

John 11 “I am the resurrection and the life”

Intro: This being resurrection Sunday my thoughts went to John 11, the final time Jesus raised someone from death, just before he died and rose.

- He raised Lazarus.
- I wanted to study *this resurrection* to find out **why this is important to us**.
- This is an *object lesson* on the topic.
- **Applying resurrection** to us *just before Jesus rose*.

[KEY] Jesus raised four people from the dead.

- He raised the widow’s son in the village of Nain (Luke 7:15).
- He raised the 12-year-old daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue (**Mark 5:42**).
- He raised Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha in Bethany after he had been dead **four days (John 11:144)**.
- **And he raised himself** from the dead **after he had been crucified** (cf. God the Father raised Jesus too; Acts 2:32; Rom. 6:4).

It is no accident that this is Jesus’ last recorded miracle in John’s Gospel.

- Lazarus’ resurrection is the climactic and most dramatic sign in this gospel.
- It is the **capstone of Christ’s public ministry**.

This resurrection is **more potent than raising the widow’s son at Nain (Luke 7:11-16) or Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:40-56)** because those two resurrections happen immediately after they died.

- Lazarus was raised after **four days of being in the grave** with the **process of decomposition** already having started.
- Lazarus being raised **flows right into Passover week**.
- Marked in our minds **just prior to Christ’s resurrection**.

[Appl] We are **all journeying through a season marked by the pandemic**.

- If you are like me, this **pandemic has influenced lifestyle changes**.
 - I have been **learning a lot about myself** in the past few weeks/months.
 - **Habits that will continue and habits I have broken** that will not continue.
- The question, **“When will things swing back to normal?”** is on the minds of most.
- **We are now looking for closure**.

[KEY] John 11 stands as **a check to our thinking**.

- If we are being honest, most of our **goals are temporal**.
- **Pragmatic**.

- This is normal but Jesus' ministry reflected different and deeper goals.
 - Meeting immediate needs was not his primary objective.

[TRANS] This morning **I want this resurrection account from John 11** to challenge your approach to life. ***Your immediate and long-term goals.***

John 11 most notably records Jesus raising Lazarus from death.

- What struck me from this account is that the point of the story is not primarily about Jesus' raising Lazarus from death.
- Jesus' goal was not everyone else's goal.

Principle: Finding your goals within Jesus' goals.

1. Jesus' goal (vv. 1-16)

John 11 is *Jesus transitioning* from his public to private ministry.

- Israel had her day and the sun was setting.
- Now Jesus' ministry moves into seclusion to minister to his true disciples.
- These final chapters in John all center on the cross.

Jesus not moves back into the area of Jerusalem.

- His death was only a few days away.
- This is a window of Christ blessing his friends while others surround him waiting to arrest him.

[KEY] Jesus' glory could not be dimmed by open rejection, opposition, and sedition.

[Note] "Bethany" different from the other town "Bethany" - beyond Jordan. This "Bethany" was located on the East side of the Mt. of Olives, 2 miles from Jerusalem.

[Note] "Mary and Martha" sisters, followers of Jesus. Sisters of Lazarus.

- Mary, the one who anointed the feet of Jesus wiping his feet with her hair (John 12:3).
- Both sisters were true disciples of Christ, both deeply concerned for their bother Lazarus who was fighting for his life being ill.

Verse 3, tells these sisters (in their distress) sent for Jesus appealing for rescue from Jesus' friend (cf. John 13:1). "...he whom you love is ill" (v. 3).

- Jesus probably one-day's walk away located along Trans-Jordan.
- By the time the messengers reached Jesus, Lazarus would have died.

- He would be dead four full days.

[KEY] Verse 4 reveals Jesus' goal. He was going to raise Lazarus.

- He knew that Lazarus' death was not meant to be final.
- Christ's main goal was "God's glory" (cf. v. 4).
- Much like the man born blind in John 9.

^{ESV} **John 9:3** Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but ^athat the works of God might be displayed in him. (Joh 9:3 ESV)

- Verse 4 is clear that when God is glorified, Christ is glorified and vise-versa.

Verse 5 weaves together the incredible blend of Christ operating according to his Father's plan, achieving his goals, while at the same time loving his dear friends.

- Christ is not a stoic!
- Christianity is not stoic!
- We too operate this way.

[Appl] Christians are called to follow God's revealed will at all cost. While reserving all kinds of love for people whether they understand what or why we are doing what we do.

"The natural man will not receive the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2).

[Question] "What does Christ's love look like?"

[Answer] Instead of rushing back to heal Lazarus or immediately raise him, he stays "two days longer in the place where he was" (v. 6).

- To confirm Lazarus' death.
- Not misinterpret Lazarus' death as resuscitation.
- Jesus' actions were fully calculated.

[Appl] Everything he does in our lives is for his purposes in our lives. To strengthen our faith.

"God is always doing 10,000 things in your life and you may be aware of three of them." [Piper]

[TRANS] In verses 6-11 Jesus' disciples question the wisdom of Jesus returning to Jerusalem for fear he would be stoned.

- Jesus' response models the kind of faith he wants formed inside Mary and Martha.
- If Jesus' personal goal was to preserve his life he might say:
"What good would it be for me to go into this kind of danger zone?"

- Instead, Jesus is dialed into God's greater goal.
- He will be kept alive until it is time for him to die.
- Jesus will not "stumble" and then he will "stumble" (vv. 9-10).
- Jesus was safe in his Father's will. Just as you and I are.

Verse 11, Jesus very confidently says, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him" (v. 11).

- "Sleep" a euphemism for *death*.
- Jesus knew Lazarus was dead (vv. 12-14).

Verse 15 taps into Jesus' goals again.

- He is actually saying he is "glad" he was not there to heal Lazarus.
- Why? He wants their faith to grow!
- For them to believe more deeply.

[Appl] I think when we believe more deeply, the pain of life may not subside, but the pain of heart just may!

Verse 16 is the example of faith that needs to grow!

- Most interpret Thomas' statement as a great statement of faith.
 - Jesus would die if he went to Jerusalem so Thomas was ready to go with him.
 - Perhaps a willing heart with a lack of faith.
 - Like Peter said? Jesus did not affirm this kind of boldness!
- I actually prefer not to defend Thomas here.
 - Thomas was being sarcastic.
 - Weak faith that needs to grow!

[POINT] Verse 15, Jesus wants them to "believe" because Jesus is there anything could happen.

- Thomas is saying, going to Jerusalem is a suicide mission!
- Just like Lazarus, we too will die!
- Thomas' goals were not Christ's goals.

2. Martha's goal (vv. 17-24)

This next section highlights this same sentiment, through Martha.

[Note] Jesus came to "Bethany...near Jerusalem" (v. 18) and found "Lazarus...in the tomb four days" (v. 17).

- The “**tomb**” was a cave sepulcher.
- You could walk into it.
- **Steps hewn in the rock** with **several shelves** for bodies of the family members.

[Note] This kind of burial along with the fact that there were several “Jews” who had come to “console” Mary and Martha reflects household wealth.

- *Professional grievers* were hired to assist in the process.
- Like a PowerPoint put to music shown during a funeral to open the hearts through memories.

Verse 20, Martha “went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house” (v. 20).

- One came and the other did not reflects two different ways of handling the same mindset.
 - Two opposite temperaments.
 - One goes to confront while the other stuffs it inside and isolates.
 - Martha, the “getter doner” goes!

Verse 21 is *not* completely void of faith, however this is Martha through sobs and exasperation questions her Lord!

^{ESV} **John 11:21** Martha said to ^aJesus, “Lord, ^bif you had been here, my brother would not have died. (Joh 11:21 ESV)

- This *exchange* with Jesus reveals **Martha’s faith in the midst of doubts (vv. 22-24)**.
 - **A conflicted soul**.
 - Martha has no idea what Jesus is about to do!
- I am convinced Martha does not truly believe Jesus could raise Lazarus immediately from death.
- **Martha** understood the teaching of “the resurrection on the last day” (v. 24).
- **Martha** is treating Jesus like a **theology book**.

3. Jesus’ goal (vv. 25-27)

[TRANS] This swings things back to Jesus’ goal.

- Jesus’ goal on the face was not to simply bring Lazarus back.
 - His goal right then was for Martha to truly grasp who Jesus is.
 - Jesus calls himself, “I am” (v. 25).
- **The fifth of seven “I AM” statements.**
- By saying, “I AM” Jesus is saying he is “Yahweh” – he is the self-existent God.

[KEY] Jesus is *not merely* from God with a direct line to God but God himself!

- Jesus is the one who met Moses from within the burning bush (Ex. 3).
- Here he says, “I am the resurrection and the life” (v. 25) meaning he is the source of life over death!

Verses 25-26 make the point.

- “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?” (vv. 25-26)
- Right here Jesus makes his point.

[Appl] Getting this point overwhelms your other problems.

- You say, “How can this truth take over my life?” – “Make my losses in life less” – “This feels impossible.”
- Yielding to Jesus as “I AM” is that difficult!
- Jesus allowed Mary and Martha’s only brother to die so they would face this GOAL.

4. Mary’s goal (vv. 28-37)

Martha appears to get Jesus’ message and goes to get her sister, Mary.

- It is Mary’s turn. “The Teacher is here and is calling for you” (v. 28).
- Mary “rose quickly and went to him” (v. 29).

Verse 30 has Jesus still outside the village by Lazarus’ tomb.

- The group of “Jews” (v. 31), the grief counselors got up with Mary assuming she being grief stricken would continue to weep at Lazarus’ tomb.

[KEY] Seeing Jesus, “she fell at his feet” (v. 32).

- Mary is a believer and a worshipper but not fully dialed into who Jesus was!
 - Her statement is exactly the same as Martha’s (v. 32b).
 - Mary has a level of doubt and conflicted soul.
- She believes but also accuses Jesus of allowing her brother to die.

[Point] Jesus had a plan and purpose to allow Lazarus to die but at the same time, his tears recognize the pain and difficulty it is for people to work through their faith.

- Jesus knows he is going to make an exception and raise Lazarus now.
- Yet, Jesus enters into their grief. He understands that death is horrible.

[KEY] Though moved with compassion, Jesus being “deeply moved” also carries the idea of being filled with indignation and being “greatly troubled” is being stirred up with confusion (v. 33).

Verse 34 says “Jesus wept” and then verses 35-36 give two perspectives on why.

- The “Jews” said, “See how he loved him!” and then “some of them” skeptically commented on Jesus supposed failure.
 - “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?” (v. 37).
 - These comments taken with Mary’s like-skeptical comment makes me think Jesus’ spontaneous reaction of weeping was less about Lazarus and more about their lack of faith.
 - Grieving like pagans who grieve without hope (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13).
- Mary just wants her brother back.
 - *Jewish bystanders* watched Jesus and *felt sorry for him*.
 - “He really loved Lazarus, it is a shame he could not work his magic this time when it really counted.”
 - “He lost a good friend.”

[Point] Jesus’ indignation and exasperation ignites over those so focused on the world’s goals. The here and now.

5. Jesus’ goal (vv. 38-45; 12:9-11)

This leads us finally back to Jesus’ goal.

Verse 38 says, “Then Jesus [was] deeply moved again” (v. 38).

- What does this mean?
 - *Instead* of *Jesus staying indignant*, it was now time for him to make his point!
 - Jesus was provoked – but not by Martha and Mary nor by the Jews.
- Jesus is provoked in his spirit to reach his goal.
 - Displaying God’s glory so they would **fully believe in him!**
- The tomb/cave had a stone covering the entrance. Sound familiar?

[Note] Although Jews would use aromatic spices, they did not embalm bodies like Egyptian mummies.

- Martha's response in verse 39 has the classic KJV translation, "Lord, by this time he stinketh!" (v.39).

[KEY] Jesus' response is his goal. "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" (v. 40).

- The four-day time *erased any possibility that Christ would bring Lazarus back*.
- Window had certainly passed. There is no way.

[KEY] However, **this was Jesus' point**.

- Bringing Lazarus back was not based in pragmatics but **glory and faith!**
 - Our faith in Jesus is a faith that says Jesus can do anything.
 - Anyway he wants to do it.
 - His schedule not ours.
 - For his glory and for his purposes!

Jesus' prayer in verse 41 makes clear that Jesus was following his Father's lead.

- An intimate conversation had been underway regarding this unique event.
 - Jesus was **not coerced** or manipulated into raising Lazarus.
 - The plan all along was Lazarus' resurrection but this was not the main point.

Verse 43 highlights Christ's command over death.

- Verse 44 describes Lazarus coming out like a hopping mummy.
- Lazarus' resurrection has been described as a picture of someone coming to faith in Christ.
- They were dead, commanded to live, and then needing the dead cloths of his prior dead life to be removed.

[KEY] The cloths reveal the earthy nature of resurrection.

- Lazarus like any other Christian is resurrected *bodily and physically*.
 - Resurrected people are recognizable.
 - They are still who they were. Named!
- Resurrection at the *future consummation* is different from Lazarus.
 - Lazarus still had a sin nature and would die again.
 - Still, there are **parallels**.
 - Chapter 12 says Lazarus was having dinner "reclining with Jesus at the table" (12:2).

[Point] Lazarus being raised was a miracle but the miracle was not meant to be worshipped.

- No, Jesus was meant to be worshipped.
- Verse 45 was that “Many of the Jews...had seen what he did, [and] believed in him” (v. 45).

Conclusion: The joke at Sunday school is when asked a question if you answer “Jesus” then 9 times out of 10 you will be correct!

- Jesus’s goal was to be believed upon and here especially by his friends.
- Life is difficult. Life aches because of death.
- When you lose someone, do not lose Jesus.
- Jesus the “I AM” – the one who is “The Resurrection and the Life.”
- We do not control our lives. God’s timetable on things.

[Question] “When will life return to normal?” I do not know.

- Only Jesus knows if he wants your life to go back to “normal.”
- One thing I can tell you is that he wants all of your goals to run through him.

[Principle] Your goals should be met within Jesus’ goals.

[TRANS] John 20:11-18 concludes the story again with Mary.

- I believe the Mary of John 11 and 12 is the Mary of John 20.
- Mary Magdalene (cf. John 20:1).
- Mary whom had seven demons cast out of her by Jesus (Luke 8:2).

^{ESV} **Luke 8:2** and also ^asome women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: ^bMary, called Magdalene, ^cfrom whom seven demons had gone out, (Luk 8:2 ESV)

^{ESV} **Luke 7:37** ^aAnd behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, (Luk 7:37 ESV)

^{ESV} **Luke 24:10** Now it was ^aMary Magdalene and ^bJoanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, (Luk 24:10 ESV)

[READ John 10:11-18]

- Mary was found weeping outside of another tomb.
- This time Jesus is not.
- His goal is firm.
- All of Mary's goals are met by Jesus!
- This Jesus, "The Resurrection and the Life."