

# Lazarus raised

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Date: 12 February 2023

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you haven't guessed by the photo, he plays now for Manchester United.!

I remember watching that match. He was playing for his country, Denmark. He collapsed on the pitch. It was all very dramatic.

Medics came out, players gathered around, cameras cut away, and it seemed like he'd died on the pitch. It was a really sad moment, but amazingly, due to amazing medical intervention, defibrillators, his heart got working again.

And so he didn't die. He was resuscitated. It was a truly amazing thing. But this morning, I want to be really honest with us.

There will come a time when Christian Erikson's heart will stop for the very final time. And so with all of us, unless Jesus comes back first.

[ 1 : 39 ] And this morning, in the passage that we have read, we see someone who dies. But we're going to see something amazing.

We're going to see that the person who dies, that four days later, is brought back to life again.

Because the amazing news for all of us this morning is that though all of us will die, we can believe in Jesus who gives life that lasts forever, even beyond death.

And that is amazing news that we get to hear. So what happens? Well, first of all, Jesus hears that his friend is sick.

Jesus hears that his friend is sick. So a message is sent through by Lazarus' sisters. They're called Mary and Martha.

And the word that's sent through to them is this. Lord, the one you love is ill. So the message is sent.

[ 2 : 57 ] One tick. The message is received. It's heard by Jesus. Lord, the one you love is ill. Two ticks. It's been received. And then two blue ticks.

It's been read. It's been heard by Jesus. Jesus has heard the message. Lord, the one you love is ill. But the message seems to be ignored.

Jesus doesn't seem particularly concerned. In fact, after he hears that his friend Lazarus is so ill, verse 6 says, So when he heard it, he stayed where he was for two more days.

He doesn't send a message back to Mary and Martha. He doesn't go and see his friend who's sick. Imagine you get a phone call. And you're told that your best friend is ill and is in hospital. And they say, Come quickly.

[ 4 : 08 ] Come and see your friends. And you put the phone down. And you don't seem very worried. You don't do anything. You don't go and try and visit them.

It almost looks like you don't care. And it kind of feels like Jesus is doing that. Why doesn't he just go?

He can heal people. Why doesn't he just go to Lazarus and make him better again? And sometimes we will have felt that in our lives.

Sometimes we will pray for people. Sometimes we will pray for people who are sick. And God doesn't seem to be listening. But knowing what I know of Jesus, I don't think this is the case.

I think he does listen. And we're going to see that. And he is working, just not in the way we might expect him to. Verse 4, it says this.

[ 5 : 15 ] Jesus is saying that in this we're going to see his glory.

We're going to see that Jesus is God. We're going to see that he has power to give us life that lasts. Even after death. Even after death. And all this is for God's glory. You see, Jesus is not like us.

Jesus is God. We're human. And though Jesus is here in a human body, he's human, but he's also God. He's not like us. See, none of us really know what's going to happen tomorrow.

Or this week. We might have our plans. Like, this week's half term. I'm going to have a few days off. I'm going to drive to Plymouth. That's my plan.

[ 6 : 23 ] But I don't know how many traffic jams I'll get stuck in. And how long for on the way to Plymouth. I don't know where I'll go and stop and eat lunch. I don't know what time I'll get there.

I don't even know if I'll be able to go. I might wake up and feel really ill. I don't know that sort of thing. But Jesus does. Jesus is not like us.

He knows the future. And he knows what is best. And he knows what is best. So that God himself can be glorified. Yet it feels confusing that Lazarus, one that he loves, gets so sick.

So ill. And Jesus doesn't come and heal him. And you know what? We see that Jesus says Lazarus is dead.

Even after he said this won't end in death, Lazarus dies. So verse 11. After he had said this, he went on to tell them, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep.

[ 7 : 36 ] But I am going there to wake him up. His disciples replied, Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better. Jesus had been speaking of his death.

But his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And for your sake I am glad I was not there so that you may believe.

But let us go to him. Jesus describes death like taking a nap. Being tired, closing your eyes, going to sleep, and waking up again.

But not in this world. In another world. But his disciples don't get it. It definitely seems confusing, especially if it's not explained.

So he says to them very, very clearly, Lazarus is dead. And when people die, we don't see them again on this earth.

[ 8 : 44 ] That's what usually happens. So many of us will remember last September, the queen died. And there was a coffin in a room, and there was a very long queue down the River Thames.

People queued up to see the queen's coffin there. And people were sad. Because the queen, who'd always been there for many years, had died.

And we won't see her again on the earth. And Lazarus has also died. And when people die, we don't see them again.

And we're kind of left puzzled. Jesus said, this wouldn't end in death. Jesus says, I'm glad I was not there.

But Jesus has the bigger picture. He knew that Lazarus was going to die, and he knew that he's going to go there to wake him up. But what does that mean? People don't just wake up from death.

[ 9 : 53 ] It seems like Jesus is a bit late. See, Jesus arrives to Mary and Martha, but is he too late?

Verse 17, On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Not only is he too late, but he's four days late.

Lazarus is very dead. It's like you've invited someone to your birthday party.

You're planning a birthday party. It's going to be next Saturday, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. And you've invited the whole church. I've received this invitation. It says, lots of fun and games, so don't be late.

So I take the invitation. I think, yeah, okay, great. But maybe I'll just be a bit late. And I decide to be so late, I'll turn up four days late.

[ 10 : 59 ] But surely the party will still be going on then. But four days after Saturday is Wednesday. I'd be very, very late. In fact, you'd be at school.

You won't be in. There'll be no party. I'm very, very late. And that's what happens with Jesus here. He's late.

Lazarus was alive. He was ill. And Jesus could have turned up when he was told. But he's late. Lazarus has died.

And he's been in the tomb for four days. But Martha, she hears that Jesus is coming.

And Martha and Mary, they're friends with Jesus. And Martha comes up to Jesus. And we see this, verse 21. Lord, Martha said to Jesus, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

[ 12 : 05 ] See, Martha knew who Jesus was. she knew that he is God. And she knew that he has the power to heal him. If you had been here, he would not have died.

You could have made him better. But Jesus was late. But Martha does believe in Jesus.

She believes he is God. And Jesus speaks to her and says, your brother will rise again. And Martha answered, I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

Martha knows that there is a time coming when this world will end. On the last day. When this earth comes to an end and those who believe in Jesus will enter into a wonderful new creation where there will be no more death and we'll be reunited with those, all Christians, who we've known and loved.

But for now, Lazarus is dead and he's in the tomb and that's kind of it. It's good to know Lazarus will rise again at the last day but it doesn't help Martha much now.

[13:34] She feels the sadness of the loss. Sitting around the table and seeing the chair where Lazarus would have ate food empty.

She feels the loss. But Jesus says that he is the resurrection and he is the life.

See, resurrection, let's read that actually. Verse 25, Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life.

He who believes in me will live even though they die and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?

Resurrection. That is bringing someone back to life forever. Life that never ends.

[14:40] Christian Erikson, the footballer, his heart started again. He was resuscitated. You don't have to remember that word but that's what that is. He wasn't his life on earth will end one day.

His body will die one day. No, Jesus is talking about life that lasts forever even beyond the day our bodies die.

So Jesus is the resurrection and Jesus is the life. Jesus is the life. See, the Bible tells us that all of us are born and have life in this world.

we have bodies that are able to live and keep going and we have our time here but in terms of life with God we are dead and we are dead because of what the Bible calls sin.

We've been saying over the last few months sin is when we say shove off God I'm in charge not you. And so the Bible says we're dead between us and God.

[15:56] Some of us were looking at a passage in Ephesians this morning where it says we are dead in our sin but God has made us alive in Christ.

See, that's the amazing news that we can have life with God through Jesus who is the resurrection and the life life that will last forever.

So anyone who believes in him even though their bodies will die they won't because they'll get to spend forever with Jesus.

But Jesus was too late to Lazarus. He's been dead for four days but Jesus shows up and he stands next to Martha and he says anyone who believes in me even though they die even though Lazarus has died as in the tomb he gets to live forever because I am the resurrection and the life and he believes in me.

That's great hope for Martha that standing with her is Jesus the resurrection and the life and that is great hope for all of us.

[17:19] Sometimes we will pray for people who are sick and sometimes those people won't get better and sometimes they will die and we will feel the sadness of their loss but Jesus stands and says I am the resurrection and the life I'm with you and if they are people who believe in Jesus they even though their bodies die they will get to live forever.

We are going to look at some more of this in a bit there is lots more there is some exciting stuff to see more exciting stuff to see in a moment but first we are going to sing a song a song that I believe is finger licking good as they say that's what they say in their adverts and that's something that I could believe just by them saying it and showing me the pictures of this wonderful chicken but I could go and see more of the evidence for myself I could go down London Road and stare at people in the window enjoying KFC and seeing if they are licking their fingers and I could go even further and go in the shop and buy it for myself and look at it and taste it and see and Jesus here he said

I am the resurrection and the life and we can certainly believe what Jesus says is true but we're going to see that what he says is true is shown by what he does we see that he really is who he says he is he really is the resurrection and the life and we're going to see that by looking here for ourselves in the Bible in this passage and we're going to see two things that I think can give us confidence that he is who he says he is the resurrection and the life and the first thing we see is that Jesus weeps his response to the death of Lazarus shows his deep love and care for

Lazarus but also for human beings generally for this world where death is a reality and we see that first in the shortest verse in the Bible verse 35 John 11 verse 35 Jesus wept two words it takes seconds to say Jesus wept and yet they're powerful words and comforting words for us to hear you see Jesus goes and he sees the tomb in which Lazarus is dead body is lying and his response is to weep for tears to come down the face of God it's extraordinary he has experienced the loss of someone he loves and he knows what it is like he knows what it is like if we are grieving the loss of someone and many of us in this room are this morning we're grieving the loss of our sister Enid Jesus knows what that is like because he has stood in front of a tomb where his close friend Lazarus has been buried he has lost someone he loves we may not know why death happens we may not know why it happens at a time to certain people we don't know why we feel the way we do but we know that Jesus understands we may have lots of questions but we know that Jesus understands he has experienced the tears of losing someone he loves too and so we can talk to him in prayer with confidence that he understands what we are feeling we can be very honest with how we feel about our grief know that we are talking to someone who has experienced grief himself but not only that it says verse 33 when Jesus saw her weeping and the [ 22 : 41 ] Jews who had come along with her also weeping he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled and what that is saying the meaning behind those words is that he is feeling a sense of anger at death death this is not right this wasn't part of God's original good design for this world and so Jesus feels this sense of anger this is not right death is horrible and so Jesus himself has come to this earth and has experienced the reality of death in his life he's not stayed far away in heaven far away from all the death and the pain and suffering and left us to it but he has come down to this earth and experienced it and has come to rescue us from death to bring us to life if we would believe in him and you know what it's absolutely amazing that he weeps at the loss of his friend because he knew exactly what was going to happen next and we know that he knew that from earlier in the passage when he said in verse 4

Jesus said this illness will not end in death no it's for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it and yet we went through the confusion of Lazarus dying and thinking Jesus what on earth are you doing you said this wouldn't end in death what are you doing but that's because Jesus knows what's coming next and it's absolutely spectacular Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead you see we can believe what Jesus said we can believe Jesus words I am the resurrection and the life because Jesus shows us in a most extraordinary way verse 38 Jesus once more deeply moved came to the tomb it was a cave with a stone laid across it the entrance take away the stone he said but

Lord said Martha the sister of the dead man by this time there is a bad odour for he has been there for four days he instructs people to open the tomb you don't go around opening tombs Martha is it Martha is it Mary Martha says you don't do this because there's going to be a bad smell if I was to wear my socks for four days in a row you wouldn't want me to take off my shoes there will be a bad smell and even worse I suspect with a dead body in a tomb a bad odour and yet that's Jesus' instructions here to take away the stone because Jesus knew what he was about to do verse 40 then

Jesus said did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God so they took away the stone then Jesus looked up and he said father I thank you that you have heard me I knew that you always hear me but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here that they may believe that you sent me he was praying to his father his father who hears him and he was praying that people who see this and no doubt people who read this would come to believe that he really is the resurrection and the life and so in the most dramatic loud voice verse 43

Jesus says this Lazarus come out and if you or I were to stand by someone's grave and say Bob come out we would be mad and people around us would think we were mad and if Jesus wasn't God and wasn't the resurrection and the life he would be mad shouting Lazarus come out but you know what happens verse 44 the dead man came out his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around his face and Jesus said to them take off the grave clothes and let him go the dead man walks he is alive again he has been buried in a tomb for four days and now he walks [ 28 : 44 ] Jesus has shown us in the most amazing way that he really is who he says he is he really is the resurrection and the life nobody in all the world can do this yes we have defibrillators and we can get people's hearts going sometimes again but those hearts will one day stop for the final time we might be able to take various tablets and eat all the right foods so that we can just live a bit

longer but none of us can stop death coming only Jesus can provide us with resurrection and life life that lasts forever beyond death and that's amazing news for us to hear this morning but you know what

Jesus went even further than this Jesus himself died on a cross he took the punishment of God's anger on our sin that we deserve to face forever after we die Jesus took that on himself on the cross and he himself died but he did that so we can go free so we can be forgiven but Jesus is the resurrection and the life so not only did he stay dead in a tomb but he himself rose again he is the resurrection and the life he is who he says he is he himself has beaten death and so we can if we are

Christians this morning if we believe and trust in Jesus to save us we can say where oh death is your victory where grave is your sting yes we'll still die and people we know and love will still die but Jesus has shown us that he that death is not the end not doesn't have to have the last words because he is the resurrection and the life we may not always understand what is going on in life we may not understand why that earthquake and thousands those earthquakes even earlier in the week happened and thousands dying we may not understand why

Jesus let Lazarus die as we were looking earlier but we see that he uses this for his glory he knows and he is in control and he himself has done what nobody can do and he has beaten death he has shown that as he raises Lazarus and he has shown that in his own resurrection and he will and he will and all who believe in him can look forward to a new world to come where there will be no more pain no more sickness no more death no more tears no more mourning the world made new that we'll get to enjoy forever with all God's people and with God himself being there amongst us and so Jesus describing death like falling asleep for Lazarus is so true for

Christians we will close our eyes but we will wake up and be forever with our God not in this world but in a wonderful new and perfect world Jesus says I am the resurrection and the life the one who believes in me even though they die believes in me will live even though they die and whoever lives by believing in me will never die and so just as Jesus said that to Martha so I say to all of us here boys girls men women do you believe this let's pray father we thank you so much that we can see we can see in the

[ 34 : 12 ] Bible Jesus' words that say yes I am the resurrection the life and we can see even more how he has shown that to be so true as he raised Lazarus from the dead and how he himself rose again from death father we thank you that we worship and we serve a living savior please please help us to glorify him and to know the comfort that it is that Jesus really is the resurrection and the life we thank you father amen amen well Jesus said that what happened to Lazarus would be all for his glory and we're going to end by giving glory to

Jesus the risen and the conquering son we're going to sing that the victory over death is endless so let's stand as we're led in this great hymn together