



## Unfinished: Discovering God's Call in the Not Yet Lent 5

*Called to Regret*

### Warm-up Question

*What do you do when you have to make a big decision?*



Two paths diverged in the woods by [Andrew Lorien](#). [CC BY-SA 2.0](#) license

### Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

“Near and Now” is a resource provided by the Nourishing Vocation Project through the Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community at St. Olaf College. This edition is written by Juniper Linberry, Luther Seminary graduate awaiting a pastoral call in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

## Jesus began to weep

Read [John 11:1-45](#)

### Bible Story Reflection

My grandmother died about ten months into the Covid-19 pandemic. She was on hospice care for about two weeks before she passed, and all three of her children were able to be there with her, but I chose not to go. I lived in Wisconsin and she was in Texas, so it was expensive to fly there; the vaccine was not widely available yet; I was still able to talk to her on the phone and send her audio recordings of myself playing music for her. But still, I could have gone to be with her and I did not go.

I have thought a lot about that decision over the last two years and cannot decide if I regret it or not. I had a great relationship with my grandmother, I know she loved me a lot, and I know she had a wonderful and full life. My presence or absence at her deathbed does not change any of those things, and I am grateful for the life she had.

We all experienced losses throughout the pandemic, whether it was the death of a loved one or lost time with friends and family or the sudden loss of our “normal” lives. We also experience change, loss, and grief in our everyday lives just by living. Every time we make a choice, whether major or mundane, it also means that we are choosing against something else. When I choose to have a sandwich for lunch, I am choosing not to have spaghetti. When I choose to go to this school, I am choosing not to go to that school. When I choose to be here, I am choosing not to be there.

Sometimes we’re faced with a hard choice, and it’s okay to grieve the choices we didn’t make. When our grief is unfinished, when we have not yet come to terms with our decisions, that’s when we experience regret. I wonder if that is part of Jesus’ grief when he weeps at Lazarus’ grave; he is mourning his choice to stay where he was because it means he was not there when Lazarus was sick. Even though he has the power to heal Lazarus, even though they are able to talk to one another again, Jesus grieves because he was not with Lazarus when he was suffering.

Jesus weeps before raising Lazarus from the dead because he is not afraid of grieving with us. God grieves with us, every time we face a hard decision, and God shares in our deepest sorrows. When we are full of regret, God does not shy away from us but embraces that feeling of uncertainty with us and promises to be with us as we figure it out.

### Discussion Questions

1. How are grief and regret different? How do they overlap?
2. Does regret ever hold you back from enjoying or participating in the present?
3. In what ways can regret lead to hindsight that can lead to insight?

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4. How can regret actually be a voice that calls to us to do or be something different in the future?
5. Share about a time when a regret led to something new and life-giving for you.
6. How do you think Lazarus, Martha, or Mary would tell this story?
7. When has it felt like God has been absent in times of grief or regret?
8. How has God been present for you in times of grief or regret?

### Activity Suggestions

Journal about a choice you made and the choices you left behind. In your reflection consider if your choice created any regrets. If there are regrets, give those regrets to God in prayer.

Read the poem *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost. Why does the title refer to the path **not** chosen by the speaker?

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
 And sorry I could not travel both  
 And be one traveler, long I stood  
 And looked down one as far as I could  
 To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
 And having perhaps the better claim,  
 Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
 Though as for that the passing there  
 Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
 In leaves no step had trodden black.  
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
 I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
 I took the one less traveled by,  
 And that has made all the difference.

In a group, give each person a piece of paper. On that paper, have each person write down or draw a personal regret that is a heavy burden to bear. Fold the papers over, without showing them to anyone. One-by-one, place them in a shoe box, and put the lid on the box. Sitting in a circle, pass the box around, giving each person a minute to hold

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the box. Remind everyone that we bear each other's burdens. When the box has made its way around the circle, burn it, either in a fireplace or in fire pit.

### **Vocare Practice**

Reflect upon how you are being **called to regret**

- How easy it is for me to name and learn from my regrets?
- What are my regrets from today?
- What insight do I gain from them? How do I respond?
- What do I need for tomorrow?

### **Prayer Concerns**

Those who are grieving, weighed down by regret, and having a hard time letting go

### **Closing Prayer**

Help me, O God, to learn from my regrets so that I might live more faithfully in each tomorrow. In +Jesus name, Amen.