Summary of Today’s Story
Mary and Martha send for Jesus when their brother Lazarus becomes seriously ill.

When Jesus arrives at their home in Bethany, Lazarus has been dead for four days and buried in the tomb. Martha and then Mary meet him in sorrow, and Jesus weeps also.

Then, coming to the cave where Lazarus’s body has been placed, Jesus prays to his Father. He then calls for Lazarus to come out, as he does, with his hands and feet still bound in burial bandages.
Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

The tangled relationship between life and death is seen in this story. Jesus returns to call a dead friend to life in spite of Thomas’s prophetic perception that the mission will cost Jesus his own life.

Real death is more than just falling asleep (11:11-14). Life is believing, and Jesus is resurrection and life. This occasion brings Jesus face to face with his own death, his own tomb, weeping women and the symbolic stone which defends the tomb from the living. Jesus is shaken but, through the strength of his relationship to the Father, prevails over death.

Lazarus dies, then is brought to life by Jesus. This is not a resurrection in the way that Jesus will be resurrected from the dead, and Lazarus and Mary and Martha know that Lazarus will ultimately die again. Lazarus is given a few more years of mortal life, then he will die once more.

Jesus takes a few days to arrive at Bethany, even when he knows that Lazarus is dying. We are brought to God’s time. The great event of life and death is in God’s time, not ours, as is everything in our lives. God works all things to his purpose.

We resist God’s time. We often take time as if it were ours. We think that we have ownership of our time, and then we resent it when our time is “taken away from us.” In The Screwtape Letters, C.S. Lewis has his astute tempter Screwtape note:

“Now you will have noticed that nothing throws [a person] into a passion so easily as to find a tract of time which he reckoned on having at his own disposal unexpectedly taken from him. It is the unexpected visitor (when he looked forward to a quiet evening)...that throws him out of gear...because he regards his time as his own and feels that it is being stolen...The man can neither make, nor retain, one moment of time; it all comes to him by pure gift; he might as well regard the sun and moon as his chattels...”

But Lazarus is given a gift of time, in God’s time. Martha and Mary chide Jesus for his lateness at coming, but we can never mistake our time for God’s time, trying to rush him or impede him. His revelation to us is on his time. But he will always come, and he will always be there.

For look how God cares! When Jesus arrives at Bethany, he is feeling deep sorrow. And experiencing such feelings, he understands ours. Reading this passage, we should never think that God is distant and uncaring, that God is remote from our experiences and our trials. God is as close to us and to our needs as he was to Martha and Mary in their need and sorrow.

Mary and Martha already believe in Jesus. The raising of Lazarus, in a way, is not for them. The love of Jesus is expressed towards them, towards Lazarus, but the act is for the crowds and for us, to show the glory of God. Let us join the crowd and see the glory of God in the raising of Lazarus.

What is our response?
In the Book of Common Prayer, there is a note: “The liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy. It finds all its meaning in the resurrection. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we, too, shall be raised” (p. 507).

As part of this liturgy, the raising of Lazarus from the dead is recognized as a sign of hope for us, when we pray in a burial service. In The Burial of the Dead: Rite Two (BCP, p. 497), we pray:

“...to our Lord Jesus Christ who said, “I am Resurrection and I am Life.”

“Lord, you consoled Martha and Mary in their distress; draw near to us who mourn for N,...

“You wept at the grave of Lazarus, your friend; comfort us in our sorrow...

“You raised the dead to life; give to our brother (sister) eternal life...”

As the children enter the room, engage them in a simple activity that relates to today’s lesson, such as a puzzle sheet or a page to color. Younger children may enjoy Lazarus at the Tomb on page 8 or making Paper-Doll Lazarus on page 24. Older children might make New Clothes for Lazarus, page 23, and wear them during Telling the Story.

Here are other ideas:

Begin a campfire to prepare for an almost-ghost story! Put a fake bonfire in the center of the room, using sticks or pretend sticks (such as paper towel rolls) and some red, yellow and orange tissue paper or construction paper on top. As children come in, hand them a piece of paper and a pencil or crayons. Have them draw a picture of someone they want to remember, and to place the picture on the “fire.”

Older intermediate learners can also be invited to sit around a “campfire” and bond together in friendship with one another.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say an opening prayer, such as:

- Our heavenly Father, we thank you that we can come together today to worship you, to praise you, and to learn about your love for us and for all of your family. Guide us today as we learn from your Word, let us see your light in each other, and bring us the joy of your life and love. We pray to you in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son and our Savior. Amen.
**Telling the Story**

Read today’s story aloud from a children’s Bible, showing the pictures, or tell the story in your own words. If you might look for a realistic video on the raising of Lazarus and show that; the part on Lazarus in the television movie *Jesus of Nazareth* is very good.

If you have prepared a “campfire” in your room, remain seated around the campfire for story time. If you can, darken the room. Read with a dramatic voice to heighten the power of the story.

Older intermediate children may want to reenact the story after you tell it. See Lazarus Returns from Death on page 26.

See Storytelling Enhancements on pages 3-6 in the Appendix (also downloadable) for additional suggestions about story aids and interactive storytelling.

Let the children hear the story without analyzing it for them or discussing it. For now, simply let the story sink into their minds and hearts. Later, while having snacks, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it and explore its message.

**Prayer**

Set up a small worship center in your room.

**Materials:**
- small table with a cloth to cover it
- 2 candles or a single large Christ candle
- matches
- Bible
- cross
- *optional:* flowers (real, artificial or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read a verse from today’s scripture from a Bible so that the children connect the story they heard with the Bible, which is the word of God. If working mainly with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

Suggestions for the readings:

*For younger children:* John 11:43

*For older children:* John 11:25-26, or 11:47-50, or 12:9-11 (these verses from chapter 12 reinforce today’s lesson.)
Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

Reader: A reading from the book of John:
(Read the selected passage.)

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself, then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Invite children to offer thanks to God for the ways in which they have seen or felt God’s guidance during the past week. This can be in school, at home, with family and friends or anywhere else. Do not worry about their theology of prayer! Invite their sincere thanksgivings to God.
- Ask them to share any concerns with one another and with God in prayer. Offer any prayers yourself, for those absent, for people in need, for those who are ill in your church family.
- Recognize any birthdays or other special occasions and give thanks for these special times and for the opportunity to share them with our church family.
- End by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.

Carefully extinguish the candles.

Sharing

Pass out snacks and say a simple grace, such as this traditional Jewish blessing:

- Blessed are you, O Lord God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. Amen.

Some graces for meals may also be found in the Book of Common Prayer, page 835. When the children begin to learn set table graces from the other children or from you, have the whole group say grace aloud together.

This is an excellent time, while sharing a snack, to begin talking about the story that the children have just heard. Draw out the children’s reactions to the story that was told. Children may be able to identify with:

- the grief of Martha and Mary over their brother’s death
- the sorrow of Jesus for his friend’s death
- the astonishment of the people as they see Lazarus emerging from his tomb
- What do you think it was like for Lazarus to be dead, then alive again?

Martha recognizes Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God, and Jesus tells her that he is the resurrection and the life. What a powerful conversation!
Activities: Arts, Crafts, Games, Drama, etc.

After Sharing, begin an activity to supplement and enhance today’s story. While the children are doing an activity, talk about the story so that they make the connection.

Suggested story-related activities are provided at the end of this lesson on pages 8-27.

Additional activity ideas can be found on pages 3-6 in the Appendix (also downloadable) where we’ve provided suggestions and directions for a variety of general activities that can be adapted to any lesson. Also included are outreach and service projects that can be done at any time.
Memorization

This story contains one of the most important sayings that Jesus said about himself, in John 11:25-26: “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.” This passage can be of great comfort to anyone in times of sorrow or need—a spiritual guidepost to keep in our hearts.

Suggestions for ways to help the children with their memorization can be found on page 15 in the Appendix at the back of this document.

Weaving the Family of God

As your time together draws to a close, take a few minutes to help the children summarize the story and say what they learned today by asking questions such as:

- Who was in today’s lesson?
- What did Jesus do?
- What did Jesus say about who he is?

Encourage the children to remember key family of God words and themes from the story, such as: resurrection, life, believing.

Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or back to their homes with God’s love and blessing. You may say one of your own or use this one:

- Lord God, we thank you for the time that we have here in church to glorify you and know you. We ask that you stay with us as we join our family and our friends, helping us to love them and all other members of your people this week, so that in whatever we do, we may give praise and thanks to you. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

End with a dismissal used in church, such as this one from the Prayer Book:

- Let us bless the Lord.

The children respond:

- Thanks be to God!
GATHERING ACTIVITY:
LAZARUS AT THE TOMB

Jesus has just called for Lazarus to come out of his tomb.
Can you draw him coming out?
In this game, children form teams and race to see which team can wrap up and unwrap Lazarus first.

**Materials:**
- long lengths of gauze or toilet paper (2 rolls)

**Directions:**
1. Divide the group into two teams. If the group is small, you may have just one team.
2. Have one child on each team be Lazarus.
3. Each team must take the toilet paper or gauze and wrap Lazarus. When finished, the team yells *Lazarus, Come Out!*
4. Lazarus must then unwrap himself or herself quickly while the rest of the team rolls up the paper.
5. Upon being unwrapped, Lazarus yells *Jesus Is the Resurrection and the Life!"*
Children use clay and various found objects in nature to make a tomb scene.

**Materials:**
- sturdy paper plates
- clay or play dough
- stones
- leaves
- twigs
- flowers
- other interesting shapes from nature

**Directions:**
1. Give each child a paper plate.
2. Tell children to use their imaginations and the found objects to create the tomb scene where Jesus went to see Lazarus.
Children use colored sand to make a picture of the tomb scene where Lazarus was buried.

**Materials:**
- thick paper (like poster board) or cardboard
- clean dry sand (or buy colored sand)
- poster paints
- paper bowls
- plastic knives
- paintbrushes
- pencils
- extra items such as twigs, leaves, tin foil (for “water”) and plain sand

**Preparation:**
1. Mix poster paints with sand to make the colored sand. Do not make the mixture too thick, or it will stick to the brush and not spread easily.
2. Pour some colored sand into paper bowls. Give each child a variety of sand, or have children share.

**Directions:**
Invite each child to make a sand painting as follows:
1. Give each child a piece of cardboard or poster board, some colored sand, a pencil and a paintbrush.
2. On the paper, draw in pencil the tomb scene where Lazarus was buried.
3. Use a plastic knife to spread the mixture thickly onto the picture, where you want that color of sand. Use the knife to make waves and cuts as decorative effects on the sand, and use a paintbrush to make lines and squiggles.
   
   *Suggestion:* Begin the sand painting from the bottom and work up, or from the top and work down. This keeps the sands from mixing together as you tip the picture to pour the excess sand out.
4. Continue applying sand onto the picture until the picture is finished. Then add natural decorative effects such as twigs. If you sprinkle a little extra sand on the picture, it will create more texture.
5. Let the picture dry before taking home.
Prayer Garden for Lazarus

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make a prayer garden for themselves. A prayer garden gives us peace and a place for prayer, especially when someone is sick. Perhaps Martha and Mary went to a garden to pray, and Jesus certainly did.

Materials:
- clay planter
- gardener’s foam
- silk flowers and leaves
- scissors
- cross pattern (see Plant a Prayer activity)
- paper
- craft stick
- glue
Optional:
- acrylic paints
Optional:
- paintbrushes

Preparation:
Make a copy of the cross pattern for each child.

Directions:
Invite each child to make a prayer garden as follows:

1. Cut the gardener’s foam to fit into your planter.

2. Cut the silk flowers to size, cutting off excess stalks. “Plant” them in the planter.

3. Cut out a cross, using the pattern. Glue it onto a craft stick. Plant this in the planter.

4. If desired, paint the sides of the planter with the words The Peace of the Lord Be Always with You.
PLANT A PRAYER
for Preschool, Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Children plant flowers in pots as a remembrance of new life.

**Materials:**
- small glass planters
- potting soil
- small live flowers to transplant
- cross pattern (p. 14)
- green paper wrapping strips (usually used to stuff gift bags)
- scissors
- glue or tape

**Preparation:**
Make a copy of the cross pattern, one cross per child.

**Directions:**
Invite each child to plant the flowers as follows:

1. Put the flower in a planter, then fill the planter with potting soil.
2. Cut out a cross and glue or tape it to the stick.
3. Poke the cross into the soil.
4. Cover the soil with the green strips of paper.
CONVERSATION JUMP START:
IF I COULD DO IT
ALL OVER AGAIN...

for Intermediate

Children consider what new life can mean, for themselves and for others.

Discuss:
- Lazarus had a second chance at life.
- If we had a second chance, what would we change about ourselves and our actions?
LAZARUS 3-D PICTURE
for Preschool, Primary

Children use paper, foam and natural materials to make a picture of Lazarus emerging from the tomb.

Materials:
- Lazarus picture (p. 17)
- plain paper
- crayons
- marker (for leader)
- small foam pieces
- scissors
- glue
- small thin strips of gauze
- small natural objects such as sand, pebbles and twigs

Preparation:
Make a copy of the Lazarus picture for each child.

Directions:
Invite each child to make a 3-D picture as follows:

1. Color and cut out the picture of Lazarus. For a special effect, glue a small strip of gauze on the figure.
2. Draw a scene on the plain paper.
3. Glue a small foam piece onto the back of Lazarus.
4. Glue Lazarus and the foam piece onto the picture.
5. On the top of the picture, have an adult write *Jesus Gives Life*
6. Add real sticks, sand, pebbles and other natural objects to the scene for a realistic look.
Children plant seeds for a flower garden in empty egg cartons.

**Materials:**
- paper egg cartons, 1 per child
- construction paper
- scissors
- potting soil
- scooping spoons
- markers
- various packets of flower seeds
- toothpicks
- tape

**Directions:**
Invite each child to make a flower planter as follows:

1. Cut some construction paper into small pieces of paper 1" x 2". On each paper, write the name of the flowers you will be planting. If you have 6 kinds of seeds, make 6 signs. You may also draw a decoration on the small sign (a flower, a bug, etc.)

2. Tape a toothpick to the back of each sign and set them aside.

3. If you want, decorate the cover of the egg carton.

4. Scoop some potting soil into each egg holder and put some seeds in, according to the instructions on the packets. Gently tamp the soil down.

5. Poke the sign into the egg holder, identifying what kind of flower you are growing there.
Children make a moving picture of Jesus and Lazarus at the tomb.

**Materials:**
- picture of Lazarus and Jesus (p. 20)
- picture of landscape (p. 21)
- brown, green or gray construction paper (9” x 12”)
- scissors
- glue
- craft sticks
- crayons

**Preparation:**
Make a copy of the pictures of Jesus, Lazarus and the landscape scene for each child.

**Directions:**
Invite each child to make a sliding picture as follows:

1. Color the pictures of Jesus and Lazarus and cut out. Glue a craft stick to the back of each picture.
2. Color the picture of the landscape, with the open tomb on the right.
3. Cut a slit along the dotted line on the landscape picture.
4. Glue the sides and top of the landscape picture to a sheet of construction paper. Do not glue the bottom or the inside below the slit.
5. Slide the craft sticks down into the slit, with Jesus on the left and Lazarus on the right. Use the sticks to move Jesus toward the tomb and Lazarus out from the tomb.
NEW LIFE T-SHIRT
for Elementary

Children make new clothes for new life with Jesus.

Materials:
- plain white T-shirts
- fabric paints and fabric pens

Preparation:
Cover the table to protect it from the paint.

Directions:
Lay out the t-shirt on the table. Use fabric paints to create a beautiful decorated shirt. On the back of the t-shirt, paint the words “Jesus gives us new life,” or “Jesus is the resurrection and the life.”
Children make a vest and sandals that they can put on during storytelling time.

**Materials for a vest:**
- plain white pillowcases or plain large grocery bags
- fabric pens and paints (if using a pillowcase)
- acrylic paints or markers (if using paper bags)
- scissors

**Materials for sandals:**
- brown construction paper or poster board
- scissors
- brown cording
- hot glue gun (leader only)

**Preparation:**
Cover the table to protect it from the paints.

**Directions for the vest:**
1. Cut a slit all the way down the front of the bag or pillowcase.
2. Cut an armhole on each side.
3. Decorate the vest with paints or markers.

**Directions for the sandals:**
1. Take off your shoes and outline both feet on the poster board or paper. Cut out the shapes.
2. Cut two lengths of cording, around 24” long.
3. Decide how you want to have the sandals tied and where you want the cords to be. Then have a leader glue them on with the hot glue gun. One option is to glue one end of each cord to the middle of the sole of the sandal, just in front of the ankle. Then the cords can be wrapped around the ankle and then tied together.
Children can participate in storytelling time with this paper-doll Lazarus.

**Materials:**
- paper doll figure and clothes (p. 25)
- crayons
- scissors

**Preparation:**
Make a copy of the paper doll and clothes for each child. If you have the sturdier white card stock paper, use that.

**Directions:**
Invite each child to make a paper doll as follows:

1. Color the paper doll and the clothes and cut out.

2. Fit the clothes onto Lazarus.
“LAZARUS RETURNS FROM DEATH” 
MOVIE OR NEWS PROGRAM 
for Intermediate

Children dramatize the John 11 story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

Materials:
- videotape
- video camera
- props as desired

Directions:
1. Assign who will play which parts. Review John 11:1-53 to identify the parts to include: Lazarus, Mary, Martha, Jesus, the disciples traveling with Jesus, the people with Mary and Martha at their house, Pharisees, chief priests, Caiaphas.

2. Find or make any props as needed. You may want to have: a large tomb “stone,” some toilet paper or gauze for wrapping Lazarus, and other “cemetery”-type items.

3. Read from the Bible or children’s Bible and have the actors act while you read, or have them act out the story according to their own imaginations. For a news program, have them decide on the feature stories, perhaps each one told from a different person’s perspective.

4. Videotape this program to show to other groups!
WHERE’S LAZARUS?
for Preschool

This game is a simple way for children to reenact today’s story and reinforce its message.

**Materials:**
- large box or bed sheet

**Directions:**
1. Make a “tomb” by covering two chairs with a sheet, or by putting a large box on the floor with the opening at the side, facing the children.
2. Pick one child to be Lazarus and one child to be Jesus. Tell the other children that they are Lazarus’s friends.
3. Have Lazarus go into the “tomb” and sit or lie there.
4. All of the other children will form a circle around the “tomb.” If there are enough children, have them hold hands in a circle around the tomb.
5. The children say all together, “Where’s Lazarus? Lazarus is dead! Where’s Lazarus? Lazarus is dead!”
6. Jesus then comes to the “door” of the “tomb” and yells “Lazarus, come out!”
7. Lazarus then comes out of the “tomb.”
8. Have the children take turns being Jesus and Lazarus.