



Lent reflection for Monday, March 27th

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John 11:1-13

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.'

Today's reflection is by Alice Avouris

The crux of this story appears to be: why did Jesus wait?

If I were told that someone I loved was near death, . . . wait a minute, I have been told this a few times, and I did not go to be with them! Blame distance, blame Covid . . . Even now, a friend upstate is not doing well, but I have yet to visit. I'm at the age where more and more people I know are vulnerable, with life-threatening illnesses, . . . None of us are getting any younger! At

least there's the phone, an important link to people I can't visit in person. But Jesus didn't have a phone, and Mary and Martha were left needing his comfort, for a time.

Behind the story looms Death. We don't like to talk about it, think about it, or deal with it. (Maybe Jesus needed some time, too?) I have been phone-visiting a woman whose mother died after a long illness. She needs to hear, over and over again, that her mother loved her, was proud of her, and that she wouldn't want her daughter to suffer so much.

Lent is a time to really think about what death means for us personally. It is, after all, a natural part of life, right? If only we could be sure that our death would be 'natural,' and due to old age, our bodies absolutely wearing out, and not due to disease or violence, accident or environmental disaster, or heaven forbid, war.

As a person in my 70's, each year, more of my family and friends make this journey, in some cases too soon, but I believe their spirits still live in me, and in others who, like me, loved them. We feel also the spirits of people present in our lives, in our church, our friends, and neighbors. I think Jesus was talking about this all the time, in his message of life and light and love. This passage from Matthew reads a bit like one of Jesus' parables: A man (Jesus) walking with his companions, hears that two dear friends are in need, because their brother (also his dear friend) is possibly dying Jesus takes his time, feels no urgency. The point of the parable: Be comforted; do not fear death; life is unending.

It is good to have this Lenten time to think about loss, and how Christ himself grieved, and shared grief with his friends, before his great lesson of transformation, before the greatest one to come. So, while death for me still can mean an unbearably sad parting, I think of what I can do to help loved ones now, while I'm alive. I want them to know I am not afraid (at least, I don't think I am.) I want them to know I will always love them, and I'm more proud of them than anything. I want to find the words, the tools, to help them accept that death is part of life. And that Life is Love, and the Light that Jesus talks about in the above passage. Life is Light is Love, for us all on our walk with God.

Alice Avouris lives with her husband around the corner from Church of the Holy Apostles. They retired and moved to Brooklyn when their granddaughter was born. She started attending in January, 2019, after a fun time caroling in December. She loves jogging around the park and birdwatching there in the spring. Alice sings in the choir and often plays the flute for services.

