

John 11:28-44

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[0 : 0 0] Our scripture reading today is taken from the book of John, chapter 11, verses 28 to 44, and can be found on page 994 of the White Bibles provided. Again, the scripture reading is John, chapter 11, verses 28 through 44, found on page 994 of the White Bibles.

Please remain standing for the reading of God's Word. When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, the teacher is here and is calling for you.

And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary rise up quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

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

And he said, where have you laid him? They said to him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. So the Jews said, see how he loved him. But some of them said, could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?

[1 : 2 1] Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.

Jesus said to her, did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God? So they took away the stone, and Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around that they may believe that you sent me.

And when he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out. The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips and his face wrapped with a cloth.

Jesus said to them, unbind him and let him go. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Last week, we looked at the first half of this chapter, and we considered, what is it that we are to make of life in the wake of death?

This week, I want to take the second half and consider what are we to make of a dead man now brought to life?

[2 : 5 5] Put simply, what you have here is a dead man walking. Last week, we understood in the first half that when it comes to death, the sisters are dealing with it.

And the disciples demonstrated the range of what we make of it. But in the second half, the character of Jesus is on the forefront of the text.

I want to talk this morning about Jesus. I want to think not so much about what it is you make of death and life, but what Jesus makes of death and what John will make of the raising of Lazarus to life.

What does Jesus make of death? First of all, he enters the pain of it. If I was to put our text simply before you, verses 28 through 37, you see that Jesus fully enters into the pain of death.

That whatever the Bible teaches about him being God, whatever it says about him being some eternal word, whatever it means about his sovereign control over all things and the creator of life itself, Christianity is not some religious, pietistic, philosophical idea that is divorced from an understanding and an entering into the pain of death.

[4 : 45] There's very little difference between what Martha said to Jesus and what Mary said to Jesus. Namely, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

But the difference as it moves in the latter half of the chapter from the former is not that you merely have Jesus saying something as he did to Martha about him being resurrection and life, but in Mary's end of it, he enters into the pain of it all.

Verse 33, When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

And they said, Where have you laid him? They said to him, Lord, come and see. And there it is. You're familiar with it. The shortest verse in all the scriptures. You've at least got one memorized.

Jesus wept. He enters into the pain of it. He's not immune to the tragedy concerning it.

[5 : 56] There's something, you just have to say it, emotional about it. I know we like to be well healed.

And I know we want our faith to stand on reasonable grounds. And it does. And I know that many of us are adverse to the outward exercise of an emotive quality concerning anything in life.

But when it comes to the most consequential thing of life, death itself, Jesus wept. He shed tears.

He mourned over it. This idea of mourning is interesting. It's related to consoling.

Notice in the text that earlier we saw in verse 19, Martha and Mary had, in one sense, probably hired some Jews, professional individuals who would attend to the days after a death.

[7 : 08] And they came to console them. There's the word, console them concerning their brother. In verse 31, those same Jews, when they saw Mary rise, they followed supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Those Jews who which came to console her. Now you have to understand that there are documents that are in our possession today that existed and were written between what we have of the Old Testament and what we have of the New Testament.

And they began to outline the practices of the Jewish people as they applied the law. And in some of those, they would detail what to do when someone died.

And even a small, poor family, when someone died, would hire two flutists, flautists, as it were. And they would play.

And they would also hire a professional mourner. Someone who would wail. Someone who would weep. Someone that would let the surrounding community know, Death has touched one of our families behind this door.

[8 : 24] Paid mourners. Mourning to console. Jesus is the unpaid mourner.

At the graveside of Lazarus. Jesus is the one who didn't require payment, but entered into the pain of Mary and Martha in some measure through his own weeping.

Now, why do I make that point? I make that because it's good for you to know that Jesus, in Jesus, I don't know what you think of him today, but in Jesus, you have one who is able to enter into your deepest sorrows.

In Jesus, you have an empathetic ear. And in this case, a tear-stained face.

Now, I know that if I could see your face in spiritual alignment with the sorrows that you have experienced, and if your tears were like indelible ink that would mark you, every face here would have tears indelibly marked upon your visage.

[10 : 04] And this text ought to encourage you. What does Jesus think of death? When you sit alone in the midst of the night and weep, you ought to consider that in Jesus you have the unpaid mourner.

You have the non-professional consoler. You have one who enters into the fullness of life in all of its tragedy and you are not alone.

And believe me, the Scripture says that he sits at the right hand of the Father and he hears you and he'll intercede for you. That he's compassionate towards you.

that he cares for you. That in the midst of your urban isolation and your individual woe and your inconsolable heart, Jesus wept.

It is not a humorous verse as much as it is one that shows the great honor of his participation with us in all of the frailties of life.

[11 : 15] I want you to know that. And for some of you, maybe that's the whole point of the sermon. Really, Pastor, in Jesus, do I have one who understands me? Do I have one who would enter into grief with me?

Do I have one that would come to me, walk alongside me, sit by me, weep for me? Yes, you do.

Jesus wept. not only does he enter into the pain of it by way of consolation, he enters into the pain of it through this intense visceral agony.

Look at the way John puts it. Verse 33, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. Or, verse 38, deeply moved again.

Now, this is an unusual word in the New Testament, but it carries with it the idea of this internal, visceral, almost on the verge of anger.

[12 : 29] It's not merely sorrow over death, but angry with death. It's used at times of a horse who's snorting under the exertion of its movement.

Jesus, when he sees death, enters into the pain of it that way as well. In other words, he is one who understands that when we consider death, we are actually in bondage to it, and it makes him viscerally upset.

Death is seen by Jesus as a great enemy, and something or someone to be confronted. Death is for Jesus a bondage that is almost inescapable.

In other words, he thinks that earth has this inescapable grip on us that angers his soul. That this should not be, says Jesus.

that this tight, inescapable reality that you will face ought to be loosened.

[13 : 46] And he's upset with it. I play a game with my grandkids just to give you a little breather here. I call it the tightness game.

I've got grandkids and I'm going to have another one. Maybe by the end of the week, Lord willing, we might have another one. But at any rate, you don't really need to hear about. But some of my grandkids like to come to me and say, Grandpa, let's play the tightness game.

And I say, okay, that's fine. So they crawl up in my lap and I act all loose. And I tell them, I say, I'm only going to get tight on you and trap you if you try to get away.

But as long as you just sit in my lap, we're good. waiting. And suddenly I feel them moving.

They're trying to slide off me. And just before they escape my grip, I capture them. And they laugh. Because Grandpa's grip holds them tight.

[14 : 54] Death holds us tight. It is inescapable. And that fact was angering to Jesus.

What does Jesus make of death? He enters into the pain of it. But the second half, beginning of verse 38, he also in this text will demonstrate a power over it.

There you go. There's a power over it in 38 through 44. Look at what happens. He sees the cave he notices the stone and in 39 he says, take away the stone.

And Martha, of course, knows that he intends to attempt something with death, which for her was incomprehensible.

people. And so she says, Lord, it's been four days now. That stone, once removed, will emit the putrid reality of death.

[16 : 14] You know that when you and I pass away, when that moment happens, and our heart stops pumping, and our brain ceases acting, our blood will begin to settle.

And then over a short period of time, that settling will then emerge in an actual physiological hardening of the body. But without embalming, eventually then, over a few days, three to eight days, that hardening of the body will then give way to a softening of it.

And all that which hardened will be soft. And she knew, not by some science class where she did her work, but she knew the reality of life and death, and without embalming, the intestinal rot, the bacteria within, that all of that would have been in full play by four days in.

Jesus says to her, did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

In other words, I plan on doing something with death. He plans on intruding into this inescapable grip.

[17 : 38] That is a prophetic response of Jesus. And notice, for you and me, we see things in order to believe things. But Jesus says, I tell you that if you believed, you would see.

And the belief is an element of faith that's attached to the action by which we have understood the evidence to play out. And so what Jesus says here is you are going to see something, and what you're going to see, notice it, the glory of God.

Now we've got to stop there for a moment. We've got to stop there because this phrase, the glory of God is worth lingering on.

And it's an important phrase, not only for Jesus but for John. So this is a moment in the sermon, if you're not used to listening to sermons, this is a moment in the sermon where I'm going to try to explain something to you, which means that your mind's got a fire rather than just the emotive waiting for a story to re-engage.

But this is worth explanation. The glory of God is what's going to be seen in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Notice back at verse 4, Jesus had already come on to this before he ever arrived at the cemetery.

[19 : 01] Verse 4, when Jesus heard that Lazarus was ill unto death, he said, this illness does not lead to death, it is for the glory of God so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

So then it says in verse 6, he stayed two days longer. In other words, Jesus intentionally delayed during the illness so that he would die because he intended to raise him and in raising him somehow the glory of God would be manifest or seen.

This is consistent then with this thought that what Jesus is about to do when he exercises power over death, he is about to reveal to all of us the glory of God, the weight, the majesty, the beauty, the splendor, the significance of God that he can bring life from death.

Now, this is actually what these signs are doing in John. Let me just take you back one more look. You remember the very first sign, chapter 2 and verse 11. In chapter 2, verse 11, when Jesus turned the water into wine, the Bible writer says that this was the first of his signs.

He did it Canaan and Galilee and manifested that as he brought to light his glory. So the signs done in John manifest or bring to light God's glory.

[20 : 38] Indeed, go back one more page to John 1. Because John the writer has understood his own self-understanding of Jesus is connected to the idea of Jesus and God's glory.

How does he introduce him? Notice verse 14. John the writer says, verse 16.

For from his fullness we have received grace for the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus. No one has seen God, the only God, who's at the Father's side.

He has made him known. Notice what John is doing. John is saying, if I want my reader to see the glory of God pass by, my gospel will have Jesus walking across the page.

Which, according to John, was a distinct revelation concerning God's glory than what Moses ever had.

[21 : 58] What is John doing when he says, Jesus is the glory of God in distinction from Moses and the law and the glory that he received.

Stay with me. Back in numbers, I'm sorry, in Exodus, there is a moment after the golden calf where Moses wanted to see God's glory.

He's like, I want to see God's glory. And God did pass by Moses and he saw the backside of glory. And when he saw the backside of glory, God revealed to Moses his name and then he said, Israel will see my glorious works.

Literally, in the Greek Septuagint, the glorious things. the glorious things will be seen by my people. And those signs then delivered people from Egypt.

So that in Exodus 34, I'm getting close, coming back to Lazarus. But in Exodus 34, God says, you want to know what my glory looks like? It looks like me casting out the enemy from the land and calling out my people from bondage in Egypt.

[23 : 20] Those are actually the words he uses. My glory is seen when I call my people out from Egypt and loosen them from bondage.

And when I cast out the enemy that has inescapably defeated them. Now, with that in place, come back to John 11 and listen afresh to what Jesus does when he says they're going to see the glory of God.

He invokes the name of God and then he says with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out. That is like, not only is he before Abraham was, I am, it's whatever Moses was, he is more.

As Moses said to the people, I am bringing you out. Jesus says, Lazarus, come out. He's casting out the enemy of death in the midst of his people.

So that he actually goes at the very end, notice it, what he says. Jesus said to him, unbind him and let him go.

[24 : 37] This echo of Moses before Pharaoh whose calling was to say, let my people go. They are to leave the bondage of Egypt that they have been inescapably tied to for 400 years and they're going to be my own.

And I'm going to bring them into my land and I'm going to cast the enemy out and they're going to go free. They're going to have life in me. All of that, all of that, glory of the old is now enhanced in the glory of Jesus as Jesus stands before a tomb and says, Lazarus, come out.

And then he says, unbind him, loosen him, chains off him, although linen wraps at this moment, and then let him go. In other words, dead man walking through the ministry of Christ is a glory of such unsurpassing strength that it goes way beyond what Moses does with Israel and what Jesus does for Lazarus, he can do for you.

He can do for me. You and I may not see the end of this week, but though we die, yet shall we live if, if John's record is actually trustworthy.

Could it be? Could it be? that you're not reading a fictitious account made up by some willy-nilly band of followers who are trying to believe in the unimaginable, but that this is actually a recorded early-century document that others would have attested to as an act within human history?

[26 : 35] I mean, there's certainly signs to it. Now, I'm moving. I'm closing. I'm moving from his pain of it and his power over it to John's purpose with it.

And I'll shut it down on this. Jesus did this, verse 42, that they may believe that you sent me. And which happened, verse 45, many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary, these professional consolers, when they saw this, it says they believed in him.

If you look across the page now, there are a lot of people who are claiming this was a historical act that took place. There was a man named Lazarus, and this occurred. And by the time you get to chapter 12 and verse 17, you begin to see that there was a connection between all of this and what eventually would take Jesus out.

The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to bear witness. There are people, people in history that were bearing witness that this was an actual event.

And what John wants you to know is that if you will likewise believe in it, you can have life the life that Christ alone can give.

[28 : 00] According to church tradition, Lazarus, dead man walking, will be appointed by the apostle Paul as bishop over Cyprus, and he will move to the island and take up residence in, I think the city's name is Lacona or something equivalent.

Today, from what I understand, not having traveled there myself, there is a church over which Lazarus was purported to have led, and it indicates on his tombstone, Lazarus, four days dead, friend of Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. when I'm four days dead, I'm going to be more alive than you ever saw me face to face.

When my body begins to rot in that ground, yet shall I live. There will come a day when he returns at that trumpet sound and all that soil that you and I have stood over in cemeteries across Chicago is going to give way.

And a resurrection is going to occur. And a reunion between body and spirit and a standing before the judgment seat of Christ. And those who believe, those who have faith, those who say, I have looked at the evidence and have come to think that Jesus is who John says he is.

[29 : 51] He's more than Moses. He's my life. He can do for me before God what he did for Israel before Egypt.

For those, your death is but your entrance into glory.

Our Heavenly Father, help us to get right what to make a death. And thank you that Jesus helps us get right, that he has power over it unto life.

May we see his glory through faith and embrace the word of Christ. May many here even today say for the first time in their life, I believe.

I believe. I believe. I believe. I believe Jesus is who the writer says he is. I believe.

[31 : 00] Lord, grant life in his name. Amen.