

Resurrection and the Glory of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 July 2024

Preacher: Les Martin

[0:00] The glory of God is something that we think about, we sing about it, we hear definitions of it, such as God's glory is the sum total of all that he is, his very essence is glory.

There are Old Testament and New Testament references of God's glory. God's glory was seen in the spectacle of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, the time of Moses.

Moses, those who were wandering in the wilderness witnessed it every day in the form of a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night.

Cloud always telling him where to go or where to stop, where to set up camp, where to move on. All of that, a visible image, as it were, of the presence of God.

First in the tabernacle, later in the temple, the glory of God in the form of a cloud filled those structures, providing a visual image again of this invisible essence and presence of God.

[1:03] Glory of God is seen in the New Testament, in Jesus, in his teaching, in his miracles, the miracles that he performed as recorded by the gospel writers. On the Mount of Transfiguration, you recall that Jesus, as he's standing there, begins to glow.

His essential glory begins to shine forth. When John wrote his gospel in the very first chapter, he said, And the word became flesh and dwelled among us.

And we have seen his glory. Glory as of the only Son from the Father. I assume that John was including Jesus' miracles as well as his glorified state after the resurrection and what he saw.

The record of the glory of the Lord Jesus was given that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, we might have life through his name. The glory of God is made known through the Son of God.

When Jesus had received word that Lazarus was ill, he told his disciples, This illness does not lead to death.

[2:10] It is for the glory of God so that the Son of God may be glorified through it. Somewhere in that conversation with Martha, Jesus had said something earlier, apparently, for in today's text, Jesus asked this rhetorical question.

Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God? If you want to turn your Bibles to John chapter 11, you can turn there.

We're going to look at just the last portion of that account of Lazarus. And I put some notes in your bulletin. Kelly, put those for us. And they'll help you follow.

And if you don't have a Bible with you, the text of what I'm dealing with is actually printed on the back of your bulletin. So along with Mary and along with Martha and the disciples and everyone else at the funeral, we are about to be exposed to the glory of God.

That glory will be made known as a result of obedience to three commands that Jesus gave in this text. The first command was take away the stone.

[3:20] So let me read that portion of the text. Verse 38. 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. Or if you have King James, he stinketh.

All right? Pretty raw. But that's the idea. The rest of the text, that section of the text says, 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?

And so they took away the stone. It's interesting to me in verse 39 that there is somewhat of a hesitation by Martha when Jesus makes that command.

I think that Martha didn't really have confidence that Jesus knew what would be exposed when the tomb was opened. I mean, from her perspective, that looked like a really bad idea.

[4:28] I mean, generally, Jews did not embalm their dead. So the spices that were used were used to mask the putrid odor of decay, which would be evident very quickly.

Four days was a long time. Now, there were some people who had the superstition that the spirit of dead people would hang around for up to three days after death.

But after that, there would be no return to mortal life. Now, that isn't true, but that's what many believed then and, frankly, even believe now. With Lazarus being four days in the tomb, any suspicion or superstition, I should say, from what Jesus was about to do would be removed. Lazarus was dead.

But the challenge is there by Jesus. For hesitation, or let's just call it what it is, unbelief, stood in the way of the display of the glory of God.

[5:53] But the challenges there by Jesus, the words of Jesus are connected to what he had said earlier, actually, in the same chapter in verse 4 in regard to the glory of God.

In verse 4 of chapter 11, he says this, Think about that.

This illness is for the glory of God so that the Son of God may be glorified through it. And now he says to Martha in our text, Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God? The glory of God wasn't on her radar, but it soon would be. So Jesus was about to demonstrate what he had announced to Martha a little bit earlier, that he was the resurrection and the life, and that the people were about to witness the display of the glory of God.

Jesus' statement, though probably not understood at the time, seemed to be enough for the command to be carried out. So, people moved the stone. The text says, So they took away the stone, and what they saw or smelled was not told.

[7:15] That's not really important, though it is interesting to speculate. I mean, I'm guessing what they saw and smelled was not good. Lazarus was still dead when the stone was removed.

He was not mostly dead. He was dead. What they saw, and at that time, again, is not told, but the decay had not been halted.

Lazarus was dead, and he had been dead for four days. There was no airbrushing the situation. For a brief time, nothing happened. The open tomb remained quiet.

I have no idea what the people were expecting Jesus to do, but I don't think they were prepared for what was about to happen. Now, with the tomb opened, the next command was the command to the dead guy, Lazarus.

Lazarus, come out. But before Jesus gives that command, he prays. According to our text, it says this. Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

[8:21] 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. When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

And the man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Before Jesus gives this command, he prays.

And it's a prayer of thanksgiving. This was, by the way, not a request. Most of the time when we pray, we're asking for things. We're making requests. This was not a request by Jesus.

This was a recognition of the Father's will and thanksgiving for the Father's provision. This was already the plan. Jesus in the flesh always did the will of the Father.

And this was the will of the Father to make his glory known and to glorify his Son. What Jesus was about to do would accomplish that very purpose. Many would believe that he had been sent by the Father and they would then see the glory of God.

[9:25] This was recognition that the Father always hears the Son. Not only does Jesus acknowledge that the Father heard him, but he also acknowledged, I knew that you always hear me.

This was recognition that what Jesus was about to do would result in people believing who he was, the one who was sent by the Father. This prayer was to the Father, but it was also a public prayer. Jesus intended other people to hear it. There was a message in there for them. Sometimes, it happens in church some, sometimes when we pray publicly, we also are praying and giving messages to the congregation.

Sometimes that's very appropriate. Sometimes not. But here Jesus, as he's praying, he's talking to the Father, but he's also talking to the people around him.

He wants them to hear his prayer to the Father. And after the prayer of thanksgiving, there was this impossible command that's given. Lazarus, come out.

[10:32] Dead people don't respond. We know that. They don't respond. Command all you want, but they are not going to do anything unless Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life, would call them.

I work part-time in a funeral home. I look like I do, maybe. I don't know. So, I've witnessed dozens and dozens and dozens of funerals.

I've never seen somebody crawl out of the casket yet. It doesn't happen. When you're dead, you're dead. And this line cannot be crossed.

Death is separation of the spirit from the body. And when that separation happens, nothing can restore mortal life, except, in this case, the one who holds the keys to death.

Dead people don't respond. And there's a reason for that. They don't respond because they can't respond. They're dead. Now, think a little bit about this. This gets a little bit weird, maybe, but think about this.

[11:46] I was reading a commentary recently, and this person helps to get the picture here. He said, this kind of divine power, this power of Jesus, as he calls Lazarus to come out, this kind of divine power stops the progress of decay, reverses rigor mortis, pours new life into rotted organs, starts a bloodless, decomposing heart, beating and pumping fresh new blood to every organ and every limb.

The kind of power that creates a brand new body that creates blood out of nothing and makes it flow fast and fresh. This is the kind of power that takes sightless, decomposed eyes and gives new tissue, new nerve, new vision, that takes a non-functioning, decomposed mass of brain tissue and recreates it so that it can think and feel and move and speak.

It's a staggering demonstration of power of a man four days dead. Dead people can't respond unless Jesus brings them to life.

And when he did, when he did call in this situation, the dead guy lives. So the man who died came out. Just process that for a minute.

He's dead, dead for four days. He's in the tomb. It's a funeral service. Jesus has to move the tomb, the stone, calls his name, he walks out.

[13:22] All the way back in John chapter five, actually Jesus had said, truly, truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of Man.

Do not marvel at this. For an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out. Those who have done good to resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

So what was all of this really about? I mean, ultimately, this was not so much about the raising of Lazarus as it was the glory of God.

I mean, think about it for a minute. This was not a great blessing for Lazarus. He was brought back, presumably from paradise, to an earthly life, and he would have to die again.

[14:31] It was, at best, a temporary blessing for his sisters to have him back, but there would be another grieving process later. This was a picture taken out of reality, the reality of physical life, to illustrate what God does in relation to spiritual life.

Lazarus was dead. Lazarus was unable to respond. There was no hope. But when Jesus came and called his name, that which was impossible happened.

Lazarus came back to life. He didn't decide to come alive. He didn't negotiate with Jesus about coming to life. He didn't believe in order to be raised.

When Jesus called his name, what did he do? He did what he couldn't do. Namely, he comes to life and walks out of the tomb. See, we are dead in our sin, and nothing can change that.

We can't respond. We're dead. But when Jesus calls, there's no hesitation. We are quickened. We come alive. The former death and decay are gone.

[15:43] We are new creations in Christ Jesus. The miracle of resurrection to mortal life for Lazarus was only an illustration of the glory of God evidenced by eternal life in Jesus.

Remember why John wrote the book. Toward the end of the book, in chapter 20, he says, these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and by believing, you might have what?

Life through his name. So Lazarus came out of the grave, and then Jesus gives a final command here. Unbind him and let him go.

Why did he say that? I'm guessing that he gave those instructions for a couple of reasons. One, because the people were, I think, frozen in stunned observation.

I mean, think about it. What would you do if someone emerged from the tomb who had been dead for a long time, and he comes walking out still wrapped in the grave cloth?

[16:48] What would you do? If you didn't run away, you would probably stand there in stunned unbelief. I think that's what we have here.

The people didn't know what to make of it. So Jesus calls to them to unbind Lazarus and let him go. Beyond the obvious, is there anything else that we should get from that command?

I'm going to suggest something here that may seem a little odd, but I'm going to call this the call to care and feeding. By that I mean this.

Only God can grant life. Bottom line, God can do whatever he wants to do, and he does. But God also gives us the privilege and the responsibility to do certain things in concert with what he does. See, God uses his word in conjunction with his spirit to bring life to sinners. That's regeneration. For those of you who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, you're saved, born again, whatever term you want to use there, you belong to him, you were regenerated at some point in your life.

[17:58] As it were, you were dead like Lazarus and he called your name and you embraced him by faith. You did that because he regenerated you. He made you alive in Christ.

Salvation is entirely the work of God, but he uses people to disseminate his message. That's why we're told to sow the seed of the gospel.

That's why we're told to go and tell. That's why we're told to make disciples. Here, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, all Jesus doing, but he calls the people to remove the grave clothes so Lazarus can walk.

Jesus alone brings spiritually dead people to life, but he gives us the privilege of caring for these new believers and teaching them and helping them so they can walk in their newfound faith in Christ.

So as Lazarus came out of the tomb, he was now alive, but some of the things that covered the deadness and the stench were still attached. They were a distraction from what was otherwise this miraculous life now on display.

[19:09] So it is with us. We were dead, not just four days, but we were dead spiritually and really had never been alive. But Jesus called our name and we came forth, alive in him.

Everything about us was new, but some of the wrappings of the past were still attached. They needed to go. They served no purpose. The beauty of life was obscured by the rags of death.

So Jesus asked the people to help their friend. God alone brings life, but he uses people to make it visible. It's part of the work of the body of Christ to help one another walk without hindrances.

We all still have some grave clothes that need to be removed. All of us. May we not resist those who are trying to help us and may we not turn away from those who need our help.

So when we work together, God's glory is fully on display. He's still calling, unbind him, and let him go. Now there's more to this, I think, that we need to see and apply, but let me just conclude with a few observations in regard to this miracle and the glory of God.

[20:23] First of all, the glory of God is seen in the granting of life from death. This account from John, chapter 11, listen, it really happened.

This was a real-life, historical thing, all right? Sometimes when we read the Bible, I think some people think that, for whatever reason, that this was just a story, it didn't happen. No, this happened.

This was real. This happened around 30 AD, and all this took place. But it's also an illustration of God's glory in the granting of eternal life to people who are spiritually dead.

What better way to teach the concept of what we cannot see by showing us something that we can see? That's what we have here. But I think there's more, not just that we see something of the glory of God in the granting of life from the death, but also the idea that the glory of God is seen in the demonstration of this whole resurrection account.

Jesus taught in John 5, as I read earlier, that a day was coming when the graves would be open, and those who belonged to him would be raised and would be forever with him in glory, never to die again.

[21:38] And those who did not belong to him, they also would be raised, but raised to endure judgment forever apart from him. It's John 5. Now, this miracle of Lazarus was a picture of what will happen at the end of the age.

For example, the Apostle Paul would later write 1 Thessalonians 4, as he described something of that. Or 1 Corinthians 15. Now, these bodies, are you ready?

These, pinch yourself, okay? These bodies, these very bodies, this flesh, one day, if the Lord delays his coming, we will die. We will be buried, cremated, something.

We will be put away, alright? But, someday, these bodies will be raised. Right? That's amazing. But that's not something even new to the New Testament. In fact, if you go all the way back to the time of Job, who probably lived during the time of Abraham, I mean, a long time ago, and knew very little about the whole plan and purpose of God and sending the Lord Jesus and all of that, listen to what he says.

[22:51] This is phenomenal. For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last, he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh, destroyed, yet in my flesh, I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold and not another.

That's amazing. Later, the Apostle Paul would kind of pick up that idea and share it with many, particularly, I'm thinking of the Philippian church. He said this, but our citizenship is in heaven, and from it, we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Keep in mind that the miracle of raising Lazarus was not just an illustration of our resurrection, but it was also a reminder and a prelude to the resurrection of Jesus.

In just a couple of weeks, Jesus would be crucified and buried, but on the third day, he would rise from the dead, but not like Lazarus merely to mortal life, but to immortality, to glory, glorified.

The miracle glorified, this miracle in John 11 glorified God in anticipation of what would soon happen in regard to Jesus, the one who is the resurrection and the life.

[24:35] And finally this, the glory of God is seen in the response of the people. Jesus told Martha in verses 25 and 26 of John 11, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. And then he asked her an interesting question. Do you believe this?

And she affirmed that she did. And then in verse 40, he says, he asked Martha this, did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

Because she believed in him, she was able to see his glory. Many who had come to mourn Lazarus' death ended up believing in the Lord Jesus. And they came, they came away from all of that.

They came, they came weeping, they left rejoicing. They too believed and they too recognized the glory of God. And God was glorified in that.

[25:40] But there were others who saw the same miracle. I'm sure they were blown away by that. How could you not be? But they didn't believe that Jesus was who he said he was.

In fact, you know what they did? They ran to the religious leaders to tell them what Jesus had done. And though their intention actually was to undermine and destroy Jesus, even what they were doing would ultimately result in the glory of God, though they would never see it.

Without knowing it, they would carry out the will of God in bringing Jesus to the cross that he might accomplish his work for the salvation of many. In the words of Jesus, did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

When John recorded the life of Jesus, he showed his readers Jesus' glory. And when we believe in him as the Christ, the son of the living God, and realize that it is Jesus, and in Jesus, and in him alone that we have eternal life, we will, in the words of the Apostle Paul, behold his glory.

And as we do, Paul said this in 2 Corinthians, he is at work transforming us by his glory in order that we might be like him.

[27:10] This is an account about the glory of God. In some ways, Lazarus is a bit player in this great text. He was the object to illustrate God's glory.

When the disciples saw things, when people saw things, I should just say, when people saw things that Jesus did, they were amazed at the miracles and so forth, but they never saw the glory until they trusted him.

When we trust Jesus, we suddenly see his glory. We suddenly realize all that he is and all that he's doing and we should be overwhelmed by that.

And so we come together on Sunday mornings and we worship God because he is a glorious God and we have seen his glory, as John said, and we worship him. What a great and glorious God he is.

It is about him, isn't it? And so, as we close this time together, may our focus be on this God of glory who has given us this incredible opportunity to be in Christ Jesus and to one day see him in his glorious state face to face.

[28:31] Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word and thank you for this text. How we allow things so much to cloud our attention or sometimes hindered by things that ought not to be in our lives.

I pray that you would help us to see more clearly daily who you are, to see your glory, and to be overwhelmed by it and may you continue to transform us by your glory.

Be with each one here. Grant your mercies and your grace today and may there be frequent times of considering you, even today, as a glorious Savior and Lord, as a glorious God and King, as a glorious one who will one day bring us into your very glorious presence.

In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen. Amen.