

As I've said before John's gospel plays out like a movie.

There are a set of scenes that take the story forward. A set of themes that converge together to demonstrate that Jesus is God's living Word amongst us. A set of conversations that call for and bring about personal and community transformation from death to life.

The last sign, or miracle that John records before Jesus' death and resurrection is the raising of Lazarus from death.

Given the length of this densely packed passage there are many significant ideas, principles and concepts that I could deal with. It would be easy to think that John is laying out a profound theoretical, intellectual, mystical and spiritual environment in which to understand who Jesus is and how divinity and humanity come together in his being.

Yet something else happens in this passage that always grabs and holds my attention. It's that short verse in the middle. "Jesus began to weep"

In this the humanity of Jesus and his entanglement with God are laid out before us.

I can't draw very well. I have neither the patience nor the manual dexterity. I can remember in Grade 5 being very jealous of a classmate who could draw really well. She was a "natural". But she showed me a few tricks and techniques that she used with her coloured pencils. I was a "draw inside the lines" kind of person but she would take a little bit of tissue and lick the corner and use it to smudge the boundaries in her drawings and give gentle transitions between colours. This blurring gave a more natural look to the image.

In Jesus' tears the boundaries between God and humanity are blurred and smudged.

I think that is what the gospel is showing us here. The clear boundary between a holy and righteous creator God and his fallible and confused creations is over written, blurred, smudged into a more natural transition.

Jesus expresses deep human empathy in the moment he is to offer the gift of life back to the dead. This is not a technical exercise for him but an expression of love, not just for Lazarus, his family and friends, but for all who will believe in Jesus and follow him.

Look at how his followers believe in him in this scene.

Thomas and the other disciples are ready to face danger and the possibility of their own deaths by following Jesus back into Judea. “Let us also go, that we may die with him!”

Martha is ready to believe that Jesus will bring Lazarus back to life on the last day. She is reluctant to press Jesus that he do this now. She holds back a bit until Jesus claims that he is the “resurrection and the life”. Then she makes her confession... ““Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.’

Mary, like Martha, states; ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ But she makes no further claim or demand. It was her tears, and the tears of the mourners around her that moved Jesus deeply to share tears of his own.

So, with courage, Jesus calls for the tomb to be opened and with prayer he calls “Lazarus come out!”

And as Lazarus stumbles forth Jesus says... ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’

This is the claim and promise Jesus offers for all who would believe in him... That we will be unbound and liberated from the dirty rags and bonds of death.

Believe in Jesus and in doing so find freedom and new life.