

Resurrection Mindset

[Ezekiel 37:1-14](#)

[Romans 8:6-11](#)

[John 11:1-45](#)

[Psalm 130](#)

Have you ever experienced complete emotional or mental overload? Whether it's just been too much stress for too long, lack of sleep, too many problems to solve moving in too many directions, major life changes, or burnout... that one final thing can burst through the damn we've built, and we get flooded. Sometimes it comes out as a fight, we say things we don't mean in ways we don't intend. Sometimes it looks like flight, where we run away from everything and everyone, dropping important things along the way. Other times it can be a freeze where we lose the ability to make choices or accomplish anything. It can even make us numb to the things that moments before were so deeply important to us. Navigating all the complexities of life, especially when they start piling up, can take a real toll. Jesus experienced it too, this rising assault against heart and mind. And gratefully, he modeled for us a way to get through it.

In today's story from John, we see Jesus experience this type of escalation of events and the inevitable mental and emotional flood that followed. When we read stories like these, it's important to remember that Jesus was a human man. He was divine, but he existed in the human flesh he shares with us, a body that is regulated and predisposed to respond to the physical world around us. Jesus' brain, neurotransmitters, and endocrine secretions were no less formative to Jesus' experience than they are for us. He may have known what Lazarus' future held, but he also knew what his own future would be. It's difficult enough for us to manage the things we know about. Can you imagine navigating the emotional stew of the present moment while also holding unpleasant future realities at the same time?

In today's story we encounter Jesus' extraordinarily tangled blend of emotions. We begin hearing of Lazarus' illness and the text specifies that this was a man Jesus loved. That leads us to understand that, even knowing Lazarus' illness would not lead to death, Jesus' affection for him made it difficult to hear the news of his friend's suffering. Then the story goes on to say Jesus deliberately chose to wait before responding. But again, the text specifically mentions his love for Lazarus' sisters, indicating that he understood the delay would devastate them and that knowledge was equally hard on his heart. Then the story shifts. Jesus finally decides to embark on the journey back towards Judea, but the disciples panic. It was not long ago that the people of the region were trying to kill him. Jesus knew he would eventually die, but we also all know that we will one day die, that does not mean that we face it without anxiety. Jesus was no more eager to suffer pain and death than are we. And once Jesus finally neared Lazarus' tomb, his emotional situation only continued to heighten.

The Greek uses three different words to describe the depth of Jesus anguish. Our reading mentions that he was **greatly** distressed two different times. It also says he was **deeply** moved and that he began to **weep**. Anyone who has ever stood beside the grave of a loved one, knows there is no adequate way to describe one's feelings or rather the litany of feelings that come flooding in. In the Greek, the words for Jesus' response describe anger, pain, rage, sadness, and indignation. Not only was he facing the world's greatest enemy, death itself, he was wounded by the separation he felt from his friend, he was heartbroken over the grief of the women he loved, and he was frustrated at those who shamed him and misunderstood his reason for waiting to arrive. Additionally, this moment was the turning point in his ministry. The second he confronted death and won, in such a public way, his adversaries would begin actively pursuing his murder. So, along with all the grieving emotions, he was internally battling against the innately human instinct for self-preservation. This was not a simple moment.

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul says that in this life we have two options of where to set our minds, on the flesh or on the spirit. Literally speaking, our mindset is the habitual mental attitude that determines how we respond to our circumstances. According to Paul, our responses to life will be dictated by how we habituate our minds. The flesh refers to the temporal, physical priorities which keep us turning away from God. The spirit, is the life infused, empowered, and animated by the presence of God. How we experience and respond to the world, when mental and emotional overload hits us **will be** a result of the way we have trained our minds to think and the depths to which we have allowed the Spirit of God to fill us. Habitual attitudes form and hold us when trouble hits because sometimes there is simply no time to prepare. Sometimes hard stuff happens and when it does, our mindset shaped by the indwelling of Christ is the thing that has the power to overcome the flood and carry us through.

God acts in this world, but God rarely acts independently of us. God is always calling us into participation in the work of restoring this world. In today's vision from Ezekial, the prophet was standing in front of a field of dead, dry bones. God could have snapped divine fingers and restored those lives. Instead, God told Ezekial to do it. Ezekial didn't even know if it was possible, but he chose to trust God, he refused to believe death was stronger than God's purpose to restore life, and he used his own voice to become the means of restoration for God's people. It is God's spirit within us, sometimes breathed into us through the lives of others, that offers life to our spirits, even when our circumstances can appear entirely desolate.

The Psalmist says, "Out of the depths I have called to you, O Lord". Sometimes our voices, because of our circumstances, will feel like they are coming from the depths. But the Psalmist teaches us to have a mindset of hope in God whose power and love is always

enough. Both the Psalmist and Ezekiel were facing the destruction of God's people because the people had turned away from God because God's people had set their minds on the flesh. But hope is only ever found with God and so, to avoid the mistakes of our forebearers, Paul urges us to claim the power of the Spirit of Christ who now lives in us.

Jesus was filled with the Spirit of God. Standing outside the tomb, facing grief, fear, and death itself, Jesus overcame the flood of circumstances and emotions. He let his mindset be controlled by what he could not see because his mind and spirit were full of the power of God. He did not give in to despondency. He did not lose his patience, run away, or even freeze. Jesus turned his gaze away from the very real presence of death. He lifted his eyes to heaven, and he prayed. And then he raised Lazarus from death to life.

The same spirit that indwelt Jesus, now dwells within us. It is our awareness of that Spirit, our mind set on Christ, that offers us the same ability to participate in resurrection life. We cannot prevent the world from offering us opportunities to overload, but we can position our internal selves to face those floods from a mind set on faith. Ezekiel trusted God, and like Jesus, was empowered to bring life into dead bones. Most of us will never raise anyone from a literal grave. One day Jesus will raise us all. But for now, our participation in the life of God means never allowing ourselves to believe any death, spiritual, emotional, or circumstantial, is more powerful than God's desire and ability to restore life. Ezekiel and Jesus understood this and were strengthened to accomplish God's work through them.

May we be a people whose minds habitually set on the Spirit, are empowered by the indwelling Christ, to experience and participate resurrection, life, and peace.