

March 22, 2026
The Fifth Sunday in Lent

Ezekiel 37: 1-14
Psalm 130
Romans 8: 6-11
John 11: 1-45

On March 25th, history will be made. Sarah Mullally will be installed as the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury...the first woman to hold this position in the 1,400 year history of our denomination.

And to mark the beginning of her historic ministry, she is walking from London to Canterbury...a six-day pilgrimage that will cover 87 miles of the Becket Camino route ending at Canterbury Cathedral. It is the first time in modern history that the Archbishop has taken on this type of pilgrimage to spiritually prepare in heart, mind, and body for the role that God has called her to fulfill.

She is walking with people...listening...and praying. Not in vestments or official regalia. But in hiking boots. As Ayala Harris, president of the House of Deputies for the Episcopal Church, stated, "...[Mullally's] ministry invites all of us into the slow, faithful work of walking together, with honesty, with responsibility and with a deeper commitment to one another."¹

In the Archbishop's own words..."Every Christian life is a pilgrimage – a journey with God."²

And that journey is true for all of us. We may not be walking towards Canterbury but we do walk our own journeys. Journeys that require us to take each committed step toward the call that is being given to each of us. Sometimes, that call is welcome...we are eager to take it on. We feel prepared and capable.

But sometimes, we have to take those first steps not out of certainty or a sense of readiness but out of faith, not knowing what those steps will mean for us.

It reminds me of the call Lazarus received in our Gospel. Now, you might think...Lazarus was dead so this call must have been great news to him. I mean...who wouldn't want a second chance? A new lease on life?

Lazarus, come out!

Maybe he ran out of that tomb unable to hold back his enthusiasm. Ready and willing to start again. Jesus...I'm here!

¹ https://episcopalnewsservice.org/2026/03/17/anglican-communion-prepares-to-celebrate-new-archbishop-of-canterbury-at-her-installation/?utm_source=Christian+Century+Newsletter&utm_campaign=c2b5518379-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_EXCHANGE_ENS_2026_03_20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-c2b5518379-86220411

² <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/archbishop-canterbury-walk-140km-pilgrimage-canterbury>

But maybe, just maybe, he stumbled. Unsure. Full of doubt and resistance. Dwayne and I were talking about this story the other morning and Dwayne said to me..."After being dead for 4 days wouldn't his soul have been up in heaven by now? Heaven's got to be a pretty nice place to be. I bet he was really irritated to be called back down to earth. It's messy down here."

Point taken.

Whatever your theological belief may be of this moment...wherever Lazarus' soul may have been hanging out...we do know one thing...when he was called...he had to make a choice.

Jesus didn't carry him out of that tomb. Lazarus had to take those steps, one by one, on his own. Ready or not.

When I think about that moment, I don't think of some bright light beaming out of the tomb. I don't hear the sound of singing angels. I don't imagine shouts of joy.

I imagine a good dose of fear and trepidation. Uncertainty. Hesitation.

This was not a pristine gathering of goodness but one of harsh accusations and pain. Not only was Jesus weeping but some translations describe him as groaning as though a deep agony was seeping out of him. Everyone was crying...some accusing Jesus of not caring enough for his friend to show up on time. It was raw and dirty and smelly. The King James translation of the Bible states it in no uncertain terms...Lazarus "stinketh."

And that's where God shows up. Right there in the mess.

Calling us out of the most difficult of circumstances. Giving us grace in midst of the grit. Right in the moment everything seems beyond repair God shows up and calls us to come forward. God doesn't care where we have been or what we have done. It doesn't matter how much we may stinketh...God still loves us.

As the Reverend Edmund Harris states in his sermon for this week, *"Jesus is the one who shows up when it is too late. When it is far too late. Jesus is the one who arrives after the nick of time has passed—after the eleventh hour has come and gone. Jesus comes when the flame of hope has flickered and gone out, when everything seems lost and the world has fallen apart."*³

Lazarus, come out!

You know...we can talk about miracles all day long which is what we often focus on when we hear this story. But I want to suggest to you that this story isn't about a miracle. It's about pure, unconditional love. Love that is granted to each of us even after we feel it is far too late.

³ <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/authors/edmund-harris/>

So, if you have found yourself in the depths of despair...maybe you are there now...if you have found yourself weighed down by shame and regret...if you feel as though you will never be worthy of God's love...I want you to remember this story and remember that is exactly when Jesus shows up.

Come out. Take a step or two or three. You may not feel ready or prepared. You may be scared and uncertain. Those first steps may be really, really difficult. But they are steps toward a new life that God is calling forth within you.

And I will promise you this...those steps will change everything. Because your life is and will always be a powerful pilgrimage with God.