

Church Weekend - Session 4

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Preacher: Nick Page

- [0 : 0 0] Ladies and gentlemen, this is Nick, Nick Page, and let's give him a warm welcome. Welcome. I know there were about 100 of us or so here yesterday, and we thoroughly enjoyed all that Nick shared with us.
- If you missed yesterday, the good news is it'll be on the website probably Tuesday on the talks page of the church website. It's well worth having a listen to that. Even if you were here, go back because there was so much in it to digest as well.
- But for those who weren't with us yesterday, do you want to just give us a speed-dating bio of who you are? A speed-dating bio of who I am?
- I don't know, is this a site where you can see what I look like? Because the bio would be different, you know. I'd be six foot seven tall or something. My name's Nick Page. I'm a writer, speaker, and I've written many, many books.
- It's largely focusing on New Testament history and then stuff around that, but also increasingly on spiritual formation, which is really the act of becoming more like Christ. So I'll do that part of my time.
- [1 : 0 6] The other part of my time, I'll work with an organisation called Open Doors, which supports persecuted church around the world. I'm married to Claire. I've just discovered I went to university with Dave down there.
- And we have three daughters and quite a feminine dog. Nice. So I'm basically surrounded by women.
- Even though one's technically not. Does the dog agree with your...? Oh, I'll tell you his breed. His name is Bill. And he's a Chinese crested powder puff.
- That is a genuine breed. Wow. And he's very cute. Like me. Quite a way to go with that.
- I just anticipated you were going to say that. Yes, yes. Well anticipated indeed. Thank you. Shall we pray? Yes, yes, yes. Let's redeem this. Dear Lord, we thank you for this weekend we've had so far.
- [2 : 1 0] We thank you for Nick in particular, Lord, and all that he was able to share with us and give of himself. For his honesty yesterday, for his humour, for his wisdom. Lord, it was there in abundance yesterday.
- And our prayer this morning, Lord, is that you'd release him afresh, please, through your spirit, to really give us what we need to hear from you today. Lord, if you weren't around yesterday, Lord, help us to pick up the thread quickly with him.
- And we trust, Lord, that all the words that he gives us today, they won't be wasted, but they'll be sinking into our hearts, that that might transform our lives to be ever more like you in all that we do and say and think.
- So bless Nick, bless us, and may that blessing bear fruit in our lives, we pray. Amen. Amen. Thanks, man. Thank you. Thanks very much, Matt. And, well, it's been so lovely being with you here in lovely Burnt Wood.
- You've got to rebrand it. You've got to rename it. You know. Burnt Wood. No, you can't do that. I don't know. Litchfield Light. I don't know. Something else. Caramelised Wood.

[3 : 20] That sounds better. Anyway, that's what I always say when I've burnt something cooking. It's not burnt. It's caramelised. It'll be fine. It's good for you.

Anyway, so, yeah, it's been great being with you. And thank you so much for your warm welcome, for your honesty, for your sharing, your openness. It was a really good time, special time yesterday.

This morning we're going to take things on a little further. I want to look at a passage in John's Gospel. I want to look at a fairly well-known story. But continue that call that Jesus gives us to move into new life with him.

We have a God of resurrection and new life. And that's really what we want to talk about this morning. So, I'm going to read a bit from the Bible.

I'll read it out loud, actually, because that's probably better. Okay. So. I'm just getting the jokes done early, all right?

[4 : 25] We'll just get them out and then we can move into all the serious stuff. Because there are no jokes later on. Anyway. So, this is from John chapter 11, if you have a Bible and you want to follow along.

Otherwise, you can just listen. This is the story of the resurrection of Lazarus. So, just to set a bit of context. I won't read the whole chapter. But Lazarus of Bethany.

His name is Lazarus who lives in Bethany. He dies. Jesus is a little way away in Judea. Just a bit further north, we think, probably.

And a message comes to Jesus. Say, your friend Lazarus has died. Lord, he who loves you is ill is the first message he gets. He who loves you.

Lazarus loves you and he's ill. And Jesus delays. He doesn't go. And then they get the message that he's died. And then he says, well, we better go now. We better go down now.

[5 : 22] And Thomas, who is known in the Gospels for his cheery and optimistic outlook. Well, they point out to Jesus. The last time he was there for one of the festivals, everybody tried to kill him.

To stone him. And so, they're not keen to go back. And Thomas says to him, you know, well, they all say to him, rather. They all say to him, well, Lord, if we go back, they're going to kill us.

And Jesus said, well, we're going back. Okay? We're just going back. And Thomas does this lovely little quote at the end. In verse 16. Thomas, who was called the twin, said to his fellow disciples, let us also go that we may die with him.

I don't know if he did come from the West Midlands, but I'm getting a kind of, do you know, might as well die.

I mean, the villa have gone to pieces. Go. So, they go. They go down.

[6 : 21] We'll start reading at verse 17. They arrive in Bethany. When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now, Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away.

And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you'd been here, my brother would not have died.

But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him. Jesus said to her, your brother will rise again. Martha said to him, I know that he'll rise again on the resurrection on the last day.

Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live. And everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? She said to him, yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.

When she'd said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, the teacher's here. And he's asking for you. And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now, Jesus hadn't yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

[7 : 34] The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. And they followed her because they thought she was going to the tomb to weep there. 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.

When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. And he said, where have you laid him? And they said to him, Lord, come and see.

And Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, see how he loved him. But some of them said, could he not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?

Then Jesus, again, greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, Lord, already there's a stench because he's been dead for four days.

Jesus said to her, didn't I tell you that if you believed you'd see the glory of God? So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me.

[8 : 41] But I've said this for the sake of the crowd standing here so that they may believe that you sent me. When he'd said this, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out. The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth.

And Jesus said to them, unbind him and let him go. It's a great story. It's a wonderful story.

So many kind of interesting details and nuances in here. I want to start just by looking at this family. Mary and Martha and Lazarus. They're a really interesting family.

One of the interesting things about Lazarus, he never speaks. We never hear a word out of Lazarus in the Gospels. So we really don't know much about him at all.

The name Lazarus comes from Elazar. It means God helps, which is certainly appropriate here. They live in Bethany. Bethany was on the east side of Jerusalem over the Mount of Olives.

[9 : 49] And it was actually a place which was known in ancient times for, had a leper colony there for a while. Which one of the other nights that Jesus is there, he has a meal with a guy with the charming name of Simon the leper.

Which is, you know, rubbing it in a bit, I think. But anyway, you know. So it's up there. But now presumably they were reasonably wealthy because they have a house big enough to accommodate Jesus and his disciples.

They seem to stay there when they go. But it's a very intriguing family. We know Jesus loves Lazarus. Three times in this story we're told how much Jesus loved Lazarus.

It's an intriguing family. There's no identifiers with the family, which is interesting. Normally when you, or very little, it's just Lazarus of Bethany. That's all we have. But normally when you deal with women in the Bible, when you read of women in the Bible, they're nearly always identified by some other relationship or something else.

Women in the first century did not have much status at all. So they're nearly always, they're seen as owned, you know, by either their parents or their father or their husband.

[10 : 57] So you often get that as an identifier. So you get people like Mary of Clopas, which means Mary, wife of Clopas. If there's no husband around, you get, are they identified by their children.

So you get Mary, mother of James and John. They're identified. No identifiers with Martha and Mary. Nothing at all. Women in the first century were expected to marry Jewish women probably between the ages of 14 and 18, really.

That's when they married. 14 to 18. Men by the age of about 21. But again, we get no hint of husbands or wives here. So I think it's potentially what we're looking at.

It's a very young family. A family where the parents have died. Where you just have Lazarus there as the head of the household, as he's the male, and the two women.

It's been suggested by a guy like Sean Vanier, if anyone's ever read about it. The L'Arche community has set up a community for disabled and handicapped people in Switzerland.

[12 : 03] And he suggested that Lazarus may well have been disabled in some way. That there may be a disability there, in which case the sisters are there looking after him. The reason I'm going into this is their plight is very real.

Because although they seem to have some level of wealth, the problem the sisters face is this. If they're not married, and if they're young, they won't get anything.

Sisters could not inherit under Jewish law. Daughters could, but sisters couldn't. So all that Lazarus has, all that is keeping them going, whatever that is, is going to leave them.

They're going to go to some other male relative. So you can see they're in a very vulnerable situation. There is more to this situation than merely the pain and the grief and the loss of Lazarus himself.

Although that's intense, that's quite clearly intense. There is the sense that now everything is uncertain. Everything is up for grabs.

[13 : 04] Everything is shaky, the whole land. And it's a difficult time. And what happens is they call on Jesus and he doesn't come. He doesn't come.

And there are many times in our lives, I'm sure, when we call on Jesus and we think, where are you? Everything's shaky. Everything's changing.

All our security is going. We rely on you. Where are you? Where are you? I think that's behind their reactions when they come.

It's very interesting to look at it as well as the reactions of the girls when he arrives. Both say pretty much the same thing. But I think there's a kind of difference of tone.

With Martha. Martha, you get her saying, Lord, if you'd been here, our brother would have lived. You could have saved him. And there's almost a quiet sort of resignation there.

[14 : 01] She clings to her beliefs. Because, you know, he says to her, Jesus says to her, your brother will rise again. And she says, yeah, I know, I know he'll rise again on the last day. Because the Jews believed, or certain sections of the Jews believed in resurrection.

They believed, though, that it would happen on the last day. On the final day. So the day of judgment, or the day of the Lord, as it was called, and then the dead would rise again. But she's not going to be around to see that or whatever that's going to be.

Jesus has a much more immediate resurrection in mind. Things are going to happen much faster than she ever believed. But she clings on to her beliefs.

Again, I think there are times in our lives where we say to God, if you'd been, maybe if you'd acted, things would have been different. But even now, I'm clinging on. I'm clinging on to what I believe about you.

Martha's brilliant, actually. Martha's amazing. Because she draws out of Jesus this astonishing statement that he says, I am the resurrection of the life. I am the resurrection of the life.

[15 : 07] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live. I am resurrection and life. And he says to her, do you believe that? Do you believe that?

And she says this. She says, yes, Lord, I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, coming into the world. Her beliefs have been suddenly transformed, suddenly changed.

She is forced to take a bigger leap than she imagined. It's a remarkable statement. Only two people make this kind of statement in the Gospels. One is Simon Peter. He says, you are the Christ.

I believe you are the Christ. And the other is Martha. We talked briefly yesterday about, in the first century, what idea of disciple being a male role.

And yet Jesus seems to have attracted women and they played this role in all but name. And then later on, in Acts, Luke invents a female version of the word, Methetes, the female version of the disciples.

[16 : 09] So Christians in the early centuries had female disciples that were quite clear on that. Here you have someone who's on a level with Simon Peter. This young girl, I think she was, this young girl in Bethany, in the midst of her grief, makes a statement about Jesus that only one other person had the courage to make.

She's right up there with him, with Simon Peter. She makes this courageous statement. And I think so. You have Martha with resignation, resigned faith, but still clinging on to what she believes, and daring, perhaps, to hope there might be more now.

And then you have Mary, and she's just in bits. Mary's in pieces. Mary is weeping, surrounded by women who are weeping.

She is distraught. And there's a tone here. Again, it's all about, we don't really get the tone in the Gospels, but there's no reason, when I read this Gospel, I imagine Mary yelling at Jesus.

I don't imagine her holding back. Everything we know about Mary is that she's full on. She does the big, grand gestures. You know, she kneels, she sits at Jesus' feet.

[17 : 22] She pours perfume on him and wipes it away with her hair. Yeah, she's a teenager. She's into drama. She's not going to hold back.

If you'd been here, if you bothered to come, he wouldn't have died. If he'd been here, he wouldn't have died. It's okay to be angry at God.

You know that. It's okay to be angry. It's okay to be honest. The Bible is just full of people who are honest with God, who ask questions of him, who say, where are you?

What's happening? We don't see you anymore. You only have to read the Psalms. I know you don't do any last vestiges of Anglicanism here, but, you know, let's bring it back.

If you go through the lecture, you read the Psalms each week. You know, the Psalms are full of lament and anger. A friend of mine said of the Psalms, the Psalms aren't always right, but they're always true.

[18 : 30] They're always right, but they're always true. In other words, they want people feeling, God, why have you done this? God, I am really furious. God, I really want to smash a few Philistines. Oh, whatever. The Babylonians. God, will you please just kill my enemies?

You know, that's not right, but it's true. It's how people were thinking. The Bible is full of people passionately asking questions of God, saying, where are you?

It's okay to be like that. I want you to know that. It's okay. He's big enough. You can take that. And he's with us. The word used of Jesus here is when he says he's troubled in spirit.

It's often translated, troubled in spirit, or angry. And it's the Greek word, brimeomai. Brimeomai. And it means to sort of, you can have it to scream out, to shout.

Jesus responds in this way. He is really upset himself. He's really upset. Angry at what? The traditional interpretation, I've read so many commentaries on this. They would say, Jesus is angry and he weeps because of their lack of faith.

[19 : 35] What utter tosh. I mean, you know, it's like Jesus, we look around. Because the bloke's died. He's been in the tomb for four days. Okay, so that is pretty terminal.

Jesus hasn't told them yet what he's going to do anyway. He hasn't explained what he's planning. As if Jesus would suddenly be really annoyed and really upset because other people were mourning.

Because other people were sad. Because other people thought it was all over. He is not angry at their lack of faith. That is nonsense. What is he angry at?

I think he's angry at a whole load of things. He's angry because Lazarus was his friend and he's dead. He's angry because he doesn't like to see vulnerable families torn apart by systems that abuse them.

That work against them. He's angry because loss and grief and pain were never supposed to be like this. It was never supposed to be this way. He weeps with those who weep.

[20 : 51] In the Sermon on the Mount. I don't know why I call it that because it wasn't a sermon and it wasn't up a mount. But there you go. It was a chat up a hill. But anyway. In the chat up the hill.

He says, you know. We should weep with those who weep. Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. We are called to weep with those who weep.

And Jesus walks the talk. He doesn't ask us to do what he doesn't do. He weeps with those who weep. He empathizes. That's why he cries. In our sadness and our pain.

And we know that Jesus cries with us. But he does more than that. He calls us to new life as well. Well that's the intro over.

Let's get on to the sermon. No I just want to look very quickly because I'm aware of time. There are three commands. When Jesus gets. So they go to the tomb.

[21 : 51] They go to the tomb. And there are three commands. Three statements that Jesus makes. He makes two of them. In fact to the community around. To the mourners and the friends around. And one of them to Lazarus himself.

He says three things. He says roll away the stone. And then he says Lazarus come out. And then he says unbind him and let him go. And I want to just look at those two.

Those three things quickly. Let's start with the things that he says. To the community. The first thing he says. Roll away the stone. They've got to help. All right.

He's going to do quite a lot of impressive work here. But they've got a role to play as well. They have to roll away the stone. And Martha immediately says. Lord it will stink.

It will stink. In the old authorised version. Lord he stinketh. Okay. There's a lot of stinker thing going on here. There's a stench.

[22 : 47] It's hot. He's been dead four days. It will smell. I mean I think that's true isn't it. We don't. We don't want to roll away the stones in our lives.

We don't want to reveal what we're really like. Because we think the same of us. We don't want to actually open up our lives to other people. Because we think it will smell. It will stink. People will be put off us.

We don't want to open those pieces. We don't want to face the decay. And the darkness. Both as individuals and communities. We don't want to come to church.

And see everybody's dirty laundry. When we have the confession. The synecdome. We get that all done. And done and dusted. But we don't really want to go into actually.

The nitty gritty so often. At least I don't. Because partly I'm English. And therefore I'm acutely embarrassed by anything. Really. You know.

[23 : 42] And you just don't want that hassle. But actually we're called. We are called to roll away the stone from people's lives. From the tombs in which they are in. To help people. To let the light in.

Our role as friends is to do that. To roll away stones which are keeping people trapped. And entombed. To show them that there may be a way out. And to be brave enough to do that.

And you can only do that if you have communities of love. And trust and honesty. Where we know. Like Jesus. Lazarus. Knew that he was loved by Jesus. Jesus loved Lazarus.

If we love one another. We can have the courage to do that. The first injunction on us. Is to start rolling away the stones. You know. Opening up. To people.

And helping one another do that. And then there's that other command at the end. When he says to them. Unbind him. And let him go. We have to play our part in the unbinding of people.

[24 : 41] As well. Those whom Jesus has called into life. Those whom Jesus has called out. We have to help unbind them. From all that is holding them. And letting them go.

Freeing them. Into new life. Calling them into freedom. So often I think in the history of church. What's happened. Is that people have been called. Out of one set of rules. One set of binds.

That they're caught in. Come into the church. And then they get bound up. In a whole load of new stuff. You know. Bound up in a whole load of new regulations. And rules. And expectations. And stuff they've got to believe.

And things they can't say about themselves. And ways of behaving. And they've got a whole new set of grave clothes. To put on. And then they've only just come out of the old grave. And they've got to put a new one. No. Let them go. Unbind.

Let them go. Help people be free. Of what's holding them down. In the past. Our role is.

[25 : 36] We have a big role as community. In this. Helping people to encounter the darkness in their life. Helping people to hear that call of Jesus. To come out of the tombs. That they're in.

And that's. You know. The third thing that Jesus says. Lazarus. Come out. Jesus calls us. Out. Of the tomb. I want to show you. A picture. And see if this works.

Look at that. There we go. Technology. This is a sculpture. By. A sculptor called Jacob Epstein. A remarkable sculptor. He was.

He was Jewish. But he was drawn throughout his life. To. Themes from the gospels. And there were several. Amazing sculptures that he's done. Of. Mary. Mother of Jesus.

And of. Jesus himself. And various things. And lots of stories of the world. From the Old Testament. He's the guy who's responsible for the. St. Michael and the. And the devil. Sculpture.

[26 : 32] On the outside of Coventry Cathedral. If you've ever. Been there. So. You know. He was. Pretty well known. Now the interesting thing about this sculpture. Is this is Lazarus.

Coming out of the tomb. Every other painting. Of Lazarus. Coming out of the tomb. Renaissance paintings. Has Lazarus. Looking directly at Jesus. And coming out of the tomb. Even though he's sort of. You know. Doing a shuffle.

It's. It's not easy. He's not going to sort of. Sashay out. Is he? They go. Whoa. No.

He's tightly bound. And. But. In every other. Renaissance picture. Or. Those kind of pictures. Lazarus is looking. At Jesus. He's looking at Jesus.

Epstein. In. You know. The time that he was writing. The time of. I think this is coming up to the war. Actually. It's a time of darkness. And you have. Lazarus.

[27 : 30] Looking back. He's in this contorted. Shape. If you see it. He's looking back over his shoulder. Like that. You can see the.

Thing more clearly there. That he's trying to come out. And there's something pulling him back. Something going back there. Jesus calls us out of the tombs.

That we're in. The darkness. The difficult. Times. The. The. The. The. Just the crap that's all around us. And. But sometimes we don't want to go. Because it's rubbish in the tomb.

It's horrible. But at least it's. Done. It's safe. And nothing else is going to happen to you. I wonder what Lazarus was thinking. Maybe the first thing he's thinking. Is he's coming out.

Is I've got to do all this again. You know. Stuff it. In our tombs.

[28 : 28] In our darkness. So often. We don't want. To emerge. We want to stay a victim. We want to cling on. To the things. That are holding us back.

Because we know them. We. We're safe with them. We have our kind of relationship with them. I once met a man. After. Well I've met lots of men. But. This one in particular.

I was. I was speaking somewhere. And. I got talking to him about his life. This is after. I was preaching. And he said. I said. What do you do? He said. Various things. And then he suddenly said. Out of the belief. He said. I used to.

I used to work for a Christian organization. He said. I said. Okay. He said. Yeah. Yeah. They sacked me for. Helping them to save money. I thought this was an odd interpretation.

And may not be the entire truth. If I'm honest. And he went on about how awful he'd been treated. And all that. And I said. I'm really sorry to hear this. But. When did this happen? He said. 25 years ago.

[29 : 25] And I thought. 25 years. You've been carrying this around. And sort of just. Showing this to people who. Who come and meet you. 25 years is a long time.

To hold on to that bitterness. But he had held on to it so long. That it was like a comfort blanket to him. In a strange way. Thoreau.

The writer. He said. So many men lead lives of quiet desperation. You know. They would just carry on. But at least we know where we are.

You know. At least we know. At least I'm not going to get my hopes up. Because I know what's going to happen. Well. Jesus calls us out. Jesus calls us into new life. But the old self.

Some of the old self. Still looks back at the ways that we know. At the attitudes that we have. At the addictions. Or the compulsions that drive us. And we don't. We sort of look back. We're torn. We're trying to move out.

[30 : 24] But we. Part of it's still dragging us back. I don't know if that's you. Are you entombed? You're here in the call. You know Jesus wants you to move. Into the light. From the darkness.

That you're in. But you're afraid. You don't want to come out. And show the world. Your scars. And your. Your. Your. Your. Your. Your. Wounds. And. And your. Bandages. And. You stinketh.

And you don't want the world to know that you stinketh. So keep the tomb closed. Put on a brave face. Paint a nice smiley face on that rock. In front of the tomb.

Don't roll it away. Stay in there. Who are you in this story this morning? I mean you know. As you read through the stories. We read the story together. I wonder who you are.

Perhaps you're Martha. Perhaps suffering from loss. And pain. And quietly resigned. And clinging on. With your fingertips. To faith. Saying the words. You know.

[31 : 21] And you're forcing themselves. Through your mouth. These words of belief. And faith. I want you to remember. That Jesus is the resurrection. And the life. That's what you have to remember.

And resurrection and life. Does not look like. What you think it looks like. It looks so much bigger. So much more. Immediate. So much brighter. He is the resurrection.

And the life. Maybe you're Mary this morning. You're angry. You're scared. You've been let down. By God. And you want to shout. At him. And you. You think he doesn't care. Remember. Jesus weeps with you.

He's angry. With you. He weeps with you. He is there. Maybe you're Lazarus. Mute.

Entombed. You're entombed. Entombed. And you need to hear that voice. Of Jesus calling you out. This morning. Come out.

[32 : 17] Come out. Are you. What are you entombed in? Are you entombed in loneliness? Come out. Grief. Come out. Disappointment.

Come out. Rejection. Anger. Maybe you're trapped in the stories.

That other people have told you. About your life. That you're never going to be. Very good at anything. You're never going to be up to anything. You don't matter much. You're trapped in that story.

You've entombed yourself in it. Come out. You are a loved and cherished. Child of God. You are made in the image. Of God. Ephesians.

I think it's 2.10. I'm rubbish with Bible verses. But I'll find it for you later. It says. In the Jerusalem Bible version. It says. We are God's works of art. Created for the works.

[33 : 15] He's prepared for us in Christ Jesus. You are a work of art. You are a work of art. I mean. Looking at you. I'm wondering what kind of work of art you are. Some of you are disturbingly abstract.

I'll be honest. You're a work of art. But you tell yourself the story. You don't matter. You're not important. Your time is over. Your time is gone. There is no hope.

Come out of that tomb. Come on out. Come out of rejection. Come out of boredom. Come out of hopelessness.

Come out into the light. Come out of hopelessness. Maybe you. Well. Whatever. Wherever you are. In this story. All of us have a role to play.

In. Helping people towards resurrection. In their lives. You know. As a community. We've got to help. Roll away the stones. Call people out. Know that we don't care.

[34 : 13] If they stinketh or not. Help them. Unwrap the bandages. Let them fly. In. This. Statue.

Is in. New College. In Oxford. Typically. With Oxford. New College. Was founded. In about 1450. So. Their. Concept of new. Is rather. Strange. Anyway.

And it's interesting. Where they put it. Just to close. It's interesting. Where they put it. Because. If you look at it. There it is. Right at the end there. Can you see that? It's. It's in the vestibule.

Outside. The. The. The chapel. And. Interestingly. Lazarus. Lazarus. Is looking back. Into the. Chapel. The chapel. Which kind of. Makes the chapel. The tomb. I don't know.

What they're saying. About the church there. But you know. It's a coded message. But beyond. Lazarus. As he's looking back. Beyond him. Is the door. Outside. Beyond him.

[35 : 07] Is an open door. This shows. There it is. I want to say to you. This morning. I don't know. What situation. You're in. But beyond you. Beyond this. For this church. There is an open door. Waiting for you.

Don't look back. Go forward. Into light. And life. Out there. There are hundreds. Thousands. Of people. Who are entombed. In their tombs.

And we can help them. We can go and shift the stone away a bit. It will be difficult. It will be unpleasant. You will reveal things you don't want to deal with. And you don't like.

And it will make life hard for you. And it will be demanding. And it stinketh a bit. There's death. Because death and decay is like that. That's what it's like.

But we have to be Christlike. Jesus calls us to be Christlike. To do the things that he did. What did he do? He calls people to roll away the stone. He calls people out.

[36 : 03] Into new life. And he commands us I think. Unbind them. And let them go. Let's pray. Lord.

I pray for my friends here. And for myself. Lord. Let us heed your call. Let us listen to you. You call us out of our tombs. Lord. For all those people today here. Who are.

Who feel like they're in that tomb. There's something. And they're just. There's something holding them there. They're in a place of darkness. They don't know what's happening. I pray that they'd hear your call.

Come out. Come out. The stones roll back. Come out. For those of us who walk alongside them.

May we be Jesus to them in their lives. May we channel you Lord. And help them. Unbind them. Unwrap the bandages that hold them.

[37 : 02] And let them run free. Lord. May we as a community. Be such a place of love. And openness. And honesty.

And hope. That people are unafraid. To reveal who they truly are. In the knowledge that you really love them. Lord.

For myself. For my work. For us. As we go into our week. Show us the occasions. Where we can speak the word. That unbinds. The word that calls out. The word that shows people.

Actually. There's life. Beyond the tomb. There's an open door. And they can walk into it. We thank you Lord. That you are. The God of resurrection.

You are the resurrection. And the life. And in this we place. Our hope. And our trust. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[37 : 56] Amen. Amen. Amen.