Does He Really Love Me

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Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[0:00] Bible lessons that we are going to be studying next several weeks in the evening service. During the summertime, while our small group ministries are not meeting, we are here together at the church for the purpose of studying the Scriptures together, and we are also together off-site, particularly on July the 3rd.

Mark that down. That is a Sunday that I want to encourage you to dedicate to gospel ministry. So let me ask you a question first. First, what do Andrew, Philip, and the woman at the well all have in common?
What do Andrew, Philip, and the woman at the well all have in common? Just raise your hand and wave at me if you know the answer.
They all did the same thing. Okay, just hold on to it. How many? Raise your hand. Go ahead. Get it up there and kind of like, hey, I got it. I got it. Andrew, when he found the Messiah, what did he do? What did he do? He went and told somebody else. What did Philip do when he found the Messiah? He went and told somebody else.
[1:23] And what did the woman do when she found the Messiah? She went and told somebody else. Now, this Sunday evening, we are going to have a witnessing refresher.

None of us need anything like that. I mean, you know, we're good at that. We practice all the time. We're just, every opportunity that comes by, we take advantage of. And God's people said, I'm all over it.
We do need refreshers. Am I right? How many of you admit a little bit of witnessing refreshing would probably not hurt you? Okay.
You come this evening, and we're going to lay the platform for what we want to do together as a family of believers. Sometimes we come in to be the church, and sometimes we go out to be the church, right?
And so this evening's service is going to focus on encouraging you in your gospel witness. Now, with that being said, I want you to take your Bible there in John chapter 11 and follow along with me as I read.
[2:33] Now, certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and his sister Martha, or her sister Martha.

It was Mary who anointed the Lord with anointment or with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, Lord, he whom 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.
Now, Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Let's pray.
Our Father, the song that we just finished singing was an expression of commitment, an expression of our dependence upon you to work in us, to give to us ears that hear and a heart that appreciates the sweetness of the Word of God.
[3:49] And so for us this morning, the matter of coming to you in prayer is not just a habit, but it is a declaration of our confidence in your readiness to work to allow us to understand and appreciate the beauty of the Scriptures that we have in hand this morning, and to work in us that we would grow in our affection for the Lord Jesus and our great confidence in the Savior that we know.

It is also our prayer this morning, Father, that those who are here that do not know Christ would be drawn to realize, first of all, the sinfulness of their heart, the absolute certainty of your eternal judgment, and that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only hope of the world, and that all who come to him in faith receive everlasting life.

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We pray for the working of the Holy Spirit, both in encouraging the believer and in convicting the unbeliever, that Christ might be glorified this morning.
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, as you look at this passage, I want you to understand that probably one of the underlying questions that all of us are dealing with on a very regular basis is this, is does he really love me?
We sang a number of different songs that related to that theme, and if you paid attention to the...you couldn't call it dueling pianos. That would be inappropriate.
[5:27] But what's the term for that? It's a piano duet, okay? It shows you my basic knowledge of musical theory. You know, it's like we have two people on there. It's a duet.

I got you. But how many of you knew that song? I mean, you've learned it forever, and some of you who are grandparents have probably had to endure more than one trip in the car with your grandchildren who want to sing it.
I wouldn't use the term ad nauseum, because that would be entirely appropriate. But, you know, it's like we've sung it 47 times. Do you know any other one? And the ministry of music that we engaged in this morning really focused on the truth of the love of God.
Now, that's a fact. It's a theological truth. But there are things that happen in our lives that challenge us to appreciate that truth.
And this passage is one that pushes that truth right up front and center. And I trust you walk out of here this morning saying this, I know for a fact I am absolutely persuaded that Jesus loves me unconditionally and forever.
[6:36] As you look at this passage, we're looking at the last and greatest miracle that Jesus committed or Jesus did that is recorded in the Gospel of John.

The controversy among the Jews as to who Jesus really was had grown into open conflict. The miracle of raising Lazarus was going to be the very last thing that he did that would kind of move things from controversy to conflict to an open commitment on the part of the Jewish leadership to murder him.
Not only to murder Jesus, but also to get rid of the evidence, namely Lazarus. And stop and realize that here we're looking at a miracle that was done in the very shadow of Jerusalem.
It tells us in the text that the city that he was going to do this miracle in there in Bethany was only about two miles away from Jerusalem. It was close enough that whatever happened in Bethany had traction in the city and everybody knew what would take place.
John's account of this miracle is instructive on many levels. It's got a lot of things to tell us. It serves to hammer home the deity of Christ.
[7:51] It shows his singular focus on the glory of his Father and his desire to make very clear that his purpose was to bring glory to his Father.

But it also serves to kind of give us a window in understanding the Lord Jesus' heart and attitude towards us personally. And when we put these things together, I trust one of the things that we walk away from here this morning is we have this fixed firmly in our mind that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Savior of the world, loves us individually with an unfailing, unchangeable love.
And that theological truth is supremely important. Supremely. Well, we dive into the text and we see, first of all, a delay for the purpose of revealing God's glory.
John's account begins like any good newsworthy story in that early on in a journalism class, one of the things that you're taught is if you're going to communicate to people effectively, particularly in a newsworthy fashion, that you've got to get the who, what, how, why, when, where out there.
In fact, it's good to hammer those things down in the first couple sentences. And you're going to see that John does that. He gives us a number of those pieces. He tells us who is going to be involved.
[9:20] He says where the event takes place. He tells us what was wrong and even goes so far as telling us why this was going to happen. Now, I'm not going to overplay those pieces of information, but I do want you to have them in mind because kind of working our way through is going to help us track the lesson that we are looking at this morning.

Understand that Bethany, the town that Lazarus, Mary, and Martha lived in, was really quite near to Jerusalem. And it was a city, Bethany, that was close enough that anything that happened in Bethany got carried over into Jerusalem.
And remember that Jerusalem was the city that by this point had become so kind of inflamed by the attitude of the Jewish leadership that it was unsafe for Jesus to be there. He had withdrawn as a

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result of that.
And he'd moved quite a distance away so that he was not in the immediate proximity of the leadership and those that openly hated him. He was distant from them for safety.
I want you to imagine also that when Mary and Martha became aware that their brother had gotten sick, and you can imagine as they watched his countenance and his health failing, they would probably have little discussions in the room about, well, should we let Jesus know?
[10:45] Now, they knew why Jesus had left the area. And they probably went back and forth. The Scripture doesn't tell us. But you can imagine the concern they had for Jesus' safety, but the concern they had watching their brother begin to slip lower and lower in his health and becoming more and more anxious.

We've all been there at one point or another where we've watched someone that we love get sick. And there are occasions where the process of getting sick is pretty sudden.
How many of you out here have had kidney stones before? The gift from God that keeps on giving, right? You know, it's like I am a frequent flyer with kidney stones, and I can tell you something about kidney stones.
They come upon you without announcement, and there's not a long run-up to the pain. It's like you suddenly wake up, and it's like, ah, I'm dying, you know, get me to the hospital.
On the other hand, some of us have watched individuals that we love kind of get more and more frail and a little more and more painful, and it kind of goes down and eventually begins to say, should I take you to the hospital?
[11:56] Well, I'm not sure. I'm taking you to the hospital, and off you go. And so here were Mary and Martha kind of watching their brother as he was getting worse and worse.

And they thought, well, we ought to call Jesus. Yeah, but coming this close to Jerusalem is probably not safe for Jesus. And so you can imagine that finally they made the decision to reach out to a trusted friend, and they sent this friend to Jesus with a very carefully framed statement.
I want you to notice it there. It says this, They didn't say, come right now because Lazarus is dying, and if you don't show up, he's gone.
They were careful. Now, one of the things that I want to add to this is that when you are thinking about who all was making this appeal, we are struck by the fact that in the mix, Mary and Martha, Mary is spoken of in a very unique way.
And I want you to mark what it says there in verse 2. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So here is this request sent to Jesus, and it is sent by people that have particular traction and credibility or authority in Christ's life.
[13:32] I want you to mark that what is being said here in verse 2 about Mary is something that actually hadn't happened yet. Later, as we work our way through the book of John, we will come to John chapter 12, where we find that Mary anointed the feet of Jesus, and not only did she anoint the feet of Jesus with an ointment that was worth about one year's wages, but she did something that is unbelievably exceptional in that she knelt down and she wiped his feet with her hair.

How much of ancient culture are you aware of in relationship to feet and touch?
As a general rule, only slaves had the responsibility of washing a person's feet. It was, guess what? When you walked around in sandals or whatever else, and there were no modern sewers to kind of take waste away, it was a very messy, ugly environment, and the feet were not something you wanted to get near.
And so here is Mary, who later on we are going to find anoints Christ's feet and wipes them with her hair. The fact that she did this is noted as being so exceptional that if you were to look over in John chapter 26 verse 13, it says this, that what she did in preparation for Christ's burial and this act of worship on her part was so noteworthy that wherever the gospel, this is what it says, wherever the gospel is told, her action would be repeated.
The significance of Mary's worship and what she did for Christ was so clear in its testimony to her appreciation for the Savior that even here prior to its happening as John is penning this letter or this gospel, he is reminded, this is Mary.
[15:39] Oh, Mary, the one who worshiped Christ by doing this distinct and very special thing. I want to stop just for a moment and ask you this question. Is my worship, the question you should ask, is my worship of Christ something others are affected by and will remember?

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Is my worship of Christ something other people are affected by and will remember? Incidentally, when you ask yourself that question, what are the ways in which we worship Christ?
We worship Christ by the way we live. We worship Christ by the way we talk. Isn't that right? We worship Christ by the way we treat other people.
We worship Christ by the joy and the confidence of our countenance in life. And so, practical question for you this morning as you think about Mary and the testimony that is given of her, you ask yourself the question, hey, the way in which I'm living, the way in which I'm talking, does it cause other people to think favorably of Christ and to remember Him in the light of my worship?
Now, I want you to notice something else in the passage as we work our way through. It tells us here that the sisters, when they send the messenger, look there in verse 3, it says, the one who, he whom you love is ill.
[17:02] Instead of saying what probably they were thinking on the surface, you know, it's like, hey, our brother's sick and he's going to die and you need to come right now.

Instead of being so bold, they frame it in a more careful and cautious way and they communicate this idea, the one that you love is ill. I want to tell you that it wasn't just Lazarus that Jesus loved. And how do we know that? For one thing, we read in the passage that Jesus also loved Mary and Martha. You look there in verse 5 and it says this, now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.
And there are all kinds of questions that arise from this. Did Jesus love these three more than He loves everybody else? Incidentally, we're going to find, as we work our way through the book of John, that John the Apostle never refers to himself by his own name in the book of John.
Does anybody know how he identifies himself in the book? How does he call himself? What's he say? He refers to himself as the one Jesus loved.
[18:15] Now, question to you, is the way John identifies himself indicative of his exceptional relationship with Christ or is it indicative of his being overwhelmed by the unbelievable blessing of being loved by the Lord of glory?

That's a question you can ponder. I want you to recognize as you look at this statement that is made repeatedly about Lazarus and Mary and Martha that one of the things that it's fair for us to ask ourselves is that, hey, if Jesus loves Lazarus, Mary and Martha as he did, does he love me that way?
And that's a fair question. So, in one sense, the thing that I want you to think here very carefully about is as you ponder this passage and this statement's made, he loved Lazarus, Mary and Martha, I want you to ask yourself this question, does he love me?
Does he really love me? In response to that, I want to give you a couple very clear statements in a Bible passage to hold on to. For one, Jesus loves you far more than you can imagine and fully grasp.
I want you to write that down and have it fixed in your mind. Jesus loves you far more than you can imagine and fully grasp. The truth of the matter is that by our nature and the sinfulness of our own hearts, the thing that we're fairly good at, sadly enough, is loving, guess who?
[19:52] How many of you would say, I'm still struggling with loving me? In fact, everybody look up and smile at me so you know I'm talking to you. In fact, I'm a little irritated that other people don't love me quite as much as I love me.

In fact, it's bothersome when people in front of me are on their cell phone instead of paying attention to the fact that they should love me and get out of my way. I mean, there they are stuck at the stoplight texting somebody that I don't care about and I have somewhere to go.
You know, I am good at loving me. The fact of the matter is is that's just poor theology, sadly, and good theology is appreciating the fact that Jesus loves me far more than I can imagine or fully grasp.
Secondly, growing to know just how much He loves you is absolutely essential. It is foundational. It is essential. It is a life changer.
I said I would give you a couple things to hang on to and some clear Bible instruction. Turn in your Bible, if you would, to Ephesians chapter 3, verse 14 through 19. Why is it that I can say that Jesus loves you far more than you can imagine?
[21:09] Why is it that I can say that knowing just how much He loves you is absolutely essential? Well, the Bible answer is in Ephesians chapter 3, verse 14 through 19. And I'm going to just kind of refer to it briefly and then have you fix it in your own mind and you spend time.

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Here's what I'm going to encourage you. If you're here this morning and struggle on occasion with being pretty moody, being kind of caught up in being a navel gazer, do you know what a navel gazer is?
A navel gazer is someone who is so obsessed that they're, you know, okay. If you're struggling with that, I'm going to suggest that you memorize this passage and hang on to it and every now and then when you go left of center, you bring the passage back.
Ephesians chapter 3, verse 14, for this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and earth is named that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love, now follow me here, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
Paul says this, the one thing I really want you to get your head around is just how much Jesus really loves you.
[23:01] I want you to stop for a moment and ponder the reality of it is that Jesus loves me with an infinite and satisfying love that will never change. Now I want you to move on through the passage because we're struck by the fact that yes, Jesus loved Lazarus and Mary and Martha but He loves me.

He loves you. Well if He loves me I'd have to believe that everything in my life would just go perfectly. I wouldn't even have to buy a lottery ticket because He would just be heaping it up and I'd have more than I need.
I mean, follow me? I would never be sick. I mean, if He loved me, right? I would never have a job I didn't like if He loved me.
Everybody would just think I was the most wonderful person if He loved me. Look at verse 4. When Jesus heard it, what was that?
Lord, He whom you love is ill. So 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 Man may be glorified through it.
[24:28] I want you to imagine just for a moment that you have rushed your loved one into ER. I remember when my dad had his last bout with a UTI, urinary tract infection, and we ran him off to OSU hospital and he stayed in ER in a little room for 17 hours and we watched his condition die.

Do you know how many times we walked in and let the nurse know that something needed to be done? I just want you to imagine that here is Jesus, the one you love is sick.
And what's it say next? He stayed around for how many more days? Count them. Two more days. 48 hours, right? And then what does he say? Look at the passage. It says this, 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. What Jesus was saying to his disciples is this, is that Lazarus' sickness will not end in his death at the moment.
[25:41] This sickness is something that is going to, and here's, the word glory can be used two different ways in the Greek in particular. There are times in which it's talking about just the overwhelming praise that is deserved to God.

You know, glory to God. There's another way in which glory is used, and this is an illustration of it, where the purpose of glory is really to display the power and nature of God.
That's what John is saying here. Jesus makes the point that this, the purpose of this sickness is that God's glory and his, his person, his power would be revealed.
I want you to think with me just for a moment, which would have been more dramatic? For Jesus to have heard this messenger come and say, Lazarus is sick, and Jesus have done the same thing that he did over in John chapter 2.
Remember? I think it's John chapter 2 where the ruler comes and says, my son is sick, and Jesus said, what? He's good. He's healed. And they get back home and find out that the guy was healed at the time Jesus said that.
[26:57] Remember when the centurion came to Jesus and said, you know, my servant is sick, and Jesus said, well, I'll come down. He says, no, no, just say the word. Could Jesus have healed in absentia?

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The answer is what? You bet. No problem. Could have done it. Would it have been more glorious for Jesus to have, hey, I've taken care of it.
He's good now. Or would it have been more glorifying, revealing his power, to have kind of waited for two more days and can you, where's Jesus?
Is he coming? Where is he? And he shows up and there's Mary and Martha. We're going to see that a couple weeks from now. And here is Lazarus who has now been in the grave for how many days? Count them, four. What we find here is that Jesus makes it clear that the circumstances of the moment were circumstances in which his power and his glory had a platform in which to be displayed.
[28:12] I wonder how often you remind yourself of that in your own life. Think with me. Things are not going the way you would like. Hardship and heartache.

A job. A marriage. Children. Circumstances circumstances surrounding your employment. Things in which there is that natural temptation in your heart to say, if Jesus loved me, it would not be happening this way.
I want you to be careful that you don't play the fool and complain at the moment that he has granted you an opportunity to be an illustration of his glory.
Instead, what I would encourage you to say to yourself is this, this moment is my chance to show who my God and Savior is. I'll never forget a man that I ministered to whose son was born with spina bifida and I watched this man and his wife care for that little boy until he was taken home.
I still remember the funeral because they had his little wheelchair up here in the front with balloons tied all over it. And after the funeral, after the ceremony, we took the little wheelchair outside and the father cut those little balloons and let them float away into the horizon.
[29:54] I remember when Fred said to me one day, he said, Dustin's condition was not something God did to us but something God did for us.

We learn things about God in ministering to Dustin. You know, sometimes we get so caught up in thinking that the things we're suffering are just illustrations of the indifference of God and that's wrong.
This moment is my chance to show who my God and Savior is. Well, let's go a little further and understand in broad terms that this delay is to amplify his glory.
We pick up there in verse 6 and we see something that really does stun us. It says he waited two days longer. And we're going to learn later in the chapter that when Jesus does get to the tomb, as I pointed out already, Lazarus would have been dead for four whole days and his body had begun that process of decay.
In delaying, what Jesus had done was he had removed any possible doubt or he had completely eliminated any potential misunderstanding or denial of the miracle that he was going to do.
[31:25] You see, when Jesus arrives on the scene in all of our lives and he does for those of you who know his grace, he arrives at such a point that the timing is perfect and the stage is set for him to be the one that is glorified in that moment.

I want you to notice something else there in verse 7. Pick up, if you will, there. Then after he said to the disciples, let us go to Judea again, the disciples said to him, Rabbi, the Jews are just now seeking to stone you and you're going there again?
You know, their voiced concern was this, is that Jesus was stepping back into the arena in which his imminent murder was going to take place and what Jesus said, and we're not going to play out all the pieces here, in essence, what he was saying is, hey, the time is okay right now and it's appropriate for me to be doing what I'm doing.
The disciples knew about the hatred of Christ's enemies, but they really were not considering the fact that Jesus knew exactly what the time was and what was appropriate.
And so, as you find yourself here on occasion and all of us have been there where we've wondered about his sense of timing.
[32:49] How many of you have ever been there? Well, you could do this sooner. No. His sense of timing is perfect and he will take care of it in his timing and his moment.

Let me draw attention to one other piece there in verse 11. Jesus says this, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep and I go to waken him. His disciples, still concerned with the issue of his death at the hands of the Jews, he says this, they say this, they didn't get it and they said to him, Lord, if he has fallen asleep, verse 12, he will recover.

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Jesus spoke of his death and they had thought that he was just talking about taking a nap, resting. No, no, no, he's dead. And then the disciples really wake up, okay.
I love, how many of you like Thomas? Look at verse 16. So here is Mr. Resolute, kind of a moderate pessimist.
Some of you can hang on to this verse and say, well, I'm a little like Thomas. Here it is. So Thomas called the twins, said to his fellow disciples, well, let us go that we may also die with him.
[34:06] That's a pretty positive statement, isn't it? They're like, yeah, I'm in it. I'm dying too. You know. Well, I do want to take a couple points and leave you with these and hold on to them.

For one, every blood-bought believer who is here today is as precious and as deeply loved as the three that we're reading about.
Will you hold on to that? If you were in this story, it could be accurately and justly said that Jesus loves you with an unconditional, unwavering, unchangeable love.
And understanding that truth is profoundly significant to your emotional and spiritual well-being and to your behavior as a believer.
You're here as one who has come to faith and has been led by the grace of God to understand that He loves you and I've got to tell you that He will not change His mind about you.
[35:18] For another, I want you to understand that the hard things of a believer's life are not meant to destroy but bring glory to God.

You know, one of the privileges, Pastor Shearer, I can tell you, comes with staying at a church for a long time is that in time you get to know the hearts and the heartaches of God's people.
But because I've been here a long time, I also know the victories of grace. Do you follow that? If you move every couple years, you don't know how the story ends. And I can say without hesitation that the hardships and the heartaches that God brings into the lives of His children are not meant to destroy but they're meant to bring glory.
Finally, and I want you to hold on to this if you're here today and don't know Christ, raising Lazarus from the dead was an undeniable miracle and was so powerful that actually others were led to believe in Jesus.
And I want to tell you this, if Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He can raise you from the dead as well. You know, amazingly, the Bible says that those who are here that are not saved are dead.
[36:40] Have you ever wondered why it is that to this moment the gospel truths have not just connected? It may well be that until this moment your heart has been dead to the sweetness of the gospel and yet faith by the grace of God brings life to the dead and changes the way we understand who Jesus is and why He came into the world.

And so, if you're sitting here this morning and you are absolutely sick of the stench of your sin and you are broken by the ugliness of your heart, I got to tell you that those convicting truths are not the work of just a natural brain getting a hold of how messy and ugly your life is.
That is the work of the Holy Spirit bringing you to see the desperate condition of your soul and leading you to understand that apart from Jesus there is no remedy and there is no hope.
And the gospel is this, is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And the Bible makes it clear. Salvation is a profoundly simple matter of calling upon the name of the Lord and saying, I am a sinner justly condemned before a holy God but I believe Jesus died for my sins that I might have everlasting life.
And I take God at His promise. And so as we think about Lazarus this morning, for the believer, here's the takeaway, I want you to know that Jesus loves you like He loved Lazarus, Mary, and Martha and it doesn't get any better than that.
[38:28] and if you are here today and you do not know Christ, it would be my plea, it has been my prayer, that you would be first of all convicted of the misery of your soul and understand that there is no remedy apart from Jesus and you call upon His name and be saved.

Let's close as John comes to lead us and we prepare for baptism. Precious Father, we are thankful for the sweetness of the gospel that reminds us that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
We're thankful of the encouragement that we see in this story of Jesus having such a special love for Lazarus and yet being willing to allow Lazarus and His loved ones to suffer not just out of pleasure in their suffering but for the glory, for the purpose of revealing our Savior's power.

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And Lord, we want to be people who are overwhelmed by the reality of your love and also ready to allow the hardships that we face to lift up Jesus. We pray that as we sing and as we enjoy the testimony of Megan in baptism that our hearts rejoice together in Christ and that those who are here that do not know Christ would be drawn to the cross.
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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