness, loss/lost, hope, resolve, and so on) or write each word on a tear card. Hold each tear in turn and think about the things that make you (or others) feel that way. Offer these thoughts to God. Add your prayer to the tear.



Organise a tidy-up of the churchyard/garden or a local burial ground as a visible sign that sorrows are shared and loved ones cherished and remembered. More personally, you could give a small gift to someone who you know is experiencing loss or disappointment.

## Bible notes

This is the last and greatest of the signs in John, by which Jesus reveals, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' Its climax is Jesus' command, 'Lazarus, come out!' The crowd will shout out for Jesus' death (19:6,15), but in Jesus' shout we hear God's life-giving Word. We have obdurate male disciples, thinking Jesus will awaken Lazarus by rousing him from slumber, and perceptive female followers. Martha expresses the belief in Jesus that brings life in his name (see 20:31), and Mary leads Jesus to the tomb, anticipating anointing him for his own impending burial (12:1-8). The sign affects the judgement for which Jesus came into the world (9:39). While many of his own Jewish people who were present believe, their leaders now plot to put both Jesus (11:53) and Lazarus (12:10) to death. Lazarus, like his sisters, is presented as both a friend and a disciple of Jesus. The little we are told about him is highly significant. Lazarus both loves and is loved by Jesus, and Lazarus welcomes Jesus into his home (12:1-2). His love for these siblings may explain why Jesus is so deeply moved and begins to weep when the grieving Mary comes to meet him, and this is what some of those present assume. But from the outset Jesus knows that he will raise Lazarus for God's glory, delaying his arrival until Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days. And, despite this, he is disturbed again when he comes to the tomb and says, 'Take away the stone.'

All this foreshadows his own death and resurrection, and it may be that his disturbance, his weeping, and his prayer at the tomb, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me' are John's equivalent of the other Gospels' account of Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. And if he is weeping also for his friends, it is perhaps because he knows what the cost of their faithfulness will be, something Thomas has already glimpsed as he urges his fellow disciples to go with Jesus to Lazarus' tomb: 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

## First impressions

- What does grief feel like?
- What helps in such situations?
- What can we learn from the experience of grief about ourselves or each other?



## A prayer of thanksgiving

A sorrow shared is a sorrow halved.  
We have seen the closeness of Lazarus and his sisters, to each other and to you, Lord Jesus.  
We thank you that, through you, we too can have that shared experience.  
Thank you that in our time of grief, however long it takes, you are there.  
Thank you that you can bring new life to us.  
And thank you most of all for the gift of eternal life. Amen.

## REFLECT



**You will need:** some rosemary, fresh or dried. Listen to 'I am not alone', by Kari Jobe on *I Am Not Alone* ([youtube.com/watch?v=bfveawSAHJA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfveawSAHJA)). As you do so, rub the rosemary between your fingers and smell it. Rosemary is traditionally associated with memory and remembrance. Bring to mind someone who is experiencing loss or sadness. You might to make and decorate a card for them and attach some rosemary to it; write whatever you feel is appropriate.