

WEEKLY SERMON

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Meditate on the raising of Lazarus by Jesus

'The Raising of Lazarus' by Caravaggio

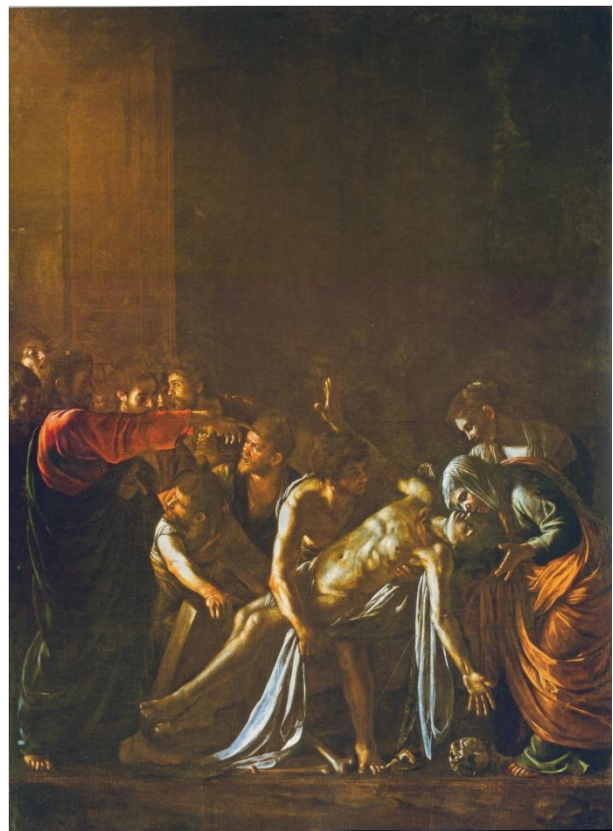
As part of our Lent Course, we have been looking at the different characters of the Easter Story, inspired by the Easter Book of Days by Gregory Cameron.

What we have found helpful is to reflect on how the person's story or the event related in the Gospels has been depicted in art; from old masters to contemporary modern paintings.

A favourite artist has been Caravaggio, whose religious paintings at the time caused a stir with depicting the more unusual bible scenes with a realism that can be disturbing, with an emphasis on the brokenness of humanity.

His use of ordinary people as models for the biblical characters, warts and all, and his illuminating use of lightness and darkness, brought a whole new dimension to his paintings.

Our gospel reading this Sunday tells the story of the raising of Lazarus, and Caravaggio's painting is full of symbolism and leads us deeper into this final miracle or sign of Jesus' ministry before he enters Jerusalem for the last time.



As we gaze upon this painting, let us explore how this encounter was interpreted by Caravaggio and what it may be saying to us today.

Reflect on what first grabs your attention? Is it the illuminated body of Lazarus? Does he seem dead or alive? Note the shape of his body, outstretched, what does this tell you?

Who else is present? Do you identify with any of the characters? Note Jesus to the far left, what does his body language say? Can you see Lazarus' sisters, Martha and Mary? What do you think they are feeling? Look at the crowds, what do they think they are witnessing?

As you continue to meditate on this painting you may wish to bring to God in prayer, how the cross shaped body of Lazarus is a foretelling of Jesus' own death by crucifixion.

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And yet, in the rising of Lazarus, Jesus is pointing to his own resurrection to come. How does the use of darkness and light reflect the areas in our lives that need bringing to the light of Christ?

Where may we, like Lazarus, need to have the bindings that hold us down broken, so they can fall away? In what ways do we need to be set free like Lazarus? Let us then thank God in prayer that we too can have eternal life through Jesus who is the resurrection and the life. Amen.

Rev Karen Herschell; Vicar of Balderston, Mellor and Sablesbury