Our Gospel passage today comes to us as we are waist-deep in the chaotic waters of the Corona Virus and knowing that Good Friday is looming and praying that Easter will still come, our text calls us to reflect on the nature of God in the midst of great tragedy.

But we are mindful that Jesus never does miracles for their own sake, but to show us what God is like. And we are mindful that this story does not simply tell us of a dead man being raised, but is a story of human grief, loss and suffering.

This is a true story of how a God like ours responds to a death that seemingly overwhelms our human experience. The story begins by telling us how much Jesus loves the family of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. We then read this story thinking about how Jesus responds toward those whom he loves.

We are told to believe we are people who Jesus loves and we wait in anticipation to see how he treats the family in our story. Jesus shows up late, and if we’re honest, this experience is true for us today as it was for them. And it forces us to reflect on a central question to the human experience, where is God in our time of need?

The question that we’re asking turns out not to be “Why did Jesus delay in this story?” but actually, “Why does God delay in our lives given all that is happening in the world today.

So where is God in our time of need? Throughout the Old Testament, God is described as being saddened, grieved, moved to pity, angry and restless. Yet the God we claim is not the disinterested, uninvolved god of Greek philosophy. Our God has fire, personality, zeal, and the deepest level of interest in our sorrow and joy! What’s interesting is that the different words used to describe Jesus’ emotions in our passage include anger, but also compassion.

Jesus experiences a wide range of emotions in this short time, and scholars can’t agree about whom Jesus is angry at. But when Jesus weeps, it is at the brokenness of our humanity, because of sin, because of grief, because of death and suffering. Jesus weeps because he is sad.

In our Gospel passage, Jesus commands Lazarus to come out of the tomb, and he does! It’s enough to say Mary and Martha did not expect this; on an obvious level they did not anticipate someone who had died coming back to life. But even on a theological level, they understood that resurrection was supposed to happen at the end of time. But Jesus throughout the gospels is saying to us that everything God is, is happening in our midst. “I am the resurrection and the life!” Jesus says, and in that He tells us we don’t have to wait until death or until the end of times to experience Resurrection. Resurrection begins now, and continues on. Jesus redefines resurrection to mean life now, and long life for tomorrow. And he will do it again on Easter Sunday.

I pray we will always turn to the God of all Life in the face of death, disaster or hardship whether near or far, in all honesty and humility, and may God come to us and make all things new once again. Amen.