



September 4, 2022

“Raising Lazarus”

[John 11:1-44](#)

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In one of the most beloved stories in the Bible, Jesus showed compassion, tenderness, and emotion in response to a very sad and tragic event—the untimely death of a close, personal friend named Lazarus.

Although Lazarus’ sisters, Martha and Mary, had asked Jesus to come quickly, Jesus delayed coming until Lazarus had died so that He could display a greater miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead! In this story from John 11, Pastor Gary answers two questions: (1) What does it teach us about Jesus that we should emulate? and (2) What does it teach us about death that we should anticipate?

1. [John 11:1-44](#) - *“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.’ When Jesus heard that, He said, ‘This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.’ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. Then after this He said to the disciples, ‘Let us go to Judea again.’ The disciples said to Him, ‘Rabbi, lately the Jews sought 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 one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.’ These things He said, and after that He said to them, ‘Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.’ Then His disciples said, ‘Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.’ However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.’ Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with Him.’ So when Jesus came, He found that he had*

*already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. Now 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 of 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 at the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever 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 to come into the world.' And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, 'The Teacher has come and is calling for you.' As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, 'She is going to the tomb to weep there.' Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.' Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to Him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, 'See how He loved him!' And some of them said, 'Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?' Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?' Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.' Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!' And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him, and let him go.'"*

2. Questions to consider

- a. What does this story teach us about Jesus that we can emulate?
- b. What does this story teach us about death that we should anticipate?

3. Background

- a. This story is only recounted in John's Gospel
- b. Took place in the town of Bethany

- i. **Beit Anya** in Hebrew; translates to “house of the poor.”
  - c. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were close personal friends of Jesus
  - d. Lazarus became sick and Mary sent a messenger to inform Jesus, who was about twenty miles away
  - e. Jesus waited two days before departing for Bethany
    - i. **John 11:6** – *“So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.”*
4. Jesus is never frantic or anxious about anything
- a. **Philippians 4:6-7** – *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*
  - b. The more we commune with God the more we are immune from fears and anxieties of the world
5. Jesus is not driven by emotion; He is guided by devotion to the Father
- a. We often allow emotions to cause us to do impulsive things, say regrettable things, think irrational things, and abandon truth
  - b. Emotion should not recalibrate truth
  - c. Emotion is God-given but is unreliable as a source of direction and decision
  - d. Feelings do not determine reality
6. God’s delay is often for His display
- a. Jesus delayed coming to Bethany to allow Lazarus to die so that He could perform an even greater miracle than healing Lazarus from illness
  - b. We desire for God to “fix” our problems immediately, but sometimes He will delay so that He will be glorified in a greater way
  - c. **John 11:5** – *“Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.”*
    - i. Do not misinterpret God not answering your prayers as you would like to mean He does not love you
    - ii. He will show up according to His timetable, in the way that is the most edifying to us and the most glorifying to Him
  - d. **John 11:35** – *“Jesus wept.”*
    - i. It is likely that Jesus wept simply for identifying with the sadness of the moment.
7. Jesus alone has the power over life and death
- a. **John 11:25-26b** – *“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.’”*
  - b. Death is not a destination; it is a transition

- i. **2 Corinthians 5:8** – *“Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord.”* (NLT)
  - ii. **Helen Keller** – *“Death is no more than passing from one room into another. But there’s a difference for me, you know. Because in that other room I shall be able to see.”<sup>i</sup>*
  - iii. **Billy Graham** – *“Someday you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don’t you believe a word of it. I shall be more alive than I am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God”<sup>ii</sup>*
  - iv. **Tony Evans (posted to Facebook upon the passing of his wife)** – *“Just before the sun came up this morning, the love of my life, Lois Irene Evans, transitioned from earth and watched her first sunrise from heaven.”*
- c. Death is a reunion with believing friends and loved ones; we will recognize each other
- i. In the story of the Mount of Transfiguration in **Luke 9**, Peter, James, and John recognized Moses and Elijah even though the two men had been dead for centuries
  - ii. **1 Corinthians 13:12b** – *“Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”* (1984 NIV)
  - iii. **1 Thessalonians 4:13** – *“And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.”* (NLT)
- d. Death is not the end—it is the beginning of eternal life
- i. The human soul never dies; it either goes to heaven or hell
  - ii. Hell was created for the devil and demons—we only go there if we choose to reject Jesus as Savior
    - 1. **Matthew 25:41b** – *“Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...”*
  - iii. Heaven is open wide for all who believe
    - 1. **2 Peter 3:9** – *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”*
    - 2. **John 3:16** – *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

## Discussion Questions

1. Read [John 11:1-44](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Jesus waited two days before departing for Bethany. What does this tell us about his mindset? (See #4 above)
3. Read [Philippians 4:6-7](#). How do we emulate Jesus' mindset when we're feeling frantic or anxious? (See #4b above)
4. What happens when we allow emotions to drive our decision-making? (See #5a above)
5. Why does God sometimes delay answering our prayers? (See #6a and #6b above)
6. Discuss a time when God's delay resulted in a greater outcome in your life.
7. Death is not a destination; it is a \_\_\_\_\_. How should this shape our attitude toward death? (See #7a and #7b above)
8. Read [1 Corinthians 13:12b](#) and [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#). What enables believers to grieve with hope? (See #7c above)
9. Read [2 Peter 3:9](#) and [John 3:16](#). How is death "a beginning?" (See #7d above)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)

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<sup>i</sup><https://people.smu.edu/cgould/2021/03/19/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://billygrahamlibrary.org/blog-what-billy-graham-had-to-say-about-his-homegoing/>