# Lazarus

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When I read the story of Lazarus, I think of Errol Lazarus

* Jamaican friend we met while in Chicago
* “I Will do my Bess”
* Very sick when we first met him; died within a year.
* The only Rastafarian Methodist Mennonite we’ve ever known
* His funeral was a blend of all of these traditions, including ganja smoking in the washrooms ahead of time
* His brother, a well-known didgeridoo player, played and spoke at the funeral. *Keened* at the funeral: “Lazarus.”
* How haunting this was. How sad. How obvious that someone had died and was being missed.

The New Testament story of Lazarus

* Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were two sisters and a brother, special friends of Jesus
* When Jesus hears that Lazarus is sick, he waits
* Jesus knows his friends can bear this terrifying story
* Jesus lets his friend die, so that his disciples—including us—will know something of which we need to believe and trust in Jesus
* This death is obvious and unhidden
  + His sisters and his friends bear the pain
  + Martha regrets that Jesus did not save him, rebukes him for his tardiness
  + Lazarus is sick, and then he dies: nothing more obvious
  + “Jesus wept”—this is not a cute verse, but expresses his sorrow. “Jesus was greatly disturbed”—twice this scriptures tell us this. Some people think this means Jesus was very angry. Or Jesus groaned with agony at the sorrow the others and he was feeling. Jesus was “greatly distressed.”
  + When Jesus tells them to open the tomb, they hesitate because they knew the body would stink. In the frank words of the King James Version, “by this time he stinketh.”
* This resurrection is obvious and unhidden
  + A crowd is gathered around the tomb
  + Jesus calls in a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth!
  + Lazarus comes out, still wrapped in the grave clothes.
  + The people physically had to unbind him (would you have the courage?)
* (In contrast, although Jesus’s death was very public, his resurrection was unseen; we “pick up the story” after his resurrection when Mary Magdalene sees him)

The application

* This is the Lenten season, where we often feel our own weakness and sorrow – as if life itself were not enough!
* But Lazarus’s story, and the story of Ezekiel, reminds us that God’s story can be told through the “dry bones” of our weakness.