

3/18 Midweek Lenten Monologue “Martha” Nancy Diepenbrock

***I was so grateful when I awakened this morning!***

Lazarus has survived one more bout with the demon  
that seems to possess him every once in a while.  
Sometimes he is out of it for so long that we fear  
he may not make it back.

I could hear his regular breathing as he slept.  
When he woke he would be his old self again!

I lay in bed and thought about my family with love.  
We’re an odd group:

2 older unmarried women and their unmarried brother.  
There IS another family member, not related by blood,  
who stays with us when he is in Judea.

He comes, but not to stay.

Yet, he is at the center of all our lives!

I am the oldest. I was five when Lazarus was born.  
Lazarus was a weak baby, and we always were afraid we’d lose him.  
Our mother couldn’t work hard after his birth,  
so I took over some of the household chores.

I cleaned and cooked and worked in the garden.  
Mother did the spinning and weaving and made clothes for all of us.  
Father usually went for the water every morning  
and shopped on market days.

Mary was born when I was ten.

Mother died after a few months after she was born.

Now, all of the work fell to me!

I never had much time to be with girls my own age.

I worked all day long.

Lazarus went to the synagogue school  
and learned to read and write.  
He could recite long passages of scripture and explain them.  
He wanted to teach me, but I had little time for such things!  
When Mary was quite young, he began to teach HER.  
She sure kept up with Lazarus! I tried not to be jealous.

Father also had seizures much like those of Lazarus.  
After Mother died, he grew frail.  
He let others know that our home and grounds  
would be mine after he died,  
and I was to have full responsibility for Lazarus and Mary.  
Father left enough money for us.

The men thought Father should arrange a marriage for me,  
but he never got around to it, and I'm glad.  
Now, I'm too old to be married.  
Lazarus feels he should not marry because of his illness.  
And Mary loves someone she can't marry. So here we are.

Lazarus is a wonderful brother!

When we were younger,  
Lazarus would serve as peacemaker between Mary and me,  
understanding how hard life was for us at times.  
Mary was a rebellious little girl. She thought I was bossy.

She didn't like it when I tried to get her to help with chores.  
She would say, "You can't make me. You're not my mother!"  
Lazarus would listen to her complaints  
until they were out of her system.

Then, HE would try to help more.  
I worried he would overdo.  
I worried about Mary also.

One morning, I lay in bed thinking about all this.  
I heard Lazarus stir, and I got up to make breakfast.  
Mary often sleeps late.  
Lazarus and I began to talk about Jesus,  
the other member of our little family.

We remembered how once,  
Joseph and Mary and their son Jesus  
were traveling from Nazareth in Galilee.  
We invited them to rest for a while before going into Jerusalem.  
Jesus was 12 years old and they were headed for the temple.  
Lazarus was about the same age then.

We heard that Jesus listened to scholars at the temple,  
who spoke of the fine points of the law.  
He asked questions that showed how well he understood the Torah.  
At times,  
Jesus seemed to know more than the scholar who was speaking!

The end of the week came.  
I had invited Jesus' family to share a meal with us on their way home.  
Mary and Joseph arrived, but Jesus wasn't with them!  
He must be with friends, they said, and will join us soon.  
We watched the road all afternoon, but Jesus didn't show up.  
Mary and Joseph searched for him quite awhile  
and then decided to hurry back to the city to hunt for him.

They found him, thank God!  
They stopped at our house for another meal.  
I fixed food for the travelers. We watched as they started out home.  
Then Jesus came running back to us, out of breath.  
“Mary, Martha, Lazarus, I will need a home near Jerusalem someday.  
I will need friends who are like family.”  
We all hugged him and told him  
that our home was his home always.  
He would always be welcome!

And now, as we remembered these things about Jesus,  
we heard Mary stirring.  
She came down from sleeping on the roof  
and took the pitcher to get water.  
After Jesus became a part of our family,  
I learned not to nag her and she learned to offer to help.  
What a miracle!

When Mary finished her breakfast, I decided  
to get a head start on the yearly deep cleaning before Passover.  
I was full of energy!  
Jesus usually came on his way to Passover in Jerusalem,  
more than a month away.  
By that time, I'd be free to just enjoy his visit.  
The house became clean and I became dirty!  
I thought with joy of a bath and clean clothes.

Just then, Lazarus called, “Martha, Jesus is here!”  
Lazarus and Mary ran up to hug him,  
but I felt too grubby to embrace Jesus.

We brought him water and washed his feet.  
Jesus sat under a tree, and Mary curled up at his feet.

I gathered beans and a cucumber and found a ripe melon.

It was hot. I was very tired.

I could hear the three of them talking in the cool of the garden.

I found myself resenting Mary  
who thought she should join the men  
and not help in the kitchen.

Just then, everything went wrong!

The fire was too hot and the beans burned.

I cut my hand and blood dripped on the sliced cucumbers.

I called to Mary to come and help. I began to cry.

I went to the doorway and asked,

“Jesus, don’t you care

that my sister has left me alone to do all the work.

Tell her to help me!” Surely he would be on my side.

But no! His reply hurt me.

“Martha, Martha....

You are worried and distracted by many things.

There is need of only one thing.

Mary has chosen the better part,

which will not be taken away from her.”

Lazarus came and led me to the cool place under the tree.

I sat down.

I said stubbornly,

“How can a woman show her welcome to someone she loves  
except by making a good meal?”

Jesus said that hospitality wasn't always food and a clean house,  
nice as those things are.

Hospitality, he went on, is being willing to pay attention to a guest,  
to listen carefully to what's on their mind.

Jesus said that he had to return to Jerusalem, to teach in Judea.  
It might mean trouble with the authorities.

It MIGHT mean his arrest.

It might even mean his DEATH.

He wanted us to know so that we could help and support him.

Some of his followers don't understand his mission yet.

They still expect him to lead a revolt against the Romans.

We listened and asked questions. We promised him our support.

We talked until the sun went down and the stars came out.

We sat in silence, bound by our love for one another.

Finally, Lazarus said, "I'm hungry now

for cold, burned beans and bloodstained cucumber slices,  
and didn't I see a melon?"

We ate together and the food tasted so good!

Now, at the end of this long day, I am in my bed again,  
remembering all of this.

I pray that I can let go of the worries that distract me,  
so that I can be strong for the days ahead.

May I always give my FULL ATTENTION

to this **great *guest of my life.***