Sermon

Brothers and sisters,

Let me begin with a light moment.

A Sunday School class was presenting the story of Jesus' miracles. One little boy proudly said,
"Yes, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead!"

The teacher asked him to explain more. He said,
"Well, Jesus told them to open the tomb, and then He said, 'Lazarus, come out!' And it's a good thing He didn't just say 'Come out!'—because there would have been a stampede of dead people!"

There is humour there—but also a deep truth.

Jesus calls specifically. Jesus calls personally. Jesus calls life out of death.

1. When Life Feels Heavy

Many of us know that feeling.

Life goes on—work, emails, routines—but something feels heavy.
Not dramatic… just quietly draining.

- The world feels unstable—wars, conflicts, misuse of power
- Relationships feel strained
- Anxiety builds in small, unnoticed ways

St Paul speaks into this reality:

"The mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)

In other words, there are two ways to live:

- One that slowly drains life
- One that gives life and peace

2. Jesus Waited – The Mystery of Delay

Now we turn to Lazarus.

Jesus hears his friend is sick.
And what does He do?

He waits.

This is difficult for us to understand.

We have all prayed:

- "Lord, why didn't you act sooner?"
- "Why did this situation get worse?"

By the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been dead four days.

Martha says:

“Lord, if you had been here…”

That sentence carries pain, disappointment, and unanswered questions.

But Jesus responds:

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

Not just *“I give life”*—
👉 **“I am life.”**

Divine timing is not human timing.
God’s delay is not God’s absence.
God works beyond what we expect.

3. Jesus Wept – The God Who Feels

Then comes the shortest and one of the most powerful verses:

“Jesus wept.”

He knows He will raise Lazarus.
Yet He still weeps.

Why?

Because God does not stand distant from our suffering.

God:

- waits
- enters our pain
- feels with us

Like a parent kneeling beside a crying child,
God does not dismiss our pain—He shares it.

Jesus’ tears teach us something vital:

- Faith does not mean denying grief
- Hope does not mean avoiding pain

You can believe in resurrection—and still weep.

Jesus wept not because He was powerless,
but because He was perfectly loving.

4. Jesus Calls – Life Out of Death

Then comes the moment:

“Lazarus, come out!”

And Lazarus comes out—alive, but still wrapped in grave clothes.

And Jesus says:

“Unbind him, and let him go.”

Notice something important:

- Jesus did not roll away the stone
- Others were asked to do it

What human beings can do, Jesus does not do.
What only God can do, Jesus alone does.

We remove stones.
God raises the dead.
We unwrap.
God restores life.

This is not limitation—it is God’s way of working with us.

5. God Waits, God Weeps, God Restores

This story shows us something profound:

- **God waits** – not because He is absent, but because He is working beyond our timing
- **God weeps** – because He shares our humanity
- **God restores** – bringing us into freedom

Sometimes God invites us into the process:

- to trust
- to participate
- to act where we can

And then God does what is impossible.

6. The Spirit Who Gives Life

Paul reminds us:

“The Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you.”

This is extraordinary.

The same power:

- that called Lazarus out
- that raised Christ

lives in us.

This means:

- life in the middle of confusion
- peace in anxiety
- hope when everything feels lost

7. A Deeper Imagination: "Lazarus Laughed"

There is a fascinating play by Eugene O'Neill titled *Lazarus Laughed*.

In it, Lazarus, after being raised, laughs—not out of madness, but out of deep joy.

A witness describes it:

"Such a laugh I never heard… it was like wine… and though I was half-dead with fright, I found myself laughing too."

And Lazarus keeps saying:

"There is no death, only God's eternal laughter."

What a powerful image.

When you have faced death and encountered God,
fear loses its grip.

Even in suffering, there is a deeper joy.

8. Resurrection Changes Everything

Yes, Lazarus will die again.

But something has changed.

He has seen that:

- death is not final
- God is greater
- life has deeper meaning

And this points us to Jesus' own resurrection—
the final victory over death.

Conclusion

So today, brothers and sisters, the voice of Christ still calls:

"Come out."

Come out of fear.
Come out of quiet discouragement.
Come out of simply going through the motions—even in church.

Because **St Mary's is not just a place we attend**.
It is a community where life is given, shared, and renewed.

Every Sunday, when we gather:

- when we pray for peace
- when we share the peace
- when we hear God's Word
- when we welcome one another

we are stepping out of the tomb and into life.

As we grow as a church:

- reaching families
- welcoming children and young people
- building community

we are participating in resurrection.

We roll away stones:

- by inviting others
- by encouraging one another
- by creating belonging

And God does what only God can do:

He gives life.

So let us not lose heart.

Even when the world feels uncertain…
Even when life feels heavy…

The Spirit is still at work—here, among us, within us.

Let us live as people of resurrection:

- with hope, not fear
- with faith, not anxiety

- with love, not bitterness

And may St Mary's continue to be a place
where people hear the voice of Christ
and discover life again.

Amen. †