



### John 11:30–45 (NRSV)

<sup>30</sup>Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where

Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup>The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup>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.”

<sup>33</sup>When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup>He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”

<sup>35</sup>Jesus began to weep. <sup>36</sup>So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” <sup>37</sup>But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” <sup>38</sup>Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” <sup>40</sup>Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” <sup>41</sup>So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. <sup>42</sup>I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” <sup>43</sup>When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” <sup>44</sup>The dead man came out, his hands and feet

*(continued on next page)*

## Opening

- 1. Pray:** Gracious God, we come with all kinds of weeks behind us. Some of us feel fine, and some of us are barely holding it together. Meet us in this story. Meet us in the tears, and meet us at the tomb. And give us the courage to trust you with what we usually keep closed. In Jesus’ name, Amen.
- 2. Share:** What is a smell you noticed this week that immediately took you back to a memory?

## Dive Into the Text

- Mary, Martha, Jesus, or the crowd. Who do you feel closest to right now, and why? (vv. 31–37, 39–44)
- Martha says, “By this time there is a stench.” What do you think she is really saying underneath that sentence? (v. 39)
- Jesus says, “Take away the stone.” If that stone showed up in real life, what might it look like? (v. 39)
- What is something you keep pushing away because you do not want to deal with it right now?
- Lazarus comes out still wrapped up. Why do you think the story includes that detail? (v. 44)
- Jesus says, “Unbind him, and let him go.” What does that tell you about what a church is supposed to do? (v. 44)

## John 11:30–45 (continued)

bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

<sup>45</sup>Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

## Wild Geese

By Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.

*This poem reminds us that we do not have to prove ourselves to be welcomed. It invites us to stop pretending and to bring what is real, even what feels messy, into the open. It also reminds us that we belong, even when we feel lonely.*

## Go Deeper

1. What is one “stone” you have been keeping in place because opening it feels too painful, too complicated, or too late?
2. When you feel resistance to facing something real, what is your usual pattern: avoiding, distracting yourself, trying to control it, or shutting down?
3. When you are tempted to pretend things are fine, what would it look like to make a little space for Jesus this week?
4. Jesus says, “Unbind him, and let him go.” Who is one person you could help “walk again” this week through one simple act of care?

## Close in Prayer

Close your time in prayer together.