

Week 5: Living in Hope



Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, let him go free!"

John 11:44

*Read the full Gospel
John 11:3-7, 17,
23-27, 33-45*

Suffering, particularly prolonged suffering, can make us question God, question our faith, and question our own self. We can be entombed in our pain, like Lazarus in today's Gospel.

Suffering can be physical, emotional or mental anguish. It can be something that has happened to us, to a loved one, or even a suffering we experience by living in a world where we see so much violence and injustice.

God never abandons us in our time of need. Even through pain and death, God will go on loving us. Jesus, as fully human, fully divine, experiences human suffering, both the physical pain of his torture and crucifixion and also the emotional anguish of friends betraying and deserting him, of seeing his mother's pain as she looks on helplessly. And we can imagine he also endures an ongoing agony in his adult life of seeing the oppression of his people, and the acts of hate against one another.

So in our suffering, we can firstly be assured that God is with us, bleeding at the heart of our pain, weeping as he weeps for Lazarus, never turning from us, even if we shrink away from the darkness.

Jesus calls out to each of us by name, "Be unbound! May you go free!" He yearns to release us from the clutches of death and suffering.

As intentional disciples, we are called never to shrink away from the crosses of life. Like Jesus, there are times we must take up a cross, for ourselves or others. Yet we do so with the assurance that God is with us, and that we do not journey alone. Hopefully, our community of faith will surround us at these times. We look beyond the present suffering, seeking paths of acceptance, perseverance and, where possible, healing. As intentional disciples we also go out on mission to the world, to seek to bring healing, justice, love and compassion to all people, and to all creation.

For Reflection

What are some ways we can strengthen our compassion, healing and justice in the world?