Grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we are nearing the end of Lent, we continue to hear about how Jesus is still on his way to Jerusalem where he will go up on the cross and his death. Along the way he stops at the home of Lazarus who Jesus had raised from the dead, an action which contributed to his death. Scripture tells us Jesus loves Martha and her sister and Lazarus. When hearing this we think about previous interactions which are outside the text. Do you remember in previous scripture passages where Jesus visited and Martha’s worked hard to give hospitality, typical role for women at that time and Mary sat at Jesus feet and listened at Jesus feet where Martha is upset she is working hard and Mary is only listening so when she voiced her displease Jesus said to her **41**“Martha, Martha you are worried and upset about many things, **42**but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her? Luke 10:41-42 What is the one thing? Mary and Paul and others had a single-hearted passion to know God deeply and Mary had a passion for learning the wisdom of Jesus. This is the one thing. And in gaining him, they received the source of their souls’ satisfaction as followers of Christ. Paul tells us in today’s Epistle Philippians 8 More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.” As [Charles Spurgeon](https://www.preceptaustin.org/spurgeons-verse-exposition-luke#11) the Victorian, Calvanistic, Baptist preacher who was called “The Prince of Preachers” once said, “If you have the Holy Spirit, you virtually have all good gifts, for the Spirit is the earnest of God’s love, the pledge of joys to come; and he brings with him all things that are necessary and good for you.” This is God’s very Spirit that was with us in our baptism and nurtures our faith every day.

Outside of this text we turn to John 11:21-27 where Jesus had heard that Lazarushad died, he came to Bethany and when Martha heard this, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. **22**But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” Then Jesustold her “Your brother will rise again.” And she replied, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” To which Jesus replied “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; **26**and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She replied **27**“Yes, Lord, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”Then we hear from John 11:32 **32**When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Going beyond their doubts, their faith is in full display. That continues in today’s story. Mary recognizes Jesus’ mission: he has come to die. We do not like to talk about death. Even the Apostles, when Jesus disclosed he was going to die people did not want to hear about it. Mary perceives the new thing God is doing, so she embraces his death and pours out her devotion to Jesus in an extravagant act. The prophet Isaiah beseeches the Israelites to forget the old pattern of salvation—the dry way through the Red Sea. Now God will make a new way, a wet way, in a dry, barren, and death-filled place. Isaiah lays this out, through images of the Exodus and release from Babylonian exile, with a new way for salvation -- God is here with us now, doing a new thing. Yes, God is with us but it is more important to be with God. Paul tells us salvation does not come from us in the law, which he once believed but rather it comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith in Christ Jesus who has made his own. He says forget what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead and presses on his goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus because salvation lies not behind us but before us, through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Mary understands Jesus is going to die so she anoints his body with expensive perfume from nard and anoints his feet (which is mindful of the foot washing Jesus performs for his loved one) and wipes this with her hair. Women were supposed to keep their head covered except in the presence of family so perhaps she did this intimate act this perhaps that is scandalous in public because she considers herself part of God’s family and even perceives Jesus as part of their family since her and Lazarus and Martha love him so deeply. When I was younger, I did not even think about my mortality but as I get older and have done many funerals I face death on a regular basis. We do not like to think about death even though it is a reality. When I was a Graduate Assistant at a university one of my fellow colleagues had read the book Death and Dying by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross published in 1969, where she explores attitudes of dying and factors that contribute to society’s anxiety over death while disclosing the five stages of dying and how the dying and living deal with them. For his master’s thesis he authored a paper about attitudes of death and dying so he interviewed Doctors and Funeral Directors but found they did not were nor comfortable talking about death. I remember in funeral homes how everyone was somber. To this day people are embalmed which removes the stench of death and are cosmetically prepared to be viewed a life like as possible. This has changed over time, and you will see people laughing as they recount an amusing story about the deceased. Death is no laughing matter but when we face the reality of death, we are more fully able to honor our own vulnerability to others and the humanity of other people.

Wen we are baptized we can boldly face death, knowing that God has created a new creation, and as Isaih pointed out God is here with us now, doing a new thing and the living waters of our baptism God has given a new way for us to travel from death to life. God is with us when we are with God, the great I AM.

**I AM Poem by Helen Mallicoat**

I was regretting the past

And fearing the future.

Suddenly my Lord was speaking:

“My name is I Am.” He paused.

I waited. He continued,

When you live in the past

With its mistakes and regrets,

It is hard. I am not there,

My name is not I WAS”.

When you live in the future

With its problems and fears,

It is hard. I am not there.

My name is not I WILL BE.

When you live in this moment,

It is not hard. I am here.

My name is I AM.

Live in the moment. Trust in God through Christ and love and serve others. Amen.