

### 3 Thomas

(John 11:1-15;32-44.

It was madness to go back. We told him so, madness. Well you see, we wanted to protect him. We wanted to protect him from the stone wielding, venom spitting Jews who we knew were determined to do just one thing, to kill him in whatever way they could. It was madness to go back, so we should have known that that was just what he would do, for we had grown used to madness. Ever since that day in Cana, ever since we had our sense of reality bent beyond breaking as we tasted water that had been turned into wine, through healing, through teaching, through just seeing him, just being with him. Somehow everything was at the same time mad, yet perfectly sane, nonsensical, yet making perfect sense. So what else should we have expected? And caught up in this madness, we followed him to Bethany.

I thought that there were no surprises left. I thought that nothing else could knock us sideways. I thought that nothing else was left after all that we had seen. I thought ... until that is, I heard his words: "Roll the stone away."

Roll the stone away! Could I believe what I was hearing! This was madness beyond any madness we had experienced before. Opening the graves of the dead!

If I could have run to him, if I could have stopped him, pleaded with him, begged him to turn away, to leave the dead to death, to step back from the madness that was unfolding before me, then I would have done. But there was no moving, Everyone became rigid, rooted to the spot, rooted to the spot by the unimaginable madness unfolding before them. Even those who rolled the stone away had to force their every movement as they too were filled with the madness and horror of the moment.

And then it happened. Lazarus walked out of his tomb! Some screamed, some ran in silence robbed of speech, some fainted, some fell to their knees hysterical and amazed, some stood, motionless, staring, bewildered and stunned. He sank to his knees, exhaustion etched on his face, tears streaming, looking suddenly small and gaunt and alone, so very alone. And as if I were suddenly released from something that was holding me back, I found myself running, running toward him. His face was drawn and thin. His eyes seemed dulled and drained of life, as if in giving life to this man he had taken in himself the death that had held him in its grip for the past 3 days. I embraced him and lifted him up. I lifted him to his feet and he said: "This is what it will cost Thomas, this is what it will cost."

Could I have known what he meant then? As I helped him in his faltering steps, this man who had emptied himself, who had given all that he had for his friend.

Could I have known that there was more to give? More madness to encounter?  
More surprises to come? More even than this?

We walked back to the village, back to the house, and Jesus slept. Exhausted  
and emptied, he slept.

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