

Lazarus - Come Forth

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Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

- [0 : 00] Welcome to our service this morning. We come to worship God and pray for his word to be magnified to our hearts and minds.
- We can begin by singing the words of Psalm 121. Psalm 121. We sing the whole psalm.
- I to the hills will lift mine eyes from whence doth come mine aid. My safety cometh from the Lord who heaven and earth hath made. Thy foot he'll not let slide, nor will he slumber that he keeps. Behold he that keeps Israel, he slumbers not nor sleeps.
- The Lord he keeps, the Lord thy shade on thy right hand doth stay. The moon by night he shall not smite, nor yet the sun by day. The Lord shall keep thy soul, he shall preserve thee from all ill. In soul's eye going out and in, God keep whatever will.
- Psalm 121. The whole psalm. I to the hills will lift mine eyes. I to the hills will lift mine eyes.
- [1 : 21] From whence doth come my name. My safety cometh from the Lord who heaven and earth hath made.
- I feel to the hills will lift mine eyes.
- The Lord who heaven and earth hath made. The Lord he keeps, the Lord I shake. The Lord he keeps, the Lord I shake.
- All thy night my heart will stay. The■■■ of my heart will be nice. The world by night he shall not smite, nor yet the sun by day.
- The Lord shall keep thy soul, we shall present thee from all else.
- [3 : 07] And for thy holy darkness, come thee forevermore.
- Let's join together in praise. Let us pray. Amen. Blessed God, as we come to worship, we pray that you would bless us under the sound of your own word.
- That you would bless us as we gather in your name and as we solicit your help in order to fulfill the reason for our gathering.
- That we would worship our God and that we would enter into your presence with praise and thanksgiving upon our lips.
- That is genuine, heartfelt and appreciative of the knowledge that you are a God who hears prayer and answers prayer.
- [4 : 22] That you are a God who is ready to endow us with the gifts and the graces that will enable us to live in this world.
- To the glory of your great name. Without which we would simply go on impoverished spiritually and incapable of achieving our preeminent end.
- For you created us for your own glory. And you created us in order to live our lives to the glory of our creator God.
- And we pray that you would encourage us to understand something of the meaning of that and the need that we have of your own help to achieve that end.

We pray your blessing upon all who are met here today. And according to the needs that are known to you alone. We would seek from you.

[5 : 28] That you would bless the individuals concerned. That you would bless them as family members. That you would bless their homes and loved ones.

That you would remember those of our fellowship who are not able to be with us this day. We remember the housebound. The hospitalised.

Those confined to beds of sickness. Those who are being cared for in the terminal stage of their illness.

We pray for whatever need that they have. Particularly the need of their soul to be met by the passion of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We are mindful once again as a community that you have spoken to us through the death of one who resided within the boundaries of these villages.

[6 : 32] You remind us through death that none of us is to reside here permanently. That we are pilgrims and sojourners as your word reminds us so often.

That we are travellers on the scene of time. And however long lived we are. The walk that we have will come to a terminus.

We pray Lord that you would remember those who are sorrowing. Those who are grieving. And that you would heal their hearts. They are many.

And they are indeed within this world of ours in abundance. We pray that you would sanctify the voice of death to us.

And direct our thoughts heavenwards. And help us to understand the provision made for the fallen race of Adam in the person of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 35] The one who is the resurrection of the life. The one who is the living redeemer. Who died and rose again from the dead.

And who sits at the right hand of the majesty on high. Who readily and repeatedly intercedes for us.

That we are to your side. And we give thanks for the way in which he meets our needs. In times when we find ourselves unequal to the tasks that are ours to carry out.

Remember Lord the world in which we live. And we pray for mercy. That we would turn as nations throughout the earth to our God.

And that we would learn what it is to submit in meekness to the almighty arm of the God who is great.

[8 : 39] The one who is high and lifted up. Who inhabits eternity. With whom lies the last word with regard to every one of us. Nations may rise and nations may fall.

But God remains ever the same. Yesterday, today and forever. We pray that you would heal the hurts of the children of men.

Those who are assailed by wicked hands. We pray that you would remember them in mercy. We see and hear of so many wickednesses being carried out within our own land.

In our cities and towns. Men and even women rising up. And taking the lives of their neighbours.

And doing so without regret. Without regret. Without regret. Without any afterthought. Simply to excuse or to deny the evils that they are guilty of.

[9 : 45] We see so much evil in the world that we become hardened to it. Do not allow us to be like that. But to be mindful of the terrible nature of the deeds that are done.

In all the nations of the earth. So remember us as a nation. Turn us to yourself. Bless our king. His family. His, uh.

Those who roll in his name within the parliaments. Remember our own local council. And with a difficult task that lies to their hand.

With limited resources. And we see so many of the ills of society percolate. Even into our own islands.

And there are so many needs and wants that are presented. And so little wisdom to direct the attention.

[10 : 44] Of those who are able to alleviate these sufferings. In mercy Lord. Grant to us these endeavors.

Made to meet the needs of society. That they would be God honoring above all else. We see the darkness that permeates the minds of so many.

Who think that they have the answer to one ill or another. And yet they are simply multiplying the evils that are carried out.

So remember our nation we pray. Remember all we would entrust to your care and keeping today. Above all the proclamation of the gospel truth.

In our villages, in our towns, in our cities. Remember those who celebrate and commemorate the death of Jesus Christ within our presbytery this day.

[11 : 50] Those who gather in his name. May he be lifted up in sincerity. May believing hands handle the very tokens of his grace.

And speak to them of his sacrifice for sin. And by faith may they appreciate the truth that is set before them. In word and symbol.

Remember Lord this day that bears your name. Sanctified afresh that we would remember the Lord's day and hallowed. Hear our prayers and petitions and bless us together for giving sin.

In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. My boys and girls before we go out to Sunday school today. I think that you're going to be talking about the children of Israel.

And the time that the Lord sent out from amongst them spies to go into the land of Canaan.

[13 : 01] To find out whether the land was suitable for them or not. It was to teach them. He knew what the land was like.

No doubt. He had promised them. It was the promised land. And yet he told Moses to choose twelve men from each.

One from each tribe. And to go out and to search the land. To go throughout it and to find out what kind of people were there.

Find out what kind of territory it was. Whether there were mountains or pastures. Whether there were trees and water. Most of all there was food to sustain them once they came into the land.

And the spies came back. And all twelve came with their own story of what they saw.

[14 : 09] Two spies. Joshua and Caleb came back with a good report. They saw a land that was flowing with milk and honey.

They saw a land just as God had promised. But the ten others came back with a naval report. They saw all the things that the two others saw.

But they also saw giants in the land. They saw men that were strong and mighty. They saw armies that they were not able to defeat.

And yet what they forgot was. Although what they were seeing was. As they said. They forgot the promise of God.

That God had said. This land was theirs. He was going to give it to them. And he was mightier than they.

[15 : 20] And when you read the story. When you hear the story. What you find is that. Because they did not believe God.

The annoyance of God. God was such that he told them. That not one of their number. Would enter into the land.

That every one of them would die. So that. When it came to the time. That he would give them the land. As he promised. They would not be amongst those.

Who would inherit it. And it's strange. How God was so detailed. He said. For.

Every day. That they searched out the land. Just 40 days. That they would spend. 40 years. In the wilderness.

[16 : 19] Before that happened. 40 days. They were. Spying out the land. But God said to them. That 40 years. Would be. The time that they would spend.

Wandering. In the wilderness. Before. Israel would be allowed. To possess the land. That he promised. And. Very often.

We. Neglect. To understand. That. When God promises something. He. Means. What he promises. He doesn't break his promises.

He never breaks a promise. And if he promises good. To you. Or to me. Then. That good.

Will be ours. Nothing. Bad. Nothing. Will prevent you from. Coming to possess it. If he promises. Bad things.

[17 : 16] Because. Of. Whatever it is. That we've done. That is wrong. Then. What he promised. Will become. Our experience also.

And there are people. Who live today. In the world. Who have lived for years. Believing. That although. God has promised. That they will.

Not enjoy. The. Privileges. Of their. Wrongdoing. Because. They haven't. Experienced. God's. Displeasure. Instantly. They think.

God has forgotten us. God has overlooked us. God will not. Be faithful. To his promise. It's a big. Big. Mistake. And the children of Israel.

Learned. That lesson. Very bitterly. And only. Two. Went into the land. Only two. Of that number. And that was.

[18 : 14] Joshua. And Caleb. Because. They had believed. In the promises. Of God. God doesn't. Really. Care about.

Numbers. But he cares. About. His own word. And his own. Reputation. Which is bound up. In it. And I hope that.

You will learn something more. About that today. As you. Learn your. Lessons. On Sunday's. We're going to sing. As you go out. Verses. Of Psalm 30.

And verse 6. Down to. Verse 12. Verse 6. To the end. Of the psalm. Psalm 30. In my prosperity.

I said. That nothing. Shall me move. O Lord. Thou hast. My mountain. Made. To stand strong. By thy love. But when. That thou. O gracious.

[19 : 07] God. Didst hide. Thy face. From me. Then quickly. Was my prosperous. State. Turned into misery. Wherefore. Unto the Lord. My cry. I cause.

To ascend. My humble. Supplication. I to the Lord. Did send. What profit is there in my blood. When I go down to pit. Shall unto thee.

The dust. Give praise. Thy truth. Declare. Shall it. Here Lord. Have mercy. Help me Lord. Thou turned hast. My sadness. To dancing.

Yea. My sackcloth. Loosed. And girded me with gladness. That sing. Thy praise. My glory may. And never silent be. O Lord.

My God forevermore. I will give thanks. To thee. We can sing these verses. Psalm 30. From verse 6. To the end. In my prosperity.

[20 : 02] I said. That nothing. Shall me move. In my prosperity. The evening.

O Lord. I said.■ic.

Thank you.

My cross will stay, turned into his holy.

Wherefore, and to the Lord my kind, I cause it to the same.

[21 : 26] My humble supplication, I give the Lord his hand.

What prophet is there in my blood, Where I know that you can.

So upon to thee, the gospel praise, thy truth declares the end.

Here, Lord, how praise thee, heavenly Lord. I turn to God, my son is, and I sing it, my son of your first, and give me thy gladness.

But sing thy praise, my glory, and may the silent peace.

[23 : 07] O Lord my God, forevermore, I will give thanks to thee.

We're going to hear God's word this morning from the Gospel of John. Gospel of Jesus Christ according to John chapter 11.

John chapter 11, reading from verse 17 down to verse 44. This is a well-known account of the death and the resurrection of the friend of the Lord Jesus, Lazarus.

And we're taking up the reading when Jesus comes to meet the family following the death of Lazarus.

Verse 17, Then when Jesus came, he found that he, that is Lazarus, had lain in the grave four days already.

[24 : 31] Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem about fifteen furlongs off. And many of the Jews came to 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 sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto, Thy brother shall rise again.

Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection of the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life.

He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

[25 : 35] believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

And when she had so said, she went her way and called Mary her sister, secretly saying, The Master is come and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto him.

Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then, which were in the house, with her in the house, and comforted her, comforted her.

When they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

When Jesus therefore saw her weeping and the Jews also weeping, which came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled, and said, Where have you laid him?

[26 : 59] They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him. And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

Jesus therefore again, groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave and a stone lay upon it.

Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead for days.

Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God. Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid.

And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always.

[28 : 14] But because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

And he that was dead came forth, bound, hand and foot, with grave clothes. And his face was bound about with a napkin.

Jesus saith unto them, Loosen and let him go. And so on. May the Lord add his blessing to this reading of his word.

To his name be the praise. We're going to sing now from Psalm 49. Psalm 49.

We're going to read from verse 12 down to the end of the psalm. But yet in honour shall not man abide continually, but passing hence may be compared unto the beasts that die.

[29 : 23] Thus brutish folly plainly is their wisdom and their way, yet their posterity approve what they do fondly say. Like sheep they in the grave are laid, and death shall them devour, and in the morning upright men shall over them have power.

Their beauty from their dwelling shall consume within the grave, but from hell's hand God will be free, for he shall be received. Be thou not then afraid when one enriched thou dost see, nor when the glory of his house advanced is on high, for he shall carry nothing hence when death his days doth end, nor shall his glory after him to the grave descend.

Although he his own soul did bless, whilst he on earth did live, and when thou to thyself dost well, men will thee praise give, he to his father's race shall go, they never shall see light, man honoured, wanting knowledge is like beasts that perish quiet.

The verses that we'll sing, verse 14 to the end, 14 to the end, like sheep, they in the grave are laid, and death shall them devour.

like sheep they in the grave are laid, and death shall them devour.

[31 : 07] And the day of the morning of the night shall over them have found.

The beauty from their dwelling shall consume within the grave, but from their time God will be free, for he shall be in reseeded.

Be thou not there a flippant one enriched thou dost see, nor when the glory of his hand unanswered this on high.

For he shall come in nothing hence, when death his day does end, nor shall his glory glory after him, and to the field his hand.

Although he has his own soul did bless, but he are at his glim and when the truth thyself does well, men will be gracious give.

[33 : 22] He to his father's face shall go, in hell shall see light, man over what in know ages, like priests unperished wise.

Let us turn to the passage from the New Testament that we read, John chapter 11, and we can read again at verse 39, Jesus said, Take ye away the stone.

Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead for days. Jesus saith unto her, said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou should see the glory of God.

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid, and Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

And I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he had thus spoke, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

[35 : 04] And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, loosen and let him go.

I'm sure you're familiar with the words of this chapter. It's a well-known account of one of the Lord's miracles.

But when you read through the whole chapter, there are many elements to it that may catch your attention. But I think there's three main parts to it that you could say sum up the main body of teaching that is there.

First of all, there is the way that Jesus tests faith. He establishes grounds for faith to be an exercise.

And then he tests that faith. And that is clearly something that we find within the body of this passage.

[36 : 33] We also find what you could believe to be essentially the doctrine of the resurrection. resurrection. This is presented to you as something that is an inevitable consequence of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not only did Christ die, but he rose from the dead. And as Paul teaches, because he rose, those who are united by faith to him, will also rise as he rose.

But there is also the miracle which is at the heart of the telling of the story, the miracle of the raising of Lazarus.

And that's what we want to look at today, the actual miracle itself and some thoughts connected with it. But before we do that, I think it is something that is often referred to when people have to deal with the sorrows associated with death and the sorrows that are associated with some grim event on the scene of time.

It is almost with a cry of euphoria that people will say if God is a good God then why does he allow bad things to happen in this world?

[38 : 24] If the God is good why does he permit evil? Why does he permit suffering? Christ is indeed a saviour?

Why does he not save people from these things? It is interesting to follow the trajectory of Christ's life to the cross.

cross. This is one thing that's cast a button on the cross. He saved others. Why does he not save himself?

There's a triumphant sense to that statement. If Christ is what he says he is, who he says he is, why does he not do something?

And some people will use this perhaps as a very strong plank for their own denial of God.

[39 : 37] As if they say well if God is incapable or impotent in situations like that how can such a God be God?

How can such a God exist in an environment where such evils are perpetrated? And if you follow the logic of their arguments it seems almost as if it's something that you could hardly resist.

If God is God then why does God not do things that you would expect God to do. But the thing is that that argument hangs on one thought that you would expect God to do or that I would expect God to do.

You have already decided that God can only behave as God if he does what you want God to do. And at that moment you're displacing God from his role as God his position on the throne of the universe and saying I have the right to decide what is good for God to do.

What is right for God to do. And it seems that that something is lost sight of. One of the books that is so full of information a book by John Blanchard written many years ago Does God Believe in Atheists?

[41 : 26] It's a very interesting book to dip into and he cites all kinds of material from all over the world from all kinds of sources.

And dealing with this question of the existence of God and the goodness of God he refers to a university debate where one of the protagonists uses the example of the way Germany put so many people to death in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and facts and figures are cited to state the awful reality of such evil.

and while we can't go into the whole of the argument that was made time doesn't allow us to do that this statement that is made that if God is good then the likes of the annihilation of so many Jews and the attempted destruction of a whole race it should not have happened if God is God then surely he would have prevented it these people after all bore God's name but the argument that is made against that is simple what is the basis of any moral complaint about what

Hitler did to the Jews if God does not exist now this isn't an argument for or against the existence of God per se but if you are saying what happened in Auschwitz what happened throughout the whole of the German suppression of this nation happened proves the nonexistence of God then if God doesn't exist on the basis of that proof in a godless universe what one animal does to another animal is ethically irrelevant because that's what you're saying if God doesn't exist then you can't say that there is anything within mankind that differentiates mankind from any other creature that doesn't exist then what one man does to another is not determined by a moral good established by

God but rather by society itself and society is not really in a fit position to determine what is right or wrong there is no moral basis for anger or outrage against God if the moral basis is not established by God himself what happens is happens and that's all there is to it now some people would look at this passage and why did we go down this road I suppose an aside more than else but you want to establish the events as they occur and understand the reason for them and all the time the Lord Jesus is saying this happened for the glory of God it's not that

[46 : 22] God is glorified in the death of Lazarus but the glory that God possesses is revealed through the resurrection of Lazarus and I think that's at the heart of what Jesus is bringing to light he's not he's not he's not in any way doing not doing something that he could do in order to make these women suffer or to make Lazarus suffer death but he is showing that the power that is in the world that is centred in God will ultimately be revealed for what it is and the fact that there is death in the world is something that man has to live with man has to make sense of it there's no escaping from death and how you understand it and what you make of it and you either live with it with the knowledge that there is no remedy to it and that there is nothing that lies beyond it or you understand that by the provision that

God has made in Christ Jesus that death is something that has already been dealt with in Christ Jesus so we want to look at the resurrection itself we want to look at it first of all with the words that come from Jesus when he is at the grave secondly we want to see how Martha reacts to Jesus his command and the reminder that he has to give her of what he has already promised what she acquiesced in which at that moment because of her grief she overlooks thirdly there is his prayer which I think is in itself a remarkable prayer and fourthly there is the actual resurrection itself the quickening of

Lazarus dead body a command given to him and a command given to those who are on Lucas now we may not be familiar with many of the practices that are common in the day that this took place we ourselves have a culture surrounding funerals we grew up with it we partaken in it we see how it works we see what's expected of us and each one who's involved in it play their own part and we should be thankful that there is a tradition that is carried on even though it's changing very very quickly it's changing because the world we're living in is treating death as if it's something that is not really to be dealt with head on it's something that's displaced from our thinking as far as possible we're happy to deal with death in the context of film or literature we're happy to think about it like that because it's not something that really touches us at that moment at that level but much of society and I've said this perhaps before and doesn't matter something

I'm so aware of outside of our culture there are a great many people who have never ever seen a dead body they've never attended a funeral service except almost remotely they know that somewhere there is a body to be interred or cremated but their relationship with that event is so remote as to make it as almost as if they have no part to play in this event at all now that's not the way it was in Jesus' day in fact those who are aware of the history of this time when a person came to be buried the burial would take place almost if not that day the following day and that's simply to do with the weather it was something that had to be done and had to be done as soon as possible so that not only was the burial something that took place very quickly for practical reasons there were also on other things that attended the death for example the mourners would hire professional mourners to accompany the burial procession that there would be those who would play some musical instrument maybe two possibly more depending on how wealthy the family was and they would pipe a tune they would play some kind of musical instrument to accompany the funeral procession and there would be either one or two mourning women lamenting the death of the person who died professionally hired for the occasion and to express the grief of the family that were burying their loved ones and the the whole experience was very very focused on there being a need for grief and there being a need for the expression of grief and the family would be involved in that so we know that when

Jesus comes to this point that some a lot of the dialogue involves Mary and Martha wondering well why didn't you come when you were sent for if you had been here then Lazarus wouldn't have died probably there were practical reasons for that but Jesus explains it to them as something that will ultimately reveal the glory of God to them he doesn't see it as his greatest task to ensure that Lazarus does not go through the experience of death because he has a greater knowledge of death than they do and he knows that he has the last word with regard to all who die and that's why we have the words earlier on spoken of that are so often referred to that I am the resurrection and the life he that believeth in me though he will get yet shall he live and when he says that to

[55 : 01] Martha she believes him she says she understands that there will be a resurrection and that those who die will rise again but when we see him coming here we notice that Jesus is said to groan in spirit that's the description that is given to him Jesus wept and those who see him weeping and those who see him groaning think that it's all down to this tie that he had with the family they knew him to be a friend of the family they knew that there was this strong link with the family and yet when you try and get to the heart of what he is feeling or why he is expressing his feelings in this way then you wonder what it is that he has to say about death that he doesn't already know what it is that there is about death that he has not already expressed in some way in verse 38

Jesus therefore again this is the second time groaning in himself comes to the grave now Don Carson one of the commentators says something very interesting about the various translations we have of that groaning in himself or groaning in the spirit the translations are in many cases interpretive of what they expect Jesus to be feeling but the actual word that's used it's unique it's used just twice here and it is a groaning in which there is a sense of anger or outrage emotional indignation is what he calls it now why should Jesus feel such rage and the expression that many give to his groaning in the spirit is that he sees what is at the centre of death the waste that is there the way that death has robbed mankind of the glory they originally possessed when they were in a state of innocence death has intruded because of sin and it is as if

Jesus is looking at the scene of time and seeing this awful spectre doing its worst and I think you could agree with that that there is a sense in which Jesus when he sees he looks round about him he sees the grief of the sisters he sees the grief of those mourners and there were many and doubtless there were some who would have known Lazarus and would have felt deep sorrow for his death and Jesus himself is one of them and he feels sympathy he feels empathy and he feels anger and possibly this is the other side to it that Carson argues as a possibility I don't think you can separate it from it that he sees the mourning of those who are there as the mourning of those who are devoid of hope that death has robbed them of the life of someone that they loved and they're not seeing beyond the death they're not seeing beyond the grave this is the end and because it's the end because they are not seeing the resurrection they are not gripping the truth of God that says that there is a resurrection there is that despondency that inevitably takes a hold of them and Jesus is angered at that and I suppose if you take it into the context and take it into his interaction with Mary and Martha and especially with Mary he has already told her there is a resurrection your brother is going to rise again and she believed that thinking in terms of the general resurrection however we know that sin brought death into the world and Jesus knows that

Jesus understands that and while we cannot and dare not agree with those who consider themselves to be super Christians who say that Christians have no right to mourn the passing of other Christians because by rights they should have faith that allows them to understand that their friend or their relative is now in glory and their friend and relative whose remains will be interred to the dust will soon rise and because of that grief is not permitted now that is not right if anything death has taken from you a friend and a relative and while the resurrection is certain and while the present glory of that individual is certain it doesn't mean that you as an individual are not deprived of the presence of that person the love of that person the communion of that person and so on and we have to guard against standing aloof as it were when others sorrow and when others are sad but there is also a fine line beyond which you can't go if the sorrow is such that it takes away every possibility of anything beyond death if it hides from you the prospect of resurrection if it leaves you incapable of believing

God's truth then that grieving is sinful that grieving goes beyond what is permitted but here Jesus displays a sense that he knows and feels and is moved by the death of his friend Lazarus and he is prepared because of that to do something about it so he says to those who are at the grave alongside him he says to them to take away the stone take away the stone and Martha is not forward now you can understand why we are told he was dead for four days but that whatever that means in hours and minutes it's a length of time that

[63 : 15] Lazarus has been in the grave but one thing it does is it takes away any thought that Lazarus was in a coma that he was simply in a faint and you remember they used that as an excuse for not believing the resurrection of Jesus not to be genuine Martha knows her brother is dead Martha knows that it is the dead brother that has been in the grave and that he's been in the grave for that length of time so she doesn't think it seems that what is about to happen should happen for very practical reasons but she responds to Jesus we believe although it's not said it is clearly the case that he is allowed to do what he wants to do said

I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou should see the glory of God and then you took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid no further communication from Martha there if she had the power or the ability to prevent him doing what he was going to do it's not clear but what Jesus was going to do he did it and the stone is removed and Martha at that point has forgotten forgotten all about what Jesus said to her just so many verses back Jesus had spoken to her about the resurrection and that is a not on her horizon and I think that's a picture again a picture of someone who understands death to be real and yet who is in the grip of grief so that even

God's word Christ's word to her is overlooked then we have Jesus' prayer and I think the prayer itself is something you would imagine that the prayer would be something along this line that he would say to God Heavenly Father I want you to raise my friend from the dead I want you to bring this dead body to life something along these lines but that's not the prayer that's not what he says he lifts up his eyes and said Father I thank thee that thou hast heard me and I knew that thou hearest me always it's not a prayer of supplication but a prayer of thanksgiving he knows already that the deed is done that

God has surely heard him and it probably means that he had some kind of interaction that he had some kind of communication I don't know how you describe it how God the Son speaks to God the Father does it always have to involve communication words or is it simply a matter of of the communication that is between the persons but he describes what he is thanking God for but he also explains to us why he is doing this audibly by saying that I think it almost suggests to us that he didn't need to speak to God about it he didn't need to communicate in this way to God but he said because of the people which stand by I said it that they may believe that thou have sent me this is not for your benefit or my benefit our relationship as father and son is always the way it should be there is never a breach in it there is never a need for me to express in words the desires of my heart you know my heart it's a difficult one to explain but

I think in the way that Jesus describes it to us here he expects us to understand as on any other occasion many other occasions he does it he explains the events there so that those who are present will know the intimacy of the relationship that exists between father and son he explains it so that his own people will know that this is the son of God this is the great high priest of his people this is the one who is at the right hand of the majesty on high whose prayers and petitions are always heard by God there is never a petition offered that God does not answer positively positively his pleas are never ignored never but then we have the command to Lazarus he cried with a loud voice Lazarus come forth and even in the grave

[69 : 02] Lazarus heard him even in the grip of death and he was in the grip of death he heard him the devil thought he had him the devil was convinced he was his the devil thought he had the last word with regard to Lazarus but Jesus said Lazarus come forth I'm sure you've heard it said so often that Christ used the name Lazarus because if he had not every other grave in the vicinity would have been vacated if he had just said to the dead rise every other dead person would have risen along with Lazarus it's often suggested we don't know that that's the case or not three occasions we have in the scripture that we can say that the dead rose at the command of Christ the child who was dead and

Jesus spoke to the child and said Talitha come little girl awake specifically directed and again the only son of the widow young man arise whatever occasion it was specific here whether it is the reason why that is so or not we're not even sure about the process doesn't matter Lazarus was dead Jesus said to the dead Lazarus come forth what moment did Lazarus begin to take take on life as it were which vital organs began to move first was it his heart was it his liver was it every part of his body simultaneously it doesn't matter it was a point at which the power of

Jesus to quicken the dead was brought into sharp focus who knows what was going on in the mind of Mary and Martha who knows what was going on in the mind of those on lookers and when they saw the dead Lazarus come forth as Christ had commanded some people try and visualize this you know you've got your idea of the mummified bodies of Egypt that they couldn't move but this is the kind of burial that the Egyptians had the Egyptians used mummification and they bled the body and so on filled it full of all kinds of concoctions to preserve the body that's not the manner of burial of the Jews they simply wrapped it in a loose burial shroud but it's different you have to notice between the death of

Christ and the death of Lazarus because when Christ died and rose again his risen his body resurrected body came through the clothes the clothes were left lying in the grave there is a difference because Christ was the first born from the dead in the resurrection Lazarus was not Lazarus was a dead man brought to life by Jesus he was able to come forth but only with the grave clothes still binding him and he says loose him and let him go but it was all because of the power of Jesus Christ to do that and it's just a reminder to us of what it will be like in the day in John chapter 5 and verse 25 27 what the resurrection of

Lazarus is different to the resurrection that will take place on the day of resurrection of all men but it was still a resurrection it was still life from the dead or to a dead person from a divine source and Christ had the ability to do that it was a miracle and it's interesting to follow on what happens afterwards in the next chapter we read how Jesus sat with Mary and Martha and Lazarus having a meal having a supper and then a few verses after that it says that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus but they also wanted to kill Lazarus because they knew that Lazarus was once dead and that he rose from the dead by virtue of the power of Christ

[74 : 37] I suppose there are many lessons we could learn from this about the spiritual resurrection of dead souls who are lying in the grave incapable of spiritual life incapable of spiritual response incapable of anything that merits the attention of God the death that they are in the grip of is all encompassing perhaps you don't realise that but the day Christ enters your name and says come forth is the day when you will respond and come to him as the one who has power over the grave the day will come when you will know that you know in the last just in the in the short few weeks of this year

I've already attended six funerals of people that I've known participated in most of them and something really makes me feel so heart sore the many that are there standing looking into a grave where the remains of a loved one is laid to rest and they think that's it they think that's it well what else would it be what else would it be well the Bible says not these remains however long they lie in the dust the grave will give up the dead the sea will give up the dead the ashes gather to the four winds will gather together and presence themselves before the throne of judgment as God has decreed to appear before the one who is the judge of the quick and the dead would it not be better for us all to listen out to the voice of

Jesus as he says oh whoever you are come forth come out of the grave and hear these words loose them and let them free what binds you now is the bonds of sin and only God in his grace can loose you from them may he do that and may you learn to cry out to him that he does let us pray Lord oh God you tell us in your word that you are indeed the resurrection and the life and that that life is a life that is without end we bless you for the prospect that lies in store for all who are in Christ hear our prayers and watch over us we ask in Jesus name amen closing psalm 23 psalm 23 the Lord is my shepherd

I not want he makes me down to lie in pastures green he leadeth me the quiet waters by my soul he doth restore again and me to walk doth make within the paths of righteousness even for his own name's sake day though I walk in death dark quail yet will I fear none for they were with me and I thought that staff we can't forth still we'll sing the whole psalm to God's praise the Lord's my shepherd I not want the Lord's my shepherd I not want he made me down me down to light till I in pastures remain he leadeth me The quiet water's fine.

My soul may die with soul again. And me to walk to thee.

[79 : 34] Within the paths of righteousness. If I have shown in sin.

Yet though I walk in death shall clear.

Yet when I fear the hell. For the wrong way.

He on my own. And stop me gone for sin.

My table I have pervaded. In precious love my hope.

[80 : 49] My heaven above. With my other wine. And my God above.

Goodness. God bless the Lord.

God bless the Lord. Fizz dry for no king I hang good Prayer Forevermore By dwelling clean shall we And may grace, measure and peace from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit rest and abide with you all now and always.

Amen.