

The Raising of Lazarus

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[0:00] You may be seated. As I mentioned in my prayer, we're in John chapter 11. If you want to turn to your Bibles right now, it's on page 1066 of your pew Bible.

And as you're turning there, has anybody recognized the name Jonathan Edwards? Jonathan Edwards is known, most well known for his sermon, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. But over the course of two years of his life, he wrote a number of what he calls the resolutions. There's 70 resolutions. And he would weekly read these resolutions so that he could live fully for Jesus.

The thing about it is he wrote the first 21 when he was at the tender age of 17. And then he wrote the rest when he was 18. Listen to these three.

17-year-old. Resolution 9. Resolved. To think much on all occasions of my dying and of the common circumstances which attend death.

[1:09] Or number 17. Resolved. That I will live so as I shall wish I had done when I come to die. Or when he was 18.

Resolution 43. Resolved. Never henceforth. Till I die. To act as if I were in any way my own. But entirely and altogether God's.

Teenager. Which becomes evident as you read through the resolutions. This man is given to the Lord. And it doesn't seem like he fears death.

For us, it's kind of a different story. We tend to fear death, don't we? We, when we think about our dying, we can get a little nervous.

In fact, we have come up with our own language for it. Listen to some of the words and phrases we use for death. He's no longer with us. She passed away.

[2:11] He expired. She's in a better place. Death is harsh. We don't like being confronted by it.

Let alone our own deaths. So when you think about your own death, where does your mind go? Are you kind of like this? La, la, la, la, la.

I'm not listening. Or do you go logistics? I want to have everything lined up so when I die, those who come after me, they're all set up. That's what you focus on.

Or maybe when you think about the process of dying, you start thinking, well, I don't want to die that way. But what happens after you breathe your last?

What is in store for you and me? After we breathe our last? Here's the truth of it. Unless Jesus returns, everyone in this room will die.

[3:21] Everyone. We will all breathe our last breath. And this morning, Jesus has good news.

Both in something he says and something he does. It's good news for those who are facing death. John 11 is the account when Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.

It is the seventh sign of the book of John, of John's gospel. And in this account, this whole chapter, all 57 verses, it unfolds in four scenes.

Scene one is a surprise. Scene two is a confrontation. Scene three is glory. Give me a glory. Oh, man. Scene one. And then scene four is a targeting.

What Jesus says and does in this passage will help you anticipate your own death. But not in fear. Less and less fear. In more and more hope.

[4:25] Trust. Trust. Because Jesus has authority over death. He has authority over your death. So let's look at scene one, a surprise.

Because of the amount of verses we got to cover, I'm just going to be summarizing things. And I'm going to ask you just to kind of hold on as we go through, all right? So scene one, verses one through 16.

If you remember last week, Jesus had this confrontation with the Pharisees over two titles. Christ and the Son of God. And they seek to arrest him.

So Jesus bolts. He leaves. It's not his time to die. So Jesus is out of town, out of Jerusalem. And that's where we pick up in verse 11. I'll just read these first five verses.

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. We'll read that account next week.

[5 : 24] Well, their brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to Jesus, who was out of town, saying, Lord, he who you love is ill. But when Jesus heard it, 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. Anyway, so Jesus is across the Jordan when Lazarus gets sick.

And we're introduced to Lazarus. We're introduced to his sisters, Mary and Martha. This was a sibling group who lived in Bethany. And Jesus had a particularly unique relationship with them. What we're going to see as this unfolds is that Martha and Mary are two very different women. And they have a similar question for Jesus.

In verse 5, I just want you to note, now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So right out of the gate, John is helping us to see that Jesus' motives in this whole story is one of love and of God's glory.

[6 : 35] Well, in verse 3, Mary and Martha send word to Jesus, he whom you love is ill. It's getting at a unique relationship between Jesus and Lazarus. They must have been buddies.

But this isn't just kind of like an FYI. So don't you know, Jesus? This is Jesus. Lazarus is seriously ill.

We know you can heal him. Would you please come? And so Jesus responds in verse 4. And now he's talking to his disciples. This illness does not lead to death.

It's for the glory of God. So that the Son of God may be glorified through it. What Jesus knows in advance, before any of this significantly unfolds, is that what's going to happen is for his glory.

There's going to be a revelation. There's going to be something spectacular. Jesus is going to be revealed. The Son of God is going to be revealed in a new way.

[7 : 38] It's the seventh sign of the Gospel of John. Think of that word glorify. As a revelation of something amazing about God.

And what Jesus is saying here is that the Son of God is going to be exalted. He's going to be made new through this illness. In verses 5 and 6, we again read, Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

But there's a connection. Look at it. Jesus loved them so because he loved them.

Because he loved him. When he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Now that's surprising. Because I thought, hey, Jesus, if he really is your buddy, if you got word that he's sick and it's serious, boy, wouldn't you just pack up and go?

But in love, he stayed two more days. There's something else operating here. We know that he loves them, but he's waiting.

[8 : 54] And then there is this whole thing. It's about God's glory. In verses 7 and 8, we start learning what he's been waiting for.

Then after this, he said to his disciples, Let's go. Now Judea is home of Jerusalem, also Bethany. And his disciples in verse 8 have an objection.

Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you. And are you going there again? It hasn't been a week, Jesus. They were looking to kill you. Why do you want to go back? Reasonable. Then Jesus says, Are there not 12 hours in the day?

What he's getting at is this. His time on earth is coming to an end. And he is going to walk in the light. He's going to do his Father's will. Those who walk in the darkness don't do God's will, but those who walk in the light do.

And he's going to be committed. And he has an appointment in Bethany at a tomb. And then there's this classic misunderstanding.

[10 : 07] After saying these things, Jesus says, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep. I've got to go wake him up. Disciples are like, Lord, if he's asleep, that's good. He needs to recover. He needs to get his sleep.

And Jesus is like, You're totally missing what I'm saying. It's this misunderstanding we've been seeing through the Gospel of John. And Jesus says very plainly, Verse 14, Lazarus has died. And then he says, And for your sake, I'm glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him. He's not glad Lazarus died. He's glad at the opportunity this is affording his disciples to see his glory on display.

And so, of all people, Thomas, as in doubting Thomas, chapter 20, Let's go die with him! Nobody understands what's going on here. Nobody knows what's coming. Why doesn't he go? There's something bigger and better that he's after.

[11:13] There's something bigger and better that he's going to reveal. This is about his glory. I want to point something out. Nowhere, nowhere here, do you have any sense that Jesus asked Lazarus' permission to do what he's about to do.

Nowhere does he ask Martha or Mary if it's okay, Hey, guys, like a month earlier, I'm going to do something in a month that's going to be really difficult. You just hang in there with me. He's doing what he wants to do.

There's something else that I want to see. Have you ever prayed to the Lord? Have you ever sent word to the Lord? Lord, I'm regularly praying for a couple people in our family that I dearly love.

Lord, would you do this? Please do this. I know you can do this. But he doesn't do it.

He doesn't show up. Anybody experience that in the room? Something else is going on, gang. He's working off a different economy.

[12:33] What we know from this text that he loves his own. And he's working for his glory. There's a greater glory coming.

That's scene one. Jesus surprisingly stays put. Scene two, Jesus is confronted. He's confronted by Lazarus' two sisters. And this is in verses 17 through 37.

In 17 through 19, Jesus arrives outside of Bethany. Again, it's 1.75 miles from Jerusalem. And so it's to remind you that there are people who want to kill Jesus just down the street.

A lot of people are there in Mary and Martha's home. They're from Jerusalem. They're there to comfort them. And it's also another thing to remind you, word can get out that Jesus is in town.

If you'll notice in verse 20, when Martha hears that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remains seated in the house.

[13:39] These are two very different women. Two different people. They have two very different temperaments. And in verses 20 and 27, Martha confronts Jesus.

And let me just point out, Jesus didn't call her. She went. She hears that he's like down the street and she's gone.

She goes. It's quite an interesting exchange. She says, why didn't you come?

Look at verse 21. Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Lord, we send word to you. If you had been here, Lazarus would still be breathing.

I know what you're capable of. And so there's this sense of like, why didn't you come? In verse 22, it sounds like Martha is asking Jesus to pray that God would raise him from the dead.

[14:49] Listen to what she says. But even now, I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you. It kind of sounds like that, but that's actually not what she's saying. And we're going to see that played out as we go along.

What she's actually saying is more like this. Okay, I don't get what you're doing, but I know you got a connection with God, so you have your reasons. And I trust you, even though I don't know why you didn't come.

It's something of faith. And then in verse 23, Jesus says to you, your brother will rise again. Now for us, who know the story, we're like, oh yeah, he's going to rise again.

But not Martha. Look how she interprets it. I know, verse 24, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on that last day. That the last day, all will be raised up and separated to be judged.

That's Revelation chapter 20. That's Matthew chapter 25. All good Jews believed that. I know that there's a coming day, chronologically speaking, there's a coming day when he will be raised from the dead.

[16:06] And then Jesus does something remarkable. He takes a chronological day and he makes it personal.

I am the resurrection and the life. I want you, Martha, not to be focused on a day.

I want you focused on me. To believe in me. This, I am the resurrection and the life is the fifth I am statement in the gospel of John.

And it does us well to ask, what is he saying? Why is he saying this? So when he says, I am the resurrection, day, personal. He's got the power to raise on the last day.

And so if you read the rest of verse 25, it says, whoever believes in me, though he die physically, the day is set, yet shall he live.

[17:08] In other words, hey, don't focus on the day, focus on me, because when you die, you will live again if you believe in me. I will raise you from the dead.

But there's more. Just not a chronological moment. There's a qualitative aspect to this. So when he says, I am the resurrection and the life, he's speaking qualitatively.

Listen to what he says in verse 26. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. You may die physically, but the moment you believe in me, I give you eternal life.

In other words, eternal life doesn't start when you die. Eternal life begins when you believe. So if you believe in Jesus Christ, eternal life has come.

Abundant life. So what Jesus is getting at here is both a qualitative life as well as a chronological aspect.

[18:22] It's like, I've got all of your life in my hands. I'm the giver of life. I'm the bread of life. I'm the water of life. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

I came that they might have life and might have it abundantly. abundantly. What Jesus is saying to her is something bigger than resurrection days here.

And then he asks her, do you believe this? Do you believe in me? You see, all the word believes, there's three of them in this passage, these two verses.

And she says, yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who's coming into the world. This was the titles that the whole kind of fight was over in John 10.

The Christ, the Son of God. This is what we see at the end of John in chapter 20. All of these signs are to demonstrate Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that you would believe in him and by believing, you live.

[19:33] Martha, do you believe this? She's the first sister who confronts Jesus and Jesus reveals something about himself.

Do you get the sense of what Jesus is saying? When he says, I am the resurrection and the life, that is a God-sized claim. He's claiming, I am the giver of life, I have authority over death.

And then, in verses 28 through 37, Mary, a very different woman than Martha. In 28, Jesus sends Mary to go tell Martha, to go tell Mary, the teacher's calling for you.

So, unlike Martha, Mary is called and Mary gets up right away and goes and then those people who are comforting and consoling her, they get up and go because they're thinking she's going to the grave, she's going to weep some more, but she actually brings them to Jesus.

And when she gets to Jesus, verse 32, she fell at his feet. Martha didn't fall at his feet. I think Martha was probably looking at him nose to nose.

[20:53] Mary fell at his feet. Two very different women. Jesus loves them both. and notice what she says. Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Does that sound familiar? Look at verse 21. Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Two very different women, very different temperaments, wrestling with the same thing.

Where were you? We sent for you. We know you loved Lazarus. You are able to heal him.

Where were you? And when Jesus responds to Martha, he drops the, I am the resurrection and the life.

Do you believe this? The way he responds to Mary. He sees Mary weeping. He sees those weeping with her. Verse 33.

[21:59] And then he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And when you hear greatly troubled, deeply moved in his spirit, you may be thinking, oh, he was overwhelmed with sadness.

But when you do a word study on this little phrase, deeply moved, by the way, it shows up in verse 38, deeply moved. Do you know how it's used throughout the rest of the New Testament?

Stern rebuke. Indignation. Holy anger. Jesus sees all this weeping and it's safe to say he gets angry.

And out of his anger, he asks, where did you lay him? I'm going to do something about this. And he is told, come see.

And in verse 35, Jesus wept. In that moment, he goes from being indignant to weeping. Jesus is mad.

[23:10] Sad and mad. He's experiencing the full range of human emotions kind of surrounding grief.

Anybody been angry when somebody dies before? Anybody been sad? Yes. Jesus is experiencing the full range of humanity.

And he does it without sinning. He weeps. He's angry. And he's like, show me where you buried him.

What's striking about this is that we have two very different human beings, Martha and Mary. and they are confronting Jesus and struggling with the same thing and they say it verbatim.

Lord, if you had been here, my brother would still be alive. How many times have we said something similar? Lord, if you had moved, if you had done what I asked, then we wouldn't be dealing with this.

[24:22] it's a soft questioning. Jesus, do you know what you're doing? He's operating for a glory.

He's got something else, something bigger and better in mind. In this passage, following both of these confrontations, we learn something about Jesus. One, that he's totally God.

I am the resurrection and the life. And we learn that he's totally man. We see him experience the fullness of human emotions. He's angry and he's sad. And now he's going to do something.

The Jews that are there who had followed Mary, some see him responding the way he is and they're like, oh, how, he just loved Lazarus so much.

And then others are there and they're like, wait, wait, hold on a second. Isn't this the guy that healed the blind, man born blind? Couldn't he have stopped this from happening? They don't have any idea what's about to happen.

[25:27] Which brings us to scene three. Glory. Give it to me. Oh, that was weak. I'm going to say glory.

You give it back. Glory. Glory. Okay, here we go. In verses 38 through 44, Jesus raises Lazarus from the death and there's been quite a build up to this moment, hasn't there.

We've covered a lot of ground leading up to this point. Now Jesus is on the scene. He's in Bethany and he has showed up to the tomb and he's deeply moved, verse 38.

He's hot. He's angry. He's indignant. He's sad, but he's angry. What's he going to do? He's made the claim, I am the resurrection and the life.

And now he's going to demonstrate it. In verse 38, deeply moved again, he comes to the tomb.

[26:32] Jesus says, take away the stone. You got to hear the tone. Where is his body? Take away the stone.

It's not because the stone is going to get in the way of what he's about to do. It's going to get in the way of the guy coming out. Martha, the direct sister, says, Lord, by this time there will be an odor for he has been dead for days.

His body has already started to decay. If you open that up there's going to be a stink. This is why I think back in verse 22 she's not asking Jesus to ask God to raise Lazarus from the dead.

She has no idea what's going on here. Jesus says to her, did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?

There's no record of he saying that to Martha. There is record of that in verse 4 to his disciples 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.

[27:39] There must have been something said that John doesn't record that Jesus is saying Martha, I'm going to be glorified through this. And then in verse 41, 42, Jesus prays.

He thanks God for what is about to happen. It's another indicator that Jesus is doing the works of his Father and he's already giving thanks to God and asking God to use what is about to happen in this display of his glory to cause belief, to result in belief in those present.

And then in verse 43, it would be like this. Think volume. God, thank you so much for hearing me. End of the prayer.

He steps back and then you see his veins in his neck pop out. Lazarus, come out! It was a voice. There's this quip among preachers.

It goes something like this. if Jesus had not specified Lazarus, then all of the dead in all of the world would have come out at that moment.

[29 : 03] But he did specify Lazarus. And by the way, when he says, Lazarus, come out, he's just not saying, come out of the cave, Lazarus.

He's saying, come out of death, Lazarus. And he says, 44, the man who is dead comes out. Jesus says, unbind him, let him go.

The burial cloths would have been restricted. Anybody seen any zombie movies lately? It's not like, that's not how Lazarus came out.

Lazarus probably came out, I don't know, but he wasn't decaying anymore. He wasn't half living. He didn't have a limb falling off.

At the very next chapter, this same Lazarus is seated at table with Jesus at a feast. He's been restored, resurrected and restored.

[30 : 15] He's not been given a resurrected body, but he's back to health. He's been raised from the dead, he's no longer sick. And what's striking is, nowhere in this chapter does Lazarus say anything.

Lazarus, come out. Now, if you were there, Lazarus comes out, I would be like, what?

He was just dead. This never happens. And then, it would dawn on me, the guy that just told him to come out with just words.

He didn't go in with those electric shocker things. He didn't go in with some kind of soup. With just words, Lazarus came out.

The one who created all things with just words speaks to a dead man, and death obeys. Death gives up.

[31 : 28] He gives up, Lazarus. Totally God, totally man. God incarnate, almighty, he is the Christ, the son of God.

He has authority over all things, including death. It's a good thing he just limited to Lazarus, otherwise there would have been a, like the resurrection of the last day, which is going to happen. if Jesus was able to raise Lazarus from the dead, who he loved, he is more than able to raise you, Christian, from the dead, who he loves.

So if you are a believer, you've already been given eternal life, that eternal life has begun, you will die one day, but you don't need to fear it, because there's coming a day when Jesus will say, Michael, come out!

You think I can resist that? You think you can resist that? I'm talking about. In verses 45 through 53, targeted, Jesus is targeted.

[32 : 53] In verses 45 and 46, there's this mixed response. Some of the Jews there who see this happen, instead of believing, they're like, oh no, we're going to go to Jerusalem and tattletale on Jesus to the Pharisees.

And so they tattletale on Jesus, and then the Pharisees, they call this emergency meeting of the Sanhedrin, the council. We see that in verse 47.

And they say, what are we going to do? For this man performs many signs. There's no denying that he just raised a dead man. If we let him go on like this, keep doing these miracles, everyone's going to believe.

That's ironic. And the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. So now you see what they're really concerned about. Their temple, their people, their position.

This is prophetic. Because in 70 AD, the Roman general Titus comes to Jerusalem. He sacks Jerusalem, the temple is destroyed, and the Israel people get scattered.

[34 : 09] It's prophetic in one sense. But there's more prophecy. the chief priest of the time, of that year, his name was Caiaphas.

And he comes on the scene in verse 49, and he says in verse 49, you know nothing at all. It's kind of like him saying, duh. And then in verse 50, nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not the whole nation should perish.

Well, that's interesting. That one man should die for the people? That there should be a substitute? One die for many?

What is he saying? Caiaphas, who doesn't believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, he's not thinking that Jesus is the Savior from people from their sins.

He's seeing him more as a scapegoat so that they can hold on to their power, hold on to their position, hold on to the status quo. But for those of us who believe, we hear that and we're like, he has no idea what he's saying.

[35 : 19] This is good news to my ears. And that's exactly what John helps us to see in verse 51. John, the gospel writer, steps in.

He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation. And not for the nation only, not just for the Jews. He would die, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

All those of God's elect that he had set his love on before the foundation of the world, and he's going to call to himself from all around the world, every tribe, tongue, and nation.

He's going to gather them together into one flock with one shepherd. Jesus is our substitute.

He brings about a new nation, a new kingdom, the church. Instead of believing, the Sanhedrin plots, they make plans to kill Jesus.

[36 : 33] verse 53, and those plans go into motion. But what we're learning is that all throughout this, the real plan has been for Jesus to display the wonder, the glory of the Son of God in the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Not only does he claim to have authority over death, he demonstrates it. his glory, our good. So the point of this whole story is to demonstrate that Jesus has authority over death.

It's both claimed and demonstrated. And the intended time after is to believe in him. So remember what Jesus asked Martha?

Do you believe this? That's my question for you. Do you believe this? That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who has authority over the dead?

And not just death in general, he has authority over your death in particular. You know, Jesus also raised Jairus' daughter, Mark 5.

[37 : 46] He also raised the son of a widow in the town of Nain, Luke 7. He has a record of raising people from the dead. But those people died again.

Jesus himself died, was raised, and is alive today, right now. He's defeated death.

And do you know what he holds in his hands? Jingle, jingle. Revelation 1.18. The keys to death and Hades.

It's a picture of him having all authority over death. This is good news. Here's how we apply it.

In light of Jesus' authority over death, demonstrated in the raising of Lazarus, demonstrated his own resurrection, knowing that he loves you, Christian, knowing that he's in it for his glory, you need not be enslaved to the fear of death.

[39 : 03] You need not to be enslaved to that. You don't need to fear that. Your ears, you're going to hear someday, Michael, come out, and there's no resisting it.

He will raise you. He will give you a new body that matches up with the eternal life already possessed. Who likes doing math?

Greater than, less than, or equal to? Is Jesus greater than, less than, or equal to death? Let's get personal.

Is Jesus greater than, less than, or equal to your death? Amen.

With words, he will call you back to life. Here's a second application. What do you do when Jesus doesn't show up?

[40 : 13] What do you do when you're asking for something over and over again and it doesn't happen? My guess, if you're like me, you may start to question Jesus.

Like Mary and Martha did, what we're assured of here, the face of death in particular, Jesus loves us, and he's in it for his glory.

glory. So if he's not doing what I'm asking, that's not a failure on his part. I am able to say, based off this passage then, oh, he's got the power, and he loves me, and he's in it for his glory.

So he must have a bigger and better glory in store. And I'm going to wait on that. I'm going to wait on that. I'm going to continue to pray in faith, but I'm going to wait on that.

It's for his glory and our good. If you entered this building today, fearing your death, my prayer is that you're going to leave this building today with a greater sense of confidence that your life and your death are in the hands of Jesus.

[41 : 32] In other words, even death cannot snatch you from his hands. At the end of this chapter, the Sanhedrin, such an motion to kill Jesus.

Jesus once again, and we see this in 54, Jesus leaves. He goes into the wilderness. It's not his time. And then in verses 55 through 57, we learn that the Passover is at hand. It's going to be Jesus' last Passover. And the question all these people who are coming into Jerusalem are asking is this. They know the Sanhedrin wants to arrest him, and they're like, is he going to come?

And what is he going to do if he comes? And we'll see that answer next week. Will you pray with me? God in heaven, we're so grateful for you, that Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life. You are our resurrection. You are our life. And you are good. God, would you stir our hearts to be freed from the fear, freed from being slaves to the fear of death?

[42:52] death. You've overcome it. And you've got a track record of doing it. All glory to your name. Amen. Amen.