

**A Gift Better Than Life (John 11:1-44)
That You May Believe: The Gospel of John
Southern Hills Baptist Church
March 19, 2017**

WELCOME

Happy Sunday! It is odd for me to think about, but this is the last time I will preach God's Word in this building. This could make me a bit nostalgic, but I don't have too much time for that as I am far too excited about where God is taking us as a church family. Nevertheless, I will enjoy this moment in a spirit of thankfulness for what God has grown in this building over the past few years, He has grown a family, a family I love.

Turn in your Bibles to John 11. I am so excited for this passage tonight. It is an incredible passage to be sure. Please take a moment to turn to John 11 as we don't have the benefit of a projector tonight and I want you to be able to see some really important truths from our text.

INTRODUCTION – COUNTER-INTUITIVE TO OUR NATURE

As you turn in your Bibles, let me remind you of a glorious truth about Jesus and His teaching. Jesus has a way of turning things on their head. He so often does and/or says that which is unexpected. He can be hard to follow at times b/c His message is so counter-intuitive to our very nature.

- We like to think of ourselves as basically good, but Jesus comes and tells us that our sin has corrupted us and stand condemned before God.
- He didn't look for pomp and circumstance like we might expect. Jesus' ministry was largely towards the poor, downtrodden, and rejected of society. Jesus walked towards those that everyone else had walked away from.
- Consider Jesus' entry into our world... Jesus, King of kings, Lord of lords, was born in the equivalent of a barn, He laid in a feeding trough for animals.
- We are used to having to working hard to earn good things in our lives, but Jesus comes and tells us that salvation is a gift of grace, it can't be earned.

These are but a few examples. All of this is counter-intuitive to our nature.

He Does It Again

Tonight we find Jesus in a situation where I believe we would all assume we know the right move for Him to make, but He does the opposite. In so doing He leaves some people that He loves dearly and that love Him sincerely dumbfounded and in great pain, His decision costs someone their life. It is here that we once again witness Jesus turning a situation on its head and through this He reveals something beautiful and glorious about Himself. **He shows us love expressed in the deepest way. He gives a gift that is greater than life itself. Our passage is a familiar one, but oh is it rich with the truth of the supremacy of Jesus, my favorite topic.**

OPENING PRAYER

Before we read through our text let me open with a word of prayer...

Heavenly Father,

It is you who gives the increase. We labor in your fields, but you are the one who causes growth. Would you do what only you can tonight? Take your word and capture our hearts with a vision of you that leaves us in wonder with hearts full of gratitude. Help us to see and know that there is a gift better than life that is to be experienced and that gift is available to us tonight, to taste of, to see, to drink in. Transform us from one degree of glory to another as we behold the glory of your Son as He works in powerful ways.

We ask these things in Jesus' name,
Amen

OUR TEXT

John 11. Hear the Word of God...

John 11:1-44

[1] Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. [2] It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. [3] So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." [4] But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

[5] Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. [6] So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. [7] Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." [8] The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" [9] 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. [10] But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." [11] After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." [12] The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." [13] Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. [14] Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, [15] and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." [16] So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

[17] Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. [18] Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, [19] and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. [20] So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. [21] Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. [22] But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." [23] Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." [24] Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." [25] Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, [26] and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" [27] She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

[28] When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." [29] And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. [30] Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. [31] 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. [32] 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." [33] 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. [34] And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." [35] Jesus wept. [36] So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" [37] But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

[38] Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. [39] 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." [40] Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" [41] So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. [42] 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." [43] When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." [44] 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."

What an incredible story. What an unbelievable miracle from our Lord Jesus. As is the case with so many of these passages in John, there is more here than we will have time to get to, so time is of the essence, let's move.

A GIFT BETTER THAN LIFE: JESUS' GIFT OF HIMSELF (vs. 1-16)

There are a couple of really big truths that John wants us to take from this astonishing account and the first is **that Jesus gives a gift to Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and all others who were there, a gift that is better than life.** We have to follow the story closely to see this, so let's start at the beginning.

The Friends Jesus Loved Dearly

John opens up by introducing us to a few people that were significant to Jesus. **These people were more than followers, they were friends, they were people that Jesus loved as friends.** John tells us very directly and on multiple occasions that Jesus loved Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. We don't hear stuff like that too often in the Gospels. **Of course Jesus loved everyone, but this family apparently held a special place in His heart.**

Seriously Sick

And this family was facing some serious trouble. As Jesus is ministering, word came to him that His beloved friend Lazarus was incredibly ill. Jesus was likely a day or two away from Bethany, where Lazarus was, so for someone to send this kind of message to Jesus tells us that Lazarus didn't just have the flu, Mary and Martha must have feared for his life. They knew this was serious so they reached out to Jesus, the only one they knew who could possibly reverse things for Lazarus, the only one who could bring forth a miraculous healing.

What Do You Think/Expect?

So Jesus knows the severity of the situation. He gets the message, He sees the trouble the messenger went to, to find Him, He knows that this is a life or death situation. So what does Jesus do? What do you think He should have done? If you were on the other side of this, if you were Mary or Martha and it was your brother, your wife, your husband, your mother, your father, what would you have wanted to see from Jesus?

You would have wanted Jesus to drop everything and hurry, right? I mean if it is life or death you have to hurry, you only get one life, right? Well, sort of.

Jesus' Response

How does Jesus respond?

John 11:6

[6] So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Wow, not what any of us expect, not what any of us would have done ourselves. Jesus heard that a dear friend that He deeply loved was sick to the point of death so He chose to stay.

Out of Love?!?

What is even more perplexing is when you see this in connection to verse 5...

John 11:5-6

[5] Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. [6] So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Did you catch the connection between these two verses? Why did Jesus choose to stay and not drop everything and go and rescue Lazarus? Because He loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

Does That Feel Like Love? 911 Call

Wait... what?!? It was because He loved this family that He let Lazarus die? Does that make any sense to you? What would you think if you called 911 because you had a gun shot wound, you knew you needed immediate help and when you get the dispatcher on the line they tell you that the paramedics care deeply for you and your situation so they are going to come tomorrow. Tomorrow?!? There will not be a tomorrow for me, I have a gun shot wound, come now so I can have a tomorrow! I am beginning to question their love and care for me.

Understand the Implications of Waiting

Let's make sure we understand what this means... Jesus gets the news that Lazarus is on his death bed and He chooses to stay 2 more days where He is. This means that Lazarus is going to die. This means Lazarus is likely going to suffer. Generally diseases that are aggressive like what Lazarus had and leave you on your deathbed, they are not pretty and there was very little in the way of medicine back in this day and age. So Lazarus is going to suffer greatly. Mary and Martha have to watch someone they love die painfully.

Jesus Knew This, Yet...

Jesus knew His delay was going to cause all of this, yet we are told He did it out of a heart of love. Have you ever considered letting a loved one die an act of love when you had the power to stop it? Have you ever considered letting someone experience intense grief an act of love when you had the power to stop it?

Jesus' Explanation

Like I told you before, Jesus has a way of turning things on their head. **This is all an act of love from Jesus. But, How?** Thankfully we are not left to answer these questions on our own, Jesus gave us the answer in verse 4...

John 11:4

[4] But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

Jesus' love can look a little different than our love because Jesus is God. As God, He knows the beginning from the end. Nothing took Jesus by surprise with this situation. Jesus knew how this whole situation was going to play out and it would not end with Lazarus ultimately dead. **Jesus was going to use this situation as a platform, a huge platform with gigantic spotlights on it, for the glory of God. God was ultimately going to be glorified in how Jesus gloriously revealed His person and power.** You saw that in verse 4, right? This illness was for the glory of the Son.

This is reiterated in verse 14 and 15 as well...

John 11:14-15

[14] Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, [15] and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

Jesus was glad He wasn't there to heal Lazarus because what He was going to reveal in the aftermath would glorify Himself through many people believing in Him.

Love's Deepest Display – Revealing Jesus

So let's make something clear here... **Jesus is showing us through His example that His love for Lazarus, Mary, and Martha was most deeply displayed, not in healing Lazarus and alleviating the great physical and emotional pain that came with his suffering and death, but rather Jesus' love was most deeply displayed when He revealed His wondrous person and miraculous works.**

Jesus gave Lazarus, Mary, and Martha a gift that was greater than the healing and sparing of Lazarus' life, He gave them a gift that was better than life itself, He was going to reveal Himself in a truly deep and powerful way that would forever change their understanding and love for Him, that they would believe. The gift that He was going to give them that was better than life was the gift of Himself, the gift of revealing Himself that He may be seen in His glory and known for who He is.

Manifested to those I Love

We see this truth taught in other passages of Scripture. Listen to the words of Jesus from John 14...

John 14:21

[21] Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

How does Jesus describe the way that He loves those who are His? He will manifest Himself to them. That is precisely what Jesus does here with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He gives them the greatest gift of love that He can by powerfully revealing Himself to them.

Eternal Life – Knowing God

Here is one more example for us to ponder...

John 3:16

[16] "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

God loves us intensely and out of that intense love we are given eternal life. Now, what is eternal life? What is at the heart of this promise of eternal life? Listen to how Jesus describes eternal life...

John 17:3

[3] And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Eternal life is eternal God. The gift of eternal life is the gift of forever knowing our great God and Savior more deeply and fully. Therefore, this gift that Jesus gives Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, in revealing Himself and His glory is a foretaste, a preview, a glimpse of eternal life!

Application: Measuring God's Love

Let me make this practical for just a moment... with all of this being true, **with the deepest expression of God's love being the gift of Himself, the revealing of Himself, you shouldn't measure the love that God has for you by the easiness of your life, by your health, your wealth, or your general comfort.**

Questioning God's Love in Pain

Many do this. Many question the love of God for them when...

- When life gets difficult,
- When dreams fall apart,
- When they are sinned against or hurt in some way,
- When all of their efforts are uphill battles.

You can't evaluate God's love that way. Our text is very clear, very clear, **Jesus loved this family, He could have immediately stopped their suffering with nothing more than a thought, yet He didn't.** Did His love waiver? No, not in the slightest. **He wanted to show His love in a deeper way, but to get there this family had to walk through suffering.**

Would They Have It Any Other Way

Do you think Mary, Martha, and Lazarus would have Jesus do it any other way now that they stand on the other side of the whole ordeal? Do you think that if Mary, Martha, or Lazarus were asked, if you could go back in time and have Jesus simply heal Lazarus before any of this got nasty or before Lazarus died, would you? **No way. What they witnessed, what they experienced was other-worldly, it was life-altering. They got a glimpse of eternal life as they experienced the glory of Jesus.** I have to imagine they would echo the words of Paul from Romans 8 and 2 Corinthians 4...

Romans 8:18

[18] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

2 Corinthians 4:17

[17] For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

I have to believe Mary, Martha, and Lazarus would say, that was the worst situation of our lives. The suffering was intense, the sorrow was overwhelming, but we can't even begin to compare it to the greatness we experienced in Jesus, the suffering was light and momentary in comparison to the immensity of what we witnessed in the work of Jesus. We would do it all over again without hesitation.

Did God Hate Mary, Martha, and Lazarus?

So you can't measure the love that God has for you by the ease or comfort of your life. **If that were the measuring stick, God hated Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.** God hated all of the Apostles. God hated some of His most faithful servants throughout history. Of course this isn't the case. **Clearly God allows**

suffering in His eternal wisdom as He looks to accomplish something greater, despite us often being oblivious to it all.

How Should We Measure God's Love For Us?

So, if the deepest expression of God's love is His revealing Himself to us, this means we should measure God's love by the lengths that He has gone to reveal Himself to us. When you measure God's love in this way, His love is shown to be immeasurable. He left the perfection of Heaven and became man to walk amongst His creation and give us an image of Himself that is knowable by our limited minds. He has given us His word that has been supernaturally compiled and preserved for us today. He goes to great lengths in your personal life to reveal Himself as well. Stop and consider this reality personally and as you do pause and enjoy the great love that you are loved with! This is how we should measure God's love for us.

TRANSITION

So we have seen that Jesus' greatest expression of love is the revealing of Himself. **This is harmonious with all that Jesus has taught us about Himself thus far in our study of John, right? He is the Bread of Life that can satisfy our souls unlike anything else.** He has living water for us to drink. Making Himself known that we may eat and drink of His all-satisfying nature is the greatest act of love that He could ever show.

We know that the greatest act of love Jesus can do is giving/revealing Himself **so let's continue to journey with Jesus through the rest of our text to see how He will powerfully reveal Himself in the face of tragedy and great sorrow.**

CONTEXT: Walk in the Day

So after two days pass Jesus tells His disciples that they are headed to Judea. The Disciples question this as Bethany is a suburb of Jerusalem where Jesus was just almost killed. They don't want to head back there because great danger awaits them there. Jesus speaks to this by saying,

John 11:9-10

[9] 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. [10] But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

If you remember back to our study in John 9, Jesus made a similar statement. Day referred to the time that Jesus was here on Earth (as He is the Light of the World) serving God in His earthly ministry. **Just as a day has an allotted number of hours, Jesus ministry has an allotted period of time. Meaning that His life would never be in danger until the appointed hour had come.** That time had not yet come.

Sleeping or Dead

Jesus goes on to explain that Lazarus has fallen asleep. Jesus was speaking metaphorically, but the Disciples missed this. In their minds if Lazarus is sleeping he must be on the road to recovery. This is not what Jesus meant of course. Lazarus is dead and Jesus clarifies this for them.

So off to Bethany they go to awaken Lazarus.

Verses 17-44, How Jesus Revealed Himself

What we have in the remainder of our passage, verses 17-44, is Jesus coming to Martha, Mary, and Lazarus and doing the good work He spoke of in verse 4, namely glorifying God the Father and Himself through the powerful revealing of His person and work.

JESUS' GIFT OF HIMSELF (vs. 17-44)

What we see in these verses is Jesus giving the gift of Himself and we see this in 3 powerful ways...

1. A POWERFUL EMOTIONAL RESPONSE: JESUS WEPT

There is no doubt that Jesus was walking into an emotionally charged scene. Someone who was beloved by his family had died at a relatively young age. His death came rather suddenly and suffering was involved. As Jesus entered Bethany He was immediately confronted with these raw emotions of grief and hurt. Listen to what He hears from the family and others...

John 11:20-22

[20] So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. [21] Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. [22] But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

John 11:32

[32] 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."

John 11:36-37

[36] So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" [37] But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

Where Were You???

Do you hear the hurt in Martha and Mary's responses? Implicit in their statements is the question, "***Where were you???*** ***Had you only been here, things would be different. You could have stopped this.***" They were both careful to be reverent in their responses to Jesus, but their pain and hurt is evident.

Short, Yet Powerful

In the midst of all of this emotion we see Jesus show His own emotion. John 11:35 is the shortest verse in the Bible, yet its power reaches far beyond its length.

John 11:35

Jesus wept.

Emotions are Complicated

We also read that Jesus was "greatly troubled" in verse 33 and "deeply moved" in verse 38. Emotions are often complex things, aren't they? As we look at Jesus's response to all that had gone on I think multiple things are at play here.

Genuinely Sad for Loved One's Pain

First, I believe He is **genuinely sad over the hurt His beloved Martha and Mary** are walking through. He knew this was part of the path that He had laid out for them, but even in His perfect plan to

give Mary and Martha a gift greater than the healing of their brother, He was saddened to see them so captured by grief.

Romans 12:15

[15] Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

The Crying Creator

How amazing is it to see the Creator of all time, space, and history crying with His creation? The God that we serve is sovereign over all things and has written out history from beginning to end, but He is not hard-hearted towards His creation, He tenderly loves us.

Deeply Moved and Greatly Troubled

I think there is more to this powerful emotive response from Jesus, however. John tells us that Jesus was deeply moved and greatly troubled in His spirit. If we do a word study in the Greek for the word for “**deeply moved**” we find it is never used in the context of compassion, but is a **word of rebuke or warning**. Similarly, the Greek word for “**greatly troubled**” is always used to describe someone who is **agitated or shaken**.

Disappointed and Frustrated

So the picture that these words paint of Jesus’ emotional response add new depth to our understanding of His response. In addition to hurting with those He loved who hurt, **Jesus is also disappointed and even a little frustrated, but by what though? I think this frustration probably stems from the fact that His love is in question**. The essence of what He has been asked in Bethany is “*Where were you? Had you been here we would all be ok. Didn’t you care?*”

Yes! He Cared Deeply

Of course He cared. In fact, He did what He did because He cared, but no one understood that yet. I think there was simply frustration within Jesus because He loved all of these people perfectly and yet they questioned His love.

Our Takeaway: Jesus Loves Perfectly and Tenderly

What are we to take away from this? **Jesus loves perfectly and He has a tender heart for those who are suffering. Just because He has allowed suffering in your life doesn’t mean He is callous or uncaring towards your situation**. He cares deeply and can relate to you as He has walked through far greater suffering than we could ever understand.

Hebrews 4:15-16

[15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus has walked where we have walked and He loves you, dearly, tenderly, even as, especially as, you walk through dark times of pain and suffering. His response here, the emotion that spills over, demonstrates this powerfully to us.

2. A POWERFUL SELF-DISCLOSURE: THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

Jesus is on a mission to show the deepest expression of His love to Martha, Mary, Lazarus, and all those around Him in Bethany and the next way He does this is by revealing Himself through a powerful statement of self-disclosure. Let me read the verses to you where this takes place...

John 11:20-27

[20] So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. [21] Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. [22] But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." [23] Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." [24] Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." [25] Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, [26] and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" [27] She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

Jesus' declaration to be the Resurrection and Life is made in such a powerful way. As Martha expresses her grief to Jesus, Jesus boldly tells her that Lazarus will rise again. Little did Martha know that Jesus was talking about a matter of mere minutes from that time. Rather she was thinking towards the future when all who are in Christ will rise on the last day. She was looking forward to the eschaton, the last days.

Jesus is the Fulfillment of Resurrection Hope

Jesus then takes her future hope and makes it a present reality. She anticipated the resurrection, she looked forward to that day. Jesus, speaking in one of the 7 "I am" statements, reveals to her that He is the Resurrection and the Life. The day she has longed for has come in Him. He was the fulfillment of all resurrection hope as He had come to purchase that gift for any and all who would put their faith in Him so that death in this life would not be an end for those in Christ, but the beginning of something more wonderful.

Death is the Enemy

This statement from Jesus is overwhelmingly huge as we consider life's great enemy death. Death is the great enemy that stands before us because it separates, it finalizes, it interrupts and ends that which is good, it removes options, it closes doors.

Jesus Undoes Death

Jesus, however, the Resurrection and the Life, meaning that He has **the power to undo death. Jesus gets the final word, not death**, which is what He means when He says that, "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." I get the final word and for all those who have put their faith in me, my final word is, "live!"

Not as Those Without Hope

Jesus being the resurrection and the life changes the way that we view death.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

[13] But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. [14] For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

Death Has Lost It's Sting

We have hope for life beyond this life so we do not have to grieve as others do who have no hope. Jesus is our hope. His resurrection is the promise of our own!

1 Corinthians 15:54-57

[54] When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." [55] "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" [56] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. [57] But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Death has lost its sting! Death is swallowed up in victory! We will mourn when we lose loved ones to be sure, it will hurt, but in Christ we know that this mourning is very temporary. We have hope in the midst of that mourning. We know that any and all who have put their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior enter into a more full and truer life and we will one day join them there if we too have placed our faith in Jesus.

Transition

Jesus' love for Martha, Mary, and Lazarus is being expressed in how He is giving them the gift of Himself. He has shown them the authenticity of His love through the strong emotions He carries for them. He has also spoken hope into the situation by revealing Himself more fully. He is the Resurrection, the Life-Giver, that will undo death. **Finally, Jesus reveals Himself even further though a miracle that demonstrates that He has the power to fulfill the title of The Resurrection and previews salvation along the way.**

3. A POWERFUL PICTURE OF SALVATION: RESURRECTION LIFE

Jesus has declared that He will raise Lazarus from the dead and thus He approaches the tomb and asks for the stone sealing the entrance to be moved away. Mary jumps in and says that might be a bad idea as Lazarus had been dead for 4 days now, meaning the smell from within that tomb would be awful. I think it is significant that Lazarus had been dead for 4 days. There was no possibility of Lazarus having been unconscious or something to that effect, he was dead-dead.

Let me read to you once more what happens next...

John 11:41-44

[41] So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. [42] 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." [43] When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." [44] 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."

Wow. At the call of Jesus the dead regenerate and take new life. Jesus said that He did this so that people would see and believe that He had been sent from God. What other explanation would there be? He had power over life itself.

Jesus called out to Lazarus to come out and a man who reeked of death b/c his body had been dead for 4 days and who was in burial wrappings walked out. Maybe he looked and smelled a bit like a mummy until he had all the burial clothes taken off of him, regardless, he was a sight to behold.

Imagine the Pure, Unadulterated Joy

Our passage doesn't speak to it at all, but can you imagine the pure, unadulterated, over-the-top joy that was running through Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and the Disciples at this point? **Yelling, screaming, crying, dancing, laughing, singing, falling in prayer, loud praising it was all going on simultaneously I would have to imagine.**

He Can Deliver on His Promise

Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. He holds the power over life and death. **The promise He had made earlier to give life after death to any and all who had put their faith in Him, He is good for that promise, He, unlike anyone else, can deliver** on that promise.

Image of Salvation

Now I believe that this account gives us a very beautiful image of salvation for us to consider. Lazarus lay in a tomb dead. **There was nothing he could do to free himself from death. Death owned him, it debilitated his body. There was no move he could make, price he could pay, or bargain he could strike to work his way out of death.** This is what makes Jesus' act a miracle.

Dead and Unable

The Bible tells us that spiritually we are in the same situation. We are dead in our sins.

Ephesians 2:1-2

[1] And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once walked,

Just as Lazarus was powerless to take back His physical life, we were powerless to take on our spiritual life.

Romans 8:7-8

[7] For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. [8] Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Just as a dead man is unable to even call out for help, spiritually we were so dead we were powerless to call out for help as well.

Jesus' Effective Call

Thankfully, just as Jesus called out to His friend Lazarus and that call imparted new life to Lazarus' dead body, Jesus does the same for us spiritually, giving us new life that we may be able to respond to Jesus with the gift of faith He has given us.

John 6:44-45

[44] No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. [45] It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me

Your Salvation is a Regenerative Miracle

As we see the powerlessness of Lazarus in the tomb, dead and lifeless, know that this is where you were spiritually before Christ. **If you are here today and have put your faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, it is only because He came to the tomb that was your dead heart and called for you to come forth, giving you new life. Your faith in Jesus is just as great a miracle as we read of in our passage tonight. Rejoice believer, you are a miraculous product of God's grace.**

Is Jesus Calling You Tonight?

If you are here tonight and have not put your faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, perhaps He is calling you tonight. **Jesus wants to give you the deepest expression of His love, the gift of Himself. He wants you to know Him, to see Him as the all-satisfying Bread of Life, the hope-giving Resurrection and Life, that He is.** He holds the power over life and death and because of His sacrificial work on the cross, where He stood in your place, bearing the wrath of God for any and all who would place their faith in Him, He purchased salvation and resurrection life. Because He overcame death Himself and rose from the grave He now lives to make intercession for you and ensure you enter into the eternal life He has promised to those who are His. **All He asks from you is that you give Him your everything. That price may sound steep, but it is the greatest bargain you will ever come across** when you begin to wrap your mind around what you are given in Him and what this eternal life He has promised really looks like. The first step in following Jesus is repenting of your sins and placing your faith in Him as your Lord and the only Savior of your soul. I would love to talk through this with you more if you have questions after service.

CONCLUSION

What I find the most impactful about this passage is that **Jesus, Himself, is the greatest gift that could be given in a time of great crisis. When everyone around Jesus thought the greatest need was for Lazarus to be healthy, what Jesus thought was that everyone needed a bigger, more complete view of who He was. So rather than go and heal Lazarus, which He could have done, He allowed pain and suffering to come to serve as the backdrop for a glorious depiction of His grandeur as The Resurrection and The Life.**

Do you see Jesus as the gift that is greater than life?

Is Jesus the treasure of your heart and life?

Is there anything you would hold on to more tightly than Jesus Himself?

Let me close with my favorite passage of Scripture...

Philippians 3:7-8

[7] But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

Let's Pray