

Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45
Reverend Giuseppe Mattei (March 22, 2026)

Do you allow yourself to get upset with God or do you find that irreverent? Would you be afraid to let God have a piece of your mind or do you feel comfortable letting God know how angry you are, letting God see that side of you?

There are plenty examples of biblical characters upset with God, often due to suffering, loss, or unmet expectations: Job, Jonah, Moses, Elijah to name a few. Many a psalm and the Book of Lamentations in the Bible include expressions of disappointment, anguish and despair.¹ Like the experience of any feeling, anger can be an opportunity for engaging in conversation with God. Turning to God is in and of itself a beginning of prayer. Staying with it takes trust and discipline.

Martha and Mary were frustrated if not altogether furious with Jesus. Wouldn't you? They had sent him notice of their brother, Lazarus, serious sickness and he didn't show up until it was too late. They probably felt disappointment and confusion. Why wouldn't Jesus show compassion and intervene in time? Why wouldn't he heed their cry, their fear of losing their brother to illness, their impending grief? Why

¹ [What does the Bible say about being angry with God?; 30 Powerful bible verses about anger towards god \(Full Commentary\) - Bible Study For You; 5 Bible Characters Who Complained to God \(With Lessons\)](#)

wouldn't he notice their loyal devotion, their deep trust, their sincere acknowledgment of his divine powers?

Has it happened to you? Have you ever felt anguish at God's apparent lack of attention to your prayer? Have you ever felt uncared for, unseen, alone and abandoned by God? Have you ever felt discouragement and helplessness? Have you ever got to the brink of despair and questioned the meaning of your very existence? Have doubts about the depth and righteousness of your faith ever assailed you? In other words, did you ever find yourself in Mary and Martha's shoes?

Sometimes, God's silence can be incomprehensible and unbearable, and it can stretch too long almost to our breaking point if not longer. Is this what God wants? Or is God challenging our attitude toward God and moving us beyond an infantile understanding of a vending-machine God – you know, the kind you put in a prayer coin or a good deed coin and expect God to deliver exactly what you dialed for, the solution to your problems?

Paraphrasing Jesus (Jn 11:4), challenging moments (even death-dealing ones) are opportunities for the glorification of the Son of God. They can be faith-shaping and life-giving moments. God will see us through, and we will be different, stronger, more confident and at peace. And all of this is out

of love: Jesus loved the Bethania siblings, John tells us, “so” he delayed his trip to see Lazarus (Jn 11:5-6). A strange way to show love, not what we expect, not what we pray for in our anguish. God’s choices cannot be measured by human criteria.²

Have some (many) abandoned God because *they* felt alone and abandoned by God,³ because they couldn’t hold on to faith,⁴ walk by faith and not by sight,⁵ make sense of God⁶? Although it is hard to believe and remain faithful, it is exactly in those moments that God is working in us a more resilient faith.⁷

Martha was intimate enough with Jesus to share her frustration openly. When Jesus asked her if she believed Lazarus would rise again, she agreed to the “resurrection at the last day.” (Jn 11:23-24) When Jesus revealed to her “I am the resurrection and the life” she earnestly believed (Jn 11:25-27): life in him on this side of death is resurrected life, the fullness of life that will allow life beyond physical death.⁸

² Job 38; Jonah 4

³ Psalm 10; Psalm 22; Job 30:20

⁴ Isaiah 41:10; Hebrews 10:23-25; Romans 4:20-21; Romans 8:28

⁵ Deuteronomy 4:31; Isaiah 43:2; Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5; 2 Corinthians 5:7

⁶ Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 103:2; Jeremiah 29:11

⁷ Isaiah 43:19; Isaiah 64:4

⁸ John 5:19-29; 6:40.54; 10:10

Yet, she told Mary “quietly” that the Teacher was here and calling her name. Her faith was still developing and not quite there yet.

Mary rose quickly at hearing that he, the Shepherd, was calling her (cf. Jn 10:3) and when she reached him, she knelt at his feet (in worship). She repeated the first part of her sister’s line but without adding the expectation of the miracle. To her, his *presence* means life. Martha needed to be led to the place of faith confession. Mary displayed it in her heart already.

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem where he knows he will face conflict and death. Yet, in the shadow of death, he brings Lazarus, a dear friend to life. He knows that this action will seal his fate. But he also knows that beyond the immediate relief to the grief of Mary and Martha, he is encouraging his disciples and friends on to a resurrected life. His goal is not the prevention of death – Lazarus will die again; death is part of life – but a conscious and convinced life in God.

Jesus is big enough to take our angry protests. Are we rooted and solid enough in faith to endure apparent abandonment, solitude and silence?

Some of us are carrying heavy crosses and struggle through a dark Friday that seems to have no end.

May the Lord sustain us in moments of anguish and loss.
May God's presence strengthen us in trust. May his light
guide us even when it's dark outside. Amen.