

June 16, 2019

John 11:1-53

"Bring Us Back to Life, Part 2"

Let's pick things up at John 11:7-16 puts it:

Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

This is a fascinating discussion between Jesus and his disciples. They are questioning the timing. Jesus says, "Let's go." His disciples say, "Where we're going they're trying to kill you. Probably not a good idea." Then Jesus says something about walking in the daylight. What's it all mean?

Jesus is talking about timing. He's saying 12 hours of daylight is enough time in which to do God's will. There is always time. But there is not time to waste. You can't wait until dark, because you will stumble. It's like that old cliché from Western movies, "Riding off into the sunset." You really should not do that. It's dumb to ride a horse in the dark. So we have to take advantage of the proper timing of things. Jesus knows there is a time to head toward his glorification on the cross. The time is now.

So Jesus makes it very clear. Lazarus is dead. I'm glad I wasn't there. The timing is right. So Jesus goes. As verses 17-27 tell us:

Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming,

she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

Jesus arrives. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life." And then he looks at Martha and says, "Do you believe this?" What's in the question?

One of the reasons Jesus waited is he wants to have a moment with

Martha where he can look here in the eyes and ask, *in the midst of this challenge, this difficulty, this trauma in life, do you believe in my powerful presence?*

Jesus speaks faith into Martha's life. He has the power to give life. He has the power to keep his promises. Jesus does that in Martha's life. And he

wants to do it in yours. Jesus brings faith into your life. Jesus comes into our life so we will have faith in him.

Martha expresses faith. Notice the progression. First, Martha says *if you'd been here, Lazarus wouldn't have died.* She has faith in what Jesus can do.

Then she says, *I know he's going to rise on the last day.* She has faith in what Jesus says when he tells her Lazarus will rise again. Then she says she believes that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. She now believes in who Jesus is.

Whatever is happening in your life right now...whatever your needs are...is Jesus Christ the preeminent person in your life? No matter what you are experiencing or are going through, are you trusting in Christ and Christ alone? Are you trusting in who Jesus is?

Let's now look at verses 28-37:

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard

it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

This is huge. It not only contains the shortest verse in Scripture - *Jesus Wept* - it also gives us an incredibly profound glimpse into the heart of our Savior.

Jesus sees Mary weeping. Two things are going on here. He is moved by

their sadness. But he's also troubled. The literal translation of *deeply troubled* has the idea "to snort." Like a horse, like a loud snort when you're angry at something. It seems to me that Jesus is angry at their fear of death. He is angry at the grip death has upon their spirits. Jesus is outraged and unsettled by this display of the power death over their lives. Jesus came to conquer death. **There is anger in the heart of God at this abject fear of death.**

Yet in the midst of how distressed Jesus is, Jesus weeps. Jesus weeps for them. Jesus weeps with them. Here's the profound moment. The love of Jesus sheds tears rather than pointing a finger. In this moment, Jesus is compassionate, not condemning. Instead of lecturing them, he weeps with them. Instead of telling them why it's wrong to cry, he cries with them. Instead of scolding us for a weak or wavering faith, **Jesus brings a deeper faith into our lives.** Will you accept that gift from him?

We pick things up at verses 38-44:

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of

the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

The truth here is that God's love adds up to new life. Deeply moved, Jesus says, "Take away the stone." Martha protests. *There's a bad odor.* I love the King James Version translation {and I'm not making this up}: "But Lord, by this time he stinketh." But it doesn't matter. Jesus wants them to take the stone away. And they do. Remember, they believe Jesus is who he says he is. They are acting on faith.

Then Jesus does something interesting. He shouts, "Lazarus, come out."

The name means "God is my help." Did you catch what Jesus doesn't say? Jesus doesn't say, *Lazarus live, or Lazarus rise*. Jesus says, "Lazarus come out" because he has already been raised. We don't know how or exactly when. And we don't need to know. All we know is that sometime after four days, God raised Lazarus. God brought him back to life.

Is there something that has died or is dying in your life? Perhaps it's your passion for serving Jesus Christ. Maybe it's a relationship. Maybe a dream has died. Perhaps your joy for life is withering on the vine. Whatever it is, what do you do about something that seems to have died or has died in your life?

First, you know that Jesus cares. He doesn't condemn you or punish you. Jesus is deeply moved by the hurts we have in our lives. So begin there. Jesus knows you and he cares about what you're going through right now.

Second, you do the first thing that Jesus asks you to do. Jesus asks them to move the stone. They move the stone. Jesus can move the stone, but he doesn't. He asks them to. It's a sign of their faith.

What is Jesus asking you to do? Is he asking you to forgive someone? Is he asking you to do daily devotions? Is he asking you to give generously? Is he asking you to be joyful? Is he asking you to humble yourself? What is Jesus asking you to do?

Third, you do what Jesus does. Jesus prays to God before he calls Lazarus out. With faith, you pray. You ask God to heal this thing that seems dead in you.

Then fourth, you hear Jesus' powerful voice. Jesus shouts to Lazarus. You need to read the Bible. As you read, as you listen, you will hear the voice of Christ. His voice tells you there is hope...there is joy...there is sacrifice...there is resurrection. Whatever you think there is not, Jesus tells you there is.

Finally, fifth, you respond in practical ways to what Jesus has done. When Lazarus comes out, Jesus says *unbind him, and let him go*. And they do it. Whatever you're dealing with right now, whatever your struggle is, whatever has died or is dying in you, you do the simple things Jesus calls

you to do.

If it's a bad or destructive habit, you replace it with something affirming or helping. If it's bitterness, you forgive. If it's anger, you get counseling or come to Celebrate Recovery. If it's envy or jealousy, you start keeping a record of the blessings in your life. If it's self-centeredness, help others or increase your giving. Take off the grave clothes. Get rid of the dead stuff. God brings new life.

So that where we're at in John's Gospel. God is bringing new life. And that marks a transition point. Jesus moves toward his death and glory. This miracle ramps up opposition to Jesus. His disciples know there's trouble brewing in Jerusalem. And Jesus says, *exactly right. It's all for the glory of God.* In other words, **the Father is glorified in the death of His Son.** Jesus knows that's exactly where this is headed.

Chapter 12 takes us to a holy place. As we see Jesus for who he really is, we are now entering into the final week of his life. Jesus is now moving toward his death and glory.