

Kelley Woehl:

Good morning.

Speaker 1:

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Kelley Woehl:

And welcome to the Appleton Chapel here in our memorial church for our daily service of morning prayers. Our speaker this morning is Charlie Donahue, who is the Paul A. Frum Professor of Law at the law school and class of '62. I invite you now to rise in, join us in today's Salter, number one 13 in the books found in your pews. Alleluia, O servants of the Lord. Give praise. Praise the name of the Lord.

Speaker 1:

Let the name of the Lord be blessed now and forever.

Kelley Woehl:

From the east to west, the name of the Lord is praised.

Speaker 1:

The Lord is exalted above all nations. His glory is above the heavens.

Kelley Woehl:

Who is like the Lord our God, who enthroned on high.

Speaker 1:

See what is below in heaven and on Earth.

Kelley Woehl:

He raises the poor from the dust, lifts up the needy from the refuse heap.

Speaker 1:

To set them with a grace with a great man of most people.

Kelley Woehl:

He sets the childless woman among her household as a happy mother of children. Alleluia. Please be seated.

Charles Donahue:

A reading from the Gospel of St. John beginning the 11th chapter at the 20th verse. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother Lazarus would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection

and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews came with her also weeping. He was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him?"

Here ends the lesson. I heard a sermon a couple of months ago where the preacher said that Jesus is recorded as having wept only twice in the Gospels. Once in Luke 19:41, where Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem, and once in the passage that we just read. In Luke, the Greek word that is translated, weep, is the standard word with that meaning. It occurs many times in the Greek Bible and is the word used in our passage to describe Mary's weeping and that of the bystanders. That is not, however, the word that is used to describe what Jesus did. That word, in fact, occurs only once in the Greek Bible.

Its use elsewhere than in the Bible is associated with a deep emotional state. It goes well with disturbed in spirit and deeply moved a couple of sentences previously. Words that in Greek sometimes suggest moved by anger. We're told that the Jews said, "See how he loved him?" They're thinking that Jesus is upset because of the death of Lazarus. The Jews in John's Gospel is code that Jesus contemporaries who did not understand him. This was not just ordinary weeping for the death of a friend, hence the use of the highly unusual word.

In order to understand what's going on in this passage, I think we need to go back to the encounter with Martha at the beginning of the passage. She says, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus uses that remark to teach, "Your brother will rise again." Martha confesses, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus replies, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" Martha does, maybe she doesn't. She replies, "Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God." She has perhaps not quite figured out what being the Messiah, the Son of God might mean.

There's nothing to suggest that Jesus is upset with Martha's replies, but when Mary comes, she says the same thing, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." That is what gets Jesus upset, even angry. He had expected more of Mary. She was, after all, the one who had chosen the better part while Martha was fussing with the housework. So what does Jesus do for both of them and for all of us? He calls to Lazarus stinking in the tomb and brings him back to life. But those who saw the raising of Lazarus, it obviously increased their faith, but what of us who have not seen it?

When Thomas sees and touches the risen Jesus, he confesses and he's the only person in the Gospels to do so, that Jesus is God. Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Much of John's gospel is about how those who have in some sense come to faith are brought by Jesus to deeper faith. Faith is not something you either have or you don't. It has gradations. And our job in this life is to open ourselves to the operation of the Spirit so that the Spirit can make our faith deeper.

I've reached the stage in life when people whom I know well are not well. I pray for them. Do I really believe? Unlike Martha and Mary, I have not seen Jesus raising someone from the dead. Unlike Martha and Mary, I have a fairly good idea of what the natural course of the disease is and at least some idea of what modern medicine could do about it. Yet, what this Gospel teaches us is that it all depends on the will of God and our faith in Jesus. Let us pray in the words of the Anthem. Oh, Lord, increase our faith.

Strengthen us and confirm us in your true faith. Endure us with wisdom, charity, and patience. In all our adversity, teach us to say, "Amen."

Our Father... Please rise, sorry. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Honor as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. The hymn is number 91. When all by mercies, O my God. In the red hymns books in the Pure Acts.

Kelley Woehl:

Friends, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.