

# The Grieving Sisters

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Good morning. I am Maddie Duhon and I'm part of Women Reading Women.

Today's scripture reading is from the Gospel of John, chapter 11, verses 1-6 and 17-46 as printed in your liturgy. A reading from the Gospel according to John.

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary, and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.

So the sisters sent word to Jesus, Lord, the one you love is sick. When he heard this, Jesus said, This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.

[ 1 : 10 ] Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

Lord, Martha said to Jesus, If you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now, God will give you whatever you ask. Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again.

Martha answered, I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.

And whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this? Yes, Lord, she replied. I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.

[ 2 : 19 ] After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. The teacher is here, she said, and is asking for you. When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.

Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house comforting her noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

Where have you laid him? He asked. Come and see, Lord, they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, see how he loved him. But some of them said, could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across 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 odor, for he has been there four days.

[ 3 : 35 ] 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 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. When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, take off the grayed clothes and let him go. Therefore, many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Christ. Thanks, Maddie. Let's pray.

We pray that your spirit would fall upon us and go forth in the preaching of your word to both confront us and to also comfort us. We thank you that's what your word does.

[ 4 : 41 ] We thank you that's what your son does. And we want to encounter him this morning in the preaching of your word. So be with us, oh God. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

All right. So I can't believe it's already mid-February. But in case any of you were wondering, one of my focuses in this new year has been on the concept of time. I've shared that with some of you, but for the rest of you, that's what I've been trying to work on, my understanding of time personally, theologically.

But more importantly, I'm trying to work out my relationship to time. You know, living in the bustle of the Bay Area, trying to keep up, you know, trying to grow, trying to hit my KPIs.

And now in the age of AI, where I can get even more done and even less time, I'm thinking about time all the time. I feel its pressure throughout each day, the weight of my responsibility to manage and steward it well.

And candidly, this shows up in my relationships as well. Chelsea would tell you her most common criticism of me, and there are many, but her most common criticism of me is how stingy I am with my time and how I like, in her opinion, I pompously act like my time is more valuable than anyone else's.

[ 5 : 52 ] And then as a dad, too, I'm constantly conflicted about how much time to give to my girls, and especially, you know, in busy seasons, which is pretty much like every season, there are few things that trigger me more than when I feel like my time is being wasted.

So all this is to say that time has been a huge theme for me this year. I just finished this older book by this theologian, Kosuke Koyama, called *The Three Mile-An-Hour God*. I'm also going through this book right now by Oliver Berkman.

It's *Wrecking Me*. It's called *4,000 Weeks*. Highly recommend it. But basically, starting from January 1, I've really been trying to submit my sense of time to the Lord, to embrace my limits, to ask God what it means to be human, what it means to be me.

And to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance on how to use my time, not just for the kingdom of God, but how to inhabit time as a beloved child of God in unhurried communion with my Father in heaven.

And I share all of this, not to get overly autobiographical, but because when I came to John 11, I couldn't help but read it through the lens of time. Look at our passage. Jesus gets an urgent message in verse 3.

[ 7 : 03 ] Lord, the one you love is sick. But then John tells us something shocking in verse 6. So, or in the Greek, therefore, when he heard Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

Like, because he loved them, he delayed. Then verse 17, when Jesus arrives, Lazarus has already been dead in the tomb four days. And so the first words out of Martha and Mary's mouths in verses 21 and 32 are, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

It's almost like they're saying, Lord, if you had been on time. And the community shares the sentiment in verse 37. Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?

It's like there was faith in Jesus as a healer so long as he arrived on time. But now, it's too late. Don't take away that stone, Lord, Martha says.

It stinketh, right? It's been too long. All that's left is the stench of death. It's too late. Does that sentiment feel familiar to you?

[ 8 : 10 ] That feeling that it's just too late, too late for the best case scenario, too late for a happy ending? Do you carry regret or maybe even resentment over missed chances, opportunities lost, doors that feel permanently closed?

Do you carry grief in your mind, your heart, even your body, grief over something precious that is gone and that cannot be brought back? Maybe you feel this financially. You feel behind, unsure how you're going to recover.

Maybe you feel like you chose the wrong career path, the wrong major, the wrong spouse, even. Maybe you feel like you've damaged a friendship, your marriage, some other relationship in your family.

Maybe you were, you screwed up your kids forever. Or maybe you feel like you've been deprived of the resources and the love and the support and the opportunities. You feel you needed to get standing on your own two feet, but now it's too late to go back.

And you resent that you cannot turn back the clock. In one way or another, I think many of us live with this quiet narrative, it's just too late.

[ 9 : 11 ] And this shapes how we live more than we realize. Like we stop expecting to thrive. We lower our hopes for joy and beauty and glory. We settle. We self-protect. We manage our expectations along with our resentments.

And we medicate and therapize our guilt and regrets. But what if there's a different way to live? A way free from the bondage of guilt, regret, and despair over time that has run out?

Well, God's word from John 11 this morning invites us to consider this. What if? What if Jesus is Lord even when time runs out? What if Jesus is Lord even when time seems to have run out?

And more specifically, what if Jesus' delay is not at odds with His love, but actually a surprising, powerful expression of His love? Because that's another theme in this passage, not just time, but love.

Verse 3, Lord, the one you love is sick. Verse 5, now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Verses 35 to 36, Jesus wept and they said, see how He loved Him.

[ 10 : 21 ] John is underlining Jesus' love. And yet we are hit by this confusing turn between verse 5 and verse 6. Jesus loved them, so therefore He stayed.

That therefore should bother us. It certainly bothered Martha and Mary. It probably bothered the mourners because John is intentionally presenting Jesus as the one who loved them and therefore delayed.

But how are we supposed to make sense of that? How can both be true? That Jesus loved them and therefore delayed. Isn't love quick to respond? Wouldn't love mean relief, rescue, immediate intervention?

Isn't that how most of us intuitively envision love? If you love me and you can fix it, fix it now. If you care, show up ASAP. And you can sense that expectation in Martha, Mary, and the others here. Lord, the one you love is sick. Lord, if you had been here, you could even call this a kind of faith. They believed Jesus loved them. They believed He could heal. But they also believed that His love and His healing should fit in their own preferred timelines.

[ 11 : 29 ] They assumed that His love would look like urgency. But see, it's one thing to believe someone is powerful, even all powerful.

And yet it's another thing to trust that person, to use that power wisely and lovingly and at just the right time. Any parent knows this tension, right? There are moments when rushing in to fix everything actually keeps a child from seeing something bigger.

Love is not always the fastest, most immediate response. Sometimes love requires the wiser, slower, more big picture response, right? And what John begins to show us here is that Jesus is not only the Lord of love, not only the Lord of healing, but He's also the Lord of time.

And the clue to all of this is something He says here in verse 4. Look at what He says when He heard the news of Lazarus' sickness. He says, This sickness will not end in death, no.

It is for God's glory, so that God's Son may be glorified through it. Also in verse 15, which it hasn't been printed, He says to His disciples, For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.

[ 12 : 42 ] And this is so key. Because see, what this means is that Jesus' primary purpose is not preventing pain, but revealing the glory of God.

The whole point of God coming in the flesh is not to comfort us with, Your wish is my command, but to convince us that my glory is for your good. And this stretches us because many of us quietly believe, right?

If Jesus loved me, this or that would be fixed now. If Jesus cared, I wouldn't still be waiting. If Jesus were good, this wouldn't take so long. Maybe you're here this morning and this is precisely why you don't believe in God.

Because you feel like the good story that you would have written for your life or for the history of the world is so different than the story that you see being written out around you. And surely if there was a God, He would have written the story of your life and of the world the way you would have written it.

But John 11 invites us to consider, what if Jesus is doing something bigger than immediate relief? What if His love is aiming not just at comfort, but at glory and a deeper faith and at showing us who He really is?

[13:53] And this is exactly what He does next, right? When Jesus finally arrives in verse 17. And it's been four days since Lazarus was buried. And when Martha comes out to meet Jesus and says to Him in verse 21, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.

You can hear both the faith and the frustration in her greeting. Faith that if Jesus was here earlier, Lazarus wouldn't have died. And then in verse 22, scholars debate whether she was expecting that Jesus might raise Lazarus again.

Surely she had faith, just like every other Orthodox Jewish person, that at the last day, faithful Lazarus would be raised again. And you can sense a little bit of curiosity, a little bit of relief about what Jesus might do here in verse 22.

But you also hear her say later, that it's basically too late. Don't remove the stone. We cannot escape the stench of death. So there's some kind of faith here, but it's a frustrated and a conflicted one.

Like, I still trust you, Lord, but I don't get what you're doing. Maybe also, I don't understand why you didn't ask God to heal Lazarus from afar. You've done that before. And our Father, He gives you whatever you ask.

[15:08] You can tell that Martha is trying her best to make sense of all the truths that she believes. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves Lazarus. Yes, Jesus is able to heal.

Yes, He is here now, and that's good. And this is the one whose prayers God always answers. And yes, I believe that my brother will be raised on the last day. She's trying to figure out how to hold all these doctrines in this moment of grief and sorrow.

And so Jesus helps her out, but not by rationally explaining why He didn't come earlier, nor by making an excuse like, hey, look, He's been in the tomb four days now, and I only lingered for two days, which means that even if I left right away, I would have made it on time.

Nor does Jesus feel the need to explain why He didn't just heal Lazarus from afar like we've seen Him do in other Gospels. No, He doesn't explain Himself so much as He reveals Himself.

Look at what He says. Now notice what Jesus didn't say.

[16:17] He didn't say, I can give resurrection. He says, I am the resurrection. He doesn't say, I can provide life. He says, I am the life. See, Martha was looking for a solution, but Jesus offers Himself.

She was hoping for a future event, but Jesus points to a present person. And while she believed in resurrection someday, eternal life later, Jesus says, resurrection is standing right in front of you. I am the resurrection and the life. And by the way, these are two related yet distinct things.

Resurrection speaks to the future. Victory over death at the last day, and Martha already believed this, but life, life speaks to a present, forever and ongoing communion with the living God.

Life now and always with God. Life that begins from the moment you know Him, and life that cannot be taken away from you. I love how this 19th century theologian put it.

He wrote, See, Jesus isn't comforting her with later life, someday life.

[17:36] He's comforting her with abundant life, today and every day, not just bios life, zoe life. Because see, eternal life is not so much about the quantity, but it's about quality.

It's less about length of time, more about relationship, knowing God. This is what Jesus says to Mary. He's revealing Himself to her. I am the resurrection and the life. By saying this, He's reframing so much of how Martha and so much of how most of us think about time and the fullness of life.

See, Martha and Mary and everyone else assumed what Lazarus needed was more time, right? More time for Jesus to arrive, more time for healing. And if we're honest, we often think the same. We often think that our biggest problem is not enough time. We just need more time to fix things, more time to get our lives together. But if we're really honest, that assumption itself is a kind of

privilege.

It assumes time can save us. But think about how arrogant and how naive we've become to get to this point in history as comfortable, productive, high-achieving, technologically advanced, modern Westerners for whom time is really our only limiting factor, right?

[ 18 : 48 ] Just give AI enough time. It's going to solve all of our biotech issues and problems, cure cancer, right? Just Brian Johnson, he's going to figure out how to live forever. Just follow his routine, right?

Elon's going to get us, right, to become an interplanetary species. So we can consume more even outside of planet Earth. But Jesus is saying here, time is not your Savior.

I am. Because resurrection is not about having more time. Resurrection is about having Jesus. Eternal life isn't about stretching your timeline.

Eternal and abundant life is about knowing God. So Jesus says, John 17, 3, eternal life is knowing the life-giving God. So what Jesus does next is he asks Martha, do you believe this?

Verse 25, I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though they die. And whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?

[ 19 : 53 ] Not do you understand this? Not can you explain this? But do you trust me? That I am who I am, the resurrection and the life. And this question, do you trust me, is not just for Martha, it's for all of us.

Remember earlier, we saw that it's one thing to believe in Jesus' power, but another to trust his timing. Well, now Jesus brings it even closer. Like, it's one thing to believe he can do things for you, but it's another thing to entrust yourself to him.

Martha believed the right doctrine, but now Jesus is drawing something deeper out of her. Do you trust me when you don't understand me? When my timing confuses you? When it feels too late for a happy ending?

And I want you to notice Martha's answer here. It's not, yes, I believe, because I get it now. Thanks for explaining it to me, Lord. No, it's verse 27. Yes, Lord, I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God who has come into the world.

She's not saying, I believe you'll fix this, but simply, I believe in you. I trust in you. And that's real faith right there. So much more than right doctrine, it's right dependence.

[ 21 : 03 ] See, faith isn't having every answer, it's trusting a person. And if you're here this morning exploring Christianity, honestly seeking, hear this, Jesus is not asking you to turn your brain off.

No, bring your questions, bring your doubts, bring your objections, bring them to Alpha, Thursday night, 6.30, free dinner, fun discussion, all right? But please, if you really want to explore Christianity, if you really want to engage with Jesus on His terms and not simply on your own, as if He really might be the Lord, don't relate to Jesus only as an idea to critique.

Relate to Him as a person to encounter and embrace. And if not for any other reason, then to whom else will you go? What else or who else would claim to be the resurrection and the life?

And who else has done that and also changed the world with the story of Him raising Lazarus and with the story of Him and His own empty tomb? This is the truth He calls us to trust.

But get this, He isn't just coming toward us with truth as He did with Martha. This isn't a God who just commands us to trust Him and His power. No, He is at the same time a God who comes toward us with tears and tenderness.

[ 22 : 22 ] After Martha and Jesus' exchange, she goes, she gets her sister Mary, the teacher is here, He is asking for you, and whereas Martha went out to Jesus, Jesus asks for Mary, He invites her to Himself. And then when she comes to Him, she says the exact same words as her sister, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

But whereas Martha said this trying to piece various truths together in her head, Mary says this, not so much with truths on her mind, but with tears in her eyes. And verse 32 says that when she saw Him, she fell at His feet and wept, these same feet that she will later anoint with the pure nard of her dowry.

She covers these feet first in tears. But now notice how Jesus responds. To Martha, He dispensed teaching and truth, but for Mary, it's tenderness and tears.

Verse 33, when Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. The word here for deeply moved has a sense of outrage and indignation, anger at the curse of death and all the pain it inflicts upon the creation of

God, this creation that God loves.

It's this image of a snorting stallion flaring its nostrils in fury. It's probably what God felt in the Garden of Eden. When after Adam and Eve first succumbed to temptation and plunged the human race into sin and death, God was furious, but not first and foremost at them.

[ 23 : 43 ] No, He cursed the serpent first, with the very first, with the greatest, with the most irreversible, unredeemable curse. Because our God hates that which harms the ones He loves.

This is what Jesus feels about death. He hates it with deep emotion. And He has come to make war against death. But not only does He come with indignation and fury at death, but also with empathy and grief.

Verse 34, where have you laid Him? His first words to Mary and the mourners. In the Greek, it's only three words. Like, only three words He could utter. Where lay Him? So they say, come and see, Lord.

Come and see. Whereas Jesus' come and see is always an invitation to come and see abundant life. Theirs is an invitation to come and see death. Come and see the end. Come and see what can't be fixed.

Come and see what's too late. And as Jesus takes up this invitation to come and see death and despair, He not only snorts at their great and powerful enemy, but He enters their grief.

[ 24 : 51 ] This is the shortest and possibly the most poignant verse in all of the Scriptures. Verse 35, Jesus wept. And this is not just crying, not just sobbing.

In the Greek, the emphasis is on His tears. So even while knowing what He was about to do, even while having all the power in His pinky finger to change all these miserable circumstances, He doesn't strut in here like a gangster with swagger, with a smirk on His face.

Like, relax guys, I got this. It's all good. No, the one who said, I am the resurrection and the life is also the one who wept. Truth for Martha, tears for Mary.

And do you realize what this means? Well, first of all, it means that Jesus truly is the wonderful counselor, the Spirit-led counselor who knows exactly what we need and when we need it and who meets us where we are in all the diversity of our circumstances and our personalities and our needs.

But secondly, and more importantly, right here, when it tells us that the Son of God, even knowing what He was about to do, He still, with Mary and the others, wept like real, non-performative tears.

[ 26 : 01 ] This means that God is not indifferent to our grief. And man, this should blow our minds that the immovable, unchangeable, invulnerable God in Christ became vulnerable and even shed tears.

Reflect on that for a second, that God Himself shed tears and not just over His own wounds and pains but over others. Think about that for a second.

God, like imagine if you were God, if you were the Almighty, if you could choose never to cry or grieve or experience pain or suffering ever in the whole history of your existence, wouldn't you?

And yet here in Christ, when the Bible says that Jesus wept, what this is saying is that while God did have that choice for Himself, the choice to never cry, to never hurt, to never shed a tear, He did not take that choice for Himself.

He came to be God with us in every way, including with us in our sorrows. This isn't some far-off, detached deity. He is the God-man, Jesus, who wept with us and for us.

[ 27 : 19 ] And this tells us something we dare not miss, that even if we don't have answers for all the pain and suffering in this world, the answer cannot be that He is far away and out of touch.

The answer cannot be that He is not with us and for us. The answer cannot be that He does not love us. No. Jesus wept.

truth for Martha, tears for Mary. But here's the thing. If all Jesus brought were teachings about some supposedly future resurrection and life, and or if all Jesus came with were tears for our pain and love in His heart, what real comfort and hope would that actually bring?

See, we don't just need a God who teaches us about some future or merely spiritual hope, and we don't just need a God who empathizes with us in tears. No, we need a God who is strong enough to save us now and forever and who can defeat our great enemy, the final boss, death.

And this is where things begin to turn because see, Jesus didn't come all this way just to talk about resurrection and cry about death. No, He came to confront death as the resurrection and the life.

Whereas most of us try not to think about death, right?

[ 28 : 34 ] And rather successfully, thanks to all of our distractions, all of our technology, all of our preoccupations, we distract ourselves, we stay busy, we optimize our time, we build careers and portfolios and bucket lists.

As Ernest Becker wrote and argued in his 1973 Pulitzer Prize winner, *The Denial of Death*, we, you know, privileged, modern, Bay Area folks like us have really become masters at distracting ourselves from death.

But underneath it all, we all know what's there, the quiet fear that time is running out. But whereas most of us prefer to avoid death, Jesus here, He walks straight toward the one thing we spend most of our lives trying to avoid.

He walks toward that tomb. And verse 38 says, Jesus once more deeply moved, He came to the tomb, He doesn't avoid it, He doesn't soften it, He doesn't spiritualize it, He stands in front of death itself. And then, He says something shocking, take away that stone.

And Martha protests, Lord, by this time there is a bad odor. Translation, this is too far gone, this is irreversible, this is beyond fixing. Again, it's too late.

[ 29 : 41 ] What does Jesus say in verse 40? Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God? Like Martha, this was never about you, or Mary, or even Lazarus.

And there was never a second in which I, even with my tears, was not in control of the situation. It's always ever been about the glory of God. And now, let me show you. Verse 41 says, that just like He did at the feeding of the 5,000, He looked up.

He gave thanks. Father, I thank You that You have heard me. Apparently, He'd been talking to His Father about this already the whole time. I knew You always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here that they may believe that You sent me.

This is the whole purpose. Again, to reveal who He is and who sent Him. See, He's the main event. And it's all about His glory. And so, what He's about to do, this is just a sign.

And so, with a loud voice, He cries out, Lazarus, come out! And He did, by the word of His power and in collaboration with His Father in heaven. And thus, the story has gone from truth for Martha to tears for Mary to now triumph for Lazarus.

[ 30 : 56 ] And not just for Lazarus, but for everyone who is in Christ. Because see, when Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life, and then raises Lazarus here, He's not giving just a spiritual metaphor, He's issuing a preview.

A preview of what happens when resurrection Himself comes face to face with death. Jesus is saying, death does not get the final word. The tomb does not get the final word. Time does not get the final word.

I do. I am the Lord. Because see, if Jesus is the resurrection and the life, then there is no such thing as too late for Him. It's like when Gandalf says to Frodo that a wizard is never late nor early, but always arrives precisely when he means to.

Because Jesus is the resurrection and the life, it's never too late for Him to be the Lord of our dreams. Lazarus was four days dead, buried, mourned, stinking, and yet Jesus still says to him, come out.

And His invitation is to all of us to remove the stone, to open ourselves up to the possibility, the reality of real resurrection power in our lives now over all the things we feel are too late to fix.

[ 32 : 06 ] Do you hear God's word to you this morning that it is not too late for your story, it is not too late for your soul, it is not too late for your family, it is not too late for God to work in your life? No, resurrection means God does some of His best work when we think our story is over.

But do you believe this? Will you trust Him as your resurrection, as your eternal and abundant life? It's yours if you will have it.

He's yours if you will have Him. And it's completely free. It's completely free. Well, at least free for you and for me, not for Him.

Let me close with one last reason why you can trust and why you should trust Jesus as your resurrection and as your life, and it's this. What does resurrection presuppose?

Death. Not just Lazarus. Because John wants you to see something sobering here, the moment Lazarus comes out of the tomb, Jesus starts marching toward His own.

[ 33 : 12 ] Look at verse 45. Therefore, many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in Him. And wouldn't it be awesome if the story just ended there? But it doesn't. Verse 46 says, But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had

done.

Then verse 53, which is not printed for you, John says it plainly, So from that day on, they plotted to take His life. Do you realize what this means? The price of Lazarus' resurrection was the cost of Jesus' death.

This sign doesn't just create faith, it also creates fury. It forces a decision. Because once you see a man walk out of a tomb at the command of Jesus, you can't keep Jesus as just a nice teacher. You either fall down and worship Him or you try to get rid of Him. And Jesus knows it. He knows exactly what He's doing here. He knows that calling Lazarus out is like signing His own death warrant.

He knows He's only two miles from Jerusalem, right? Two miles closer to the cross. That's what it says here. And still He says, Take away the stone. Still He says, Lazarus, come out.

[ 34 : 17 ] Which means the tenderness of Jesus is not sentimental, it's costly. His tears are not the tears of someone who means well but can't help. His tears are the tears of a Savior who is about to step into the line of fire.

Because here's the deeper pattern of the gospel. Lazarus gets to come out because Jesus is willing to go in. Lazarus is unbound because Jesus will be bound. Lazarus gets his life back because Jesus will lay his life down.

And on the cross, Jesus doesn't merely sympathize with our grief. He enters the very thing that causes it. Sin, curse, death. The wages of sin is death and Jesus pays those wages for us with His blood.

He doesn't just stand outside the tomb and shout resurrection. He goes through death itself so that resurrection can become ours. So that He can truly say, I am the resurrection and the life.

He doesn't just claim it with His lips. He proves it with His blood. He seals it with His empty tomb. So will we trust Him? Will you trust Him?

[ 35 : 18 ] Will you take away that stone? Open yourself up to Him? Because the one who weeps with you is the one who walked into death for you and who walked out again with all who will hope in Him.

And that means it is never too late for Jesus to be Lord. And in particular, the Lord of your story, which He promises will end in His glory and our good if we will trust Him.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank You. There is no other God like You.

There is no God like our God. There is no rock like our rock. There is no Savior like our Lord and Savior who is the resurrection and the life. And who is the resurrection and the life because He went to death on a cross for us.

God, if we do not already trust Him, would You fill us with that kind of faith? Help us to make that comparison. What could be better? Who could be better?

[ 36 : 26 ] What other Savior is there out there? What other life is out there on offer that is better than the life that He offers us? Lord, turn our eyes to Him. Turn our hearts toward Him.