

September 25th, 2016

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

John 11:1-44

Last week's passage to me was absolutely shocking. We learned that Jesus delayed His travel to Bethany, even though He knew Lazarus was sick. The reason why He delayed coming was because He *loved* Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Jesus delayed. Lazarus died. And John tells us that this happened *because* of Jesus' love for this family. v.5-6 are crystal clear that this is the case.

"Now Jesus *loved* Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, (therefore) when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was."

Jesus loving this family, was the reason He didn't go to them. How is this love? This loving doesn't make sense *because* Lazarus died. Jesus tells us why this is love in v.4

"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."

The chief end of Lazarus' death is to magnify the worth of the glory of God. Meaning, Lazarus' death is going to set the stage for Jesus to show how great, and admirable, and excellent He is. And that's what love is. **Love is doing whatever it takes for us to see and enjoy the glory of Jesus Christ.** Jesus loved Lazarus and this grieving family so much that He allowed him to die. And we can say this is love, because his death revealed more of the glory of Christ.

The Big Idea...

Jesus will do whatever it takes for us to see His glory and this is the chief way
He loves us

The most loving thing God does

In the mind of Jesus, the most *loving thing* that He can ever do for us is give us Himself. Above everything else. Above health, and wealth. Above pain free living. Everything else is secondary. We can see this very clearly if we connect two huge verses together. First, John 3:16

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

Jesus died a horrible death on the cross so that we have eternal life. So we could say from this verse that **God’s love is the gift of eternal life even though it cost Him the death of His Son.** Now we must ask: what is the essence of eternal life?¹ Jesus gives us the answer in John 17:3. “**And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.**” Eternal life according to Jesus is having an intimate, unbroken, everlasting enjoyment of God and Jesus Christ His Son. That is what eternal life is in its essence. So if we put John 3:16 together with John 17:3 we see that **God’s highest gift of love to the world is the gift of Himself.**

They didn’t believe this, and neither do we

Our problem is that we don’t believe that. **We don’t believe that Jesus doing whatever ever it takes for us to see His glory is what love is.** That is the tension in this text. Everyone in this story believed that if Jesus really loved Lazarus, He should went and healed him. Everyone was aware that Jesus delayed two days longer (v.6), and their conclusion is, where is the love Jesus? And so we see three conversations that Jesus has that puts His love to the test.

In *the first conversation* Martha asks: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” (v.21) In *the second conversation* Mary says the same thing: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” (v.

¹ What would you say is the *essence* of eternal life? Would our answer be any different from the world’s answer? Endless pleasures. Perfect health. Restored relationships. Wisdom beyond measure. Where does God fit in their scheme of eternal life?

32) *In the third conversation*, 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?” (v.36-37)

Do you hear the doubting and suspicion over Jesus’ love in these statements? ‘Jesus, if you would have been here...Jesus, couldn’t you have stopped this? Jesus where is the love?’

And that is where it touches us as 21st century Christians. As our personal worlds starts to crumble and fall apart, we begin to question Christ. ‘Jesus where are you at? Don’t you love me? Couldn’t you have stopped this?’ We secretly, or openly believe the same things that Martha and Mary and these Jews believed. ‘Jesus if you want to love me, then take these burdens away. Heal me and my loved ones. Restore those relationships what were broken. Fix me Jesus, then I will know that you love me.’

Jesus answers these questions by pointing to...

- ☆ The Glory of His Person
- ☆ The Glory of His Passion
- ☆ The Glory of His Power

Remember that v.4-6 are the epicenter of this chapter. Everything revolves around them. This illness is for glory of God (v.4); and Jesus loved them, so He delayed His coming in order that they would see it (v.5-6).

I. The Glory of His Person

I am the resurrection and the life

When Jesus arrived on the scene, Lazarus had already been dead four days (v.17). It appears that this family was somewhat of a prominent family, because many Jews (v.19) came from Jerusalem to comfort Martha and Mary. I imagine the sickness of stomach that this family felt. The reality of a beloved

dead brother would have been so traumatic on the soul, that it's effects would have been felt on the body. Picking up in v.20 "So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. (v.21) Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."— There's that pain that questions Jesus' love. But she has not abandoned Christ. —v.22 "But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."²

So Jesus answers her in v.23 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." Martha was understanding Jesus to be speaking about the final resurrection on the day of judgment.

But then Jesus says to her in v.25 "I am the resurrection and the life." In other words, 'Martha, there's something more wonderful than that final day when you see your brother again—Me! I am the resurrection. In Me, all life exists, and consists, and persists. I don't merely grant life, I am life itself. I am that day that you've been waiting for, because I am the Messiah—Son of God and God Himself.'

And then Jesus unpacks what He means at the end of v.25 "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." This is the hope that he holds out for all the Lazarus' (the Don Sullivans, the Alan Fadels) that have gone before us. All who have ever believed in Christ, even though they have died physically, they are still alive! Christ has become their life. Their physical eyes closed the the passing glory of this world, and their spiritual eyes opened to the ever-increasing glory of the next. 'Martha that is the reality about your brother. He is alive. And here is the reality about you:' v.26 "...and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." 'Martha I am the conquerer of death! If you are united to Me by belief, you will live with Me forever. Satan cannot

² I don't believe she is thinking Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead with this statement because of how she reacts in v. 39. She was hesitant to have the stone removed. I think this statement here points her confidence that Jesus is still the Person that she thought He was. He had a unique relationship with the Father, and she still believes that.

touch you. Your sin cannot condemn you. Hell cannot hold you. You are mine, if you believe.'

How Adoniram Judson Found Hope

It was in this gospel that the missionary Adoniram Judson found hope. Judson suffered from severe spiritual depression from April 1827 to 1830 after the death of his wife and infant daughter in Burma. At the depth of his despair, he wrote: "God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in him, but I find him not."³ He isolated himself to the point where those closest to him thought he had gone mad. Then the darkness broke in the most mysterious way. Judson received news from the mainland that his brother Elnathan had died on May 8, 1829 at the age of 35. How could this news help the already broken Judson recover from the darkest season of his soul? Because Judson got word that before his brother died he had been born again and united to Jesus Christ by faith.

Judson saw the glory of Jesus' words afresh. "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*."

This is how Jesus loves us

Jesus uses the suffering in our lives to show us that *He is our life*. *That's how He loves us*. Our life doesn't consist in our carefully laid out plans, or our careers, or our marriages, or our bank accounts, or our reputations. Jesus often and painfully strips us of those things so that we can remember that 'Jesus is my life.' And no other.⁴ That's what Jesus was saying to Martha and to us (if you are in Christ): "I love you. It is my great glory that I am life itself. And I will never ever break fellowship with you. Though every thing else will desert you, I never will. You are going to live forever with Me, because I love you.'

³ John Piper, *Filling Up The Afflictions of Christ*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2009), pg. 100

⁴ So that we can say with the Apostle Paul "[our] life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:2)

That was Jesus answers Martha when she is suspicious about His love. Now we look to how Jesus respond to Mary and her mourners when they doubt.

II. The Glory of His Passion

The doubt and suspicion of Jesus' love

Picking up in v.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.”

It seems that Mary was much more outwardly shaken than Martha. She fell out Jesus' feet in front of all her company and in between sobbing said “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Feel the tension in this passage. Jesus had delayed. Lazarus is dead. And everybody made the connection between Jesus' delay and Lazarus' death and therefore was calling Jesus' love into question. “Jesus you loved Him and us. Where have you been?” How does Jesus respond?

The complexity of Jesus' emotions

[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?”

v.33 says that Jesus “...was deeply moved in his spirit...” The Greek word⁵ for “deeply moved” is rarely used in the NT (only 5 times⁶). It is *not* a word of

⁵ ἐμβριμάομαι (embrimaomai)

⁶ Matthew 9:30; Mark 1:43; 14:5; John 11:33, 38

pity and compassion but of rebuke and warning.⁷ As D.A. Carson points out “...it can refer to the snorting of horses; as applied to human beings, it invariably suggest anger, outrage or emotional indignation.”⁸ In other words Jesus was mad. And v.33 adds that He was “greatly troubled.” Now it appears that Jesus restrained this anger within Himself, for John adds that this was “in his spirit” and the only outward emotion we see is Jesus weeping in v.35.

But John wants us to see this. And so it is recorded twice. After the Jews see Jesus weep (v.35), they say in v.36 “See how he loved him!” (v.37) But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?” Then in v.38, John records “Then (οὐὐν *therefore*)⁹ Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb.” In other words, Jesus was agitated and angry **because** He was being called into question.

Isn't this a proper response for the God-man? Jesus—God Himself—was being put in the dock and openly questioned. Perhaps Jesus doesn't really love Lazarus, or perhaps He just wan't powerful enough to keep him from dying. Oh how this dilemma is often plastered on the news when tsunamis and tornadoes rip through the land. ‘Well God must either be all powerful, but not good because He **did not** stop it; or He must be all-good but not powerful because He **could not** stop it.’

And this dilemma is felt in our hearts. It's either “Jesus, I don't know if you really love me, because this hurts.” Or we dismiss this particular crisis as *outside* of Jesus' jurisdiction (outside of His power). This troubles and angers Jesus. It disturbs Him greatly when we call His love or His power into question. And this display of Jesus' anger is a revelation of His glory (v.4). Which means that it is an act of His love. How? **Because those things—doubting His love for us or His power to save us— prevent us from seeing His glory when we need it most—when we are suffering.** How should Jesus respond to our unbelief and

⁷ <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/jesus-is-the-resurrection-and-the-life>

⁸ D.A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), pg. 415

⁹ We saw the significance of this Greek word last week in the connection between v.5 and v.6.

doubt? With glee? His love and power are the very thing that will comfort our heart in our darkest moments. He's angry at anything that would prevent that, because He loves us!

However this is not the only emotion that we see in Jesus. His emotions are infinitely complex. Jesus wept (v.35). Jesus is not a stone-hearted man. Where do you think tears come from? God made them on purpose. And though the emotional state of Mary and these mourners was flawed, it did not stop Jesus from entering into their grief with them. Just as it doesn't stop Jesus from entering into our grief with us. Jesus is perfectly able to "Rejoice with those who rejoice; [and] weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15) in every situation under the sun.¹⁰

And oh how clearly we see the love of Jesus when we see Him with these glorious emotions. He's angry at the very thing in us—doubt and unbelief—that would prevent us from seeing Him clearly in our pain. And in our pain, He is sympathetic tender-hearted Savior that will weep with us.

III. The Glory of His Power

This resurrection is for the glory of God

Jesus makes his way to the tomb of Lazarus and says in v.39 "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?" Jesus makes one final connection so that we wouldn't miss it, between what He's about to do and what he said in v.4 "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."

'Martha, he's dead right now because I love you and your sister and I wanted you to see what I'm about to do. Once you see who I really am, once you see my glory, you wouldn't trade it for a thousand lives of your brother.

¹⁰ "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." (Hebrews 4:15)

So then Jesus prays to the Father. v.41 “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.” Jesus prays to prepare those around Him who would believe in Him when they saw the resurrection. v.43 “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.”

Lazarus is alive. This is the greatest miracle in the book of John besides Jesus’ resurrection. But His being raised is not the main show. Eventually he’s going to die again. The main show is the glory of Jesus being revealed in this miracle. That’s what v.4 and v.40 keep reminding us of.

And the main question I want to ask at this point is: how is this display of Jesus’ glory an act of love to us? We weren’t there. We didn’t see Lazarus being raised from the dead. Does that mean that because we didn’t see the event, less love is being communicated to us?

This miracle as a sign

No. This is more than a miracle. It is a sign. The gospel of John is not a series of unconnected stories culminating in Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is a dramatic unfolding of signs that Jesus performs, each one revealing more and more of who He is. We see this language of signs first in John 2:11 after Jesus turned the water into wine. John says “This, the first of his **signs**, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.”

Jesus performs 7 signs in all in the gospel of John, and this raising of Lazarus is the last sign. Jesus’ opponents knew this was a sign v.47 “the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many **signs**. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him.” And then again in 12:18 “The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this **sign**.” So this the last of Jesus’ signs, and the completion of His public ministry (11:54).

So the question is, what is this a sign of? Our salvation. It's the clearest picture of what our regeneration looks like and the clearest picture of what our final resurrection looks like.

Before any of us ever became a Christian we were dead. Ephesians 2:1 "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked," Just as Lazarus was dead four days, so there are four ways in which we have been dead.

- 1) We were born dead. We were all spiritually still born. The sin of Adam's first transgression was credited to our account. He passed down his guilt to everyone ever born on planet earth. Psalm 51:5 says "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."
- 2) We are dead according to our own conscience. All men and women and children have a sense of God' moral law. Romans 2 says that the work of the law is written on our hearts. (Rom. 2:15). And this law convinces our conscience that we stand condemned before God.
- 3) We are dead according to the revealed Word of God. Paul says in Romans 3:19 "Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God." God's law brings the knowledge of sin, and the wages of sin is death.
- 4) We had the second death of hell and eternal fire hanging over us. We "were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Ephesians 2:3), awaiting that final day of judgment when God will judge "...the secrets of men by Christ Jesus."

Every human being is hopelessly dead. There was a reason Lazarus was dead four days before Jesus came. It was believed at the time the the spirit of a dead man hovered over the body for 3 days looking for a way to get back in, but once the three days have passed, death was irrevocable.

Dear congregation. Sin has slain us. We are not just born into this world spiritually sick. We were born spiritually dead. And dead men do not raise themselves from the grave.

No one in this story had the power to resuscitate Lazarus. Except Jesus Christ. That's what Jesus wants us to see in John 11. He wants us to see the glory of His love in saving sinners. That's how this miracle communicates love to 21st century Christians. You and I are Lazarus. And Jesus called us forth from the grave: "_____ Come forth." And we came alive, and then we believed the gospel. Salvation is a miracle.

Application

Our Doctrine: Salvation is nothing less than being raised from the dead.

It is the most loving thing for Jesus to do, to tell us the truth about our salvation. And here is the truth: Lazarus was not decisive in his salvation. He was dead. Dead men do not and cannot believe the gospel. Jesus was decisive in His salvation. Jesus is decisive in our salvation. That's what John's gospel has been continually communicating to us—that salvation is from the Lord.

Jesus has been pressing this on us.

"You must be born again" (John 3:3) How do I do that, Jesus? You can't. The Spirit blows where He wishes.

"Whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (John 6:37) Jesus, why aren't everyone coming? Because "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." (John 6:44) "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27). How do they hear your voice Jesus? Because I raised them from the dead.

Our Duty: What things are you doing to keep yourself alive?

What did Lazarus do to make himself alive? Nothing. After he was made alive, what did he do to keep himself that way? Nothing. What things are we doing to keep ourselves alive? Meaning, how are we keeping ourselves in the grace of God. We're not. Grace is not what we've done, it's what Christ had done. When Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life." He included all of our salvation. That's why He said resurrection **and the life**. Resurrection—meaning that He raised us from spiritual death; and life—meaning that He will sustain us all the way home to glory.

And this is so difficult to believe because our hearts want to rely on ourselves. We want to be in control. We want the credit. We want to be the spiritual hero. This is why Paul wrote Galatians. He said to them, and to us: "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Galatians 3:3). How foolish would it have been for us to run into Lazarus 1 year after his resurrection to find him telling the story of his resurrection, but giving credit to his moral living. We'd call him on it.

And God wants to call us on this. What are we trusting in to keep us alive? Do we believe Jesus to be our **resurrection**, but our moral performance to be our **life**? Scripture says that is our default position. Here's the problem. It doesn't work. And the loudest witness to this is our own hearts. What happens when we *put our trust* in our resolve to try harder? We crash harder. "I'll just engage in the spiritual disciplines more frequently...I won't have as much to drink...I'll try to be more kind to my co-workers or my family members...I won't watch as much t.v...I'll start giving money to missions... What happens when these 'gospels' fail to give you the peace of conscience that you are longing for? You crash. But perhaps more frightening, these gospels do start to give you peace, and self-righteousness settles in.

So ask yourself: Did you have success this week? Where did you place the credit for it? Did you have failure this week? Where did you run for comfort? We will always be running to a gospel for our comfort. We will always be running to a gospel in order to cope with the world. Which gospel are

we running to? If John 11 shows us that salvation is a miracle, how are we living in accord with that?

Our Delight: Jesus is our life!

Talked with some of you this week. Some of you are in excruciating trials, some of you have simply lost your joy. Maybe these seasons will be over shortly. Maybe not. John 11 is for us. This family was facing the trial of it's life. Pain, suffering, hardship, broken-hearts. And Jesus orchestrates all of it. "This illness is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified in it." Jesus wants us to feel something in this text.

"When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay."

Jesus is the resurrection **and the life**. He doesn't merely save us initially so that we move on to bigger and better stuff. There is nothing bigger or better than Jesus. He is our life. And I don't mean that in a *subjective* sense—like Jesus is everything to me.

I mean it in an *objective* sense. I mean that when Jesus says "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," and we believe that message, He gives us Himself—forever. And from the moment that we are raised from our spiritual death, all our sins are forgiven. All our iniquities have been cancelled having been nailed to the cross. And we are covered with the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ. So that when the Father looks at us, He objectively sees us in Christ. As the apostle Paul says "If then you have been raised with Christ... **your life is hidden with Christ in God**. When Christ **who is your life** appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." Colossians 3:1-4