

Lazarus, Resurrection and You

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Date: 24 July 2016

Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0 : 00] Thanks, worship team. Tell you what, it's a blessing to be able to come to the Lord's house and start a service! The focus on the Lord Jesus Christ and what He's accomplished for us, remembrance of what!

I'm going to segue into our passage this morning and then to be able to look at the Word of God together and just sit underneath the ministry of the Scripture. And I realize that as a teacher, as a preacher this morning, that this message is first for me. So, you get to be part of the fringe benefits of what I've already been able to learn this week. And I understand that really, the person who's really in the spotlight as I'm teaching is me, because that's the only person I can change. And I trust that as God's Word teaches us, instructs us today, it'll be more than just information. That as we walk out of the doors, as we enter the week, that it will be the beginnings of transformation, maybe the continuation of transformation in our lives. We don't come here on a Sunday morning just to hear some good things from the Bible.

We come here for change. We come here to worship. There really is one audience today. There's one audience and that's the audience of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as your life is held in the spotlight, and as you evaluate and kind of turn it over in your hands, as you evaluate in light of the Scripture today, it's my prayer that there will be areas of life where we say, you know, Lord, I need to be more like you here.

That's why we do this. We do this for worship. We do this so that we can represent Him in the world in which we live. Represent Him in our homes.

[2 : 30] Represent Him in our workplaces, in our communities, our families. And the more we look like Jesus, the more profoundly we will impact and influence the world in which we live.

As I get myself out of the way so that people are no longer looking at Andrew Scheer, but they're looking, hopefully, at Jesus Christ shining through, that's when we'll begin to make a difference in this world.

That's why we come here on a Sunday morning. And that's the joy that we have throughout the week as we take this eternal Word of God home with us, as we peer into the Scriptures, as we learn what God would have to tell us, we continue to refine, and we let the Holy Spirit refine our lives, so that day by day we can look more like Him.

Then, God will show up in your community. Then, students, God will show up in your school. God will show up in your family.

God will show up in your workplace. You have things to complain about in your workplace? Things aren't quite the way you'd like them to be? Well, the more you look like Jesus, the more you will impact your workplace for Christ.

[3 : 56] Well, we have been looking through the story of John chapter 11. We've seen this account of Jesus who has been asked by some special friends to come and to show up and to do something significant for them.

John chapter 11, which is this account of Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha. Martha. And Jesus is about doing ministry and He gets this message from Mary and Martha.

Hey, our brother is sick. Will you come and will you help us deal with this problem? Now, Jesus had been ministering for three years and here we are in kind of the final few days of Jesus' ministry.

There's about two to three months left before the cross. We're in the home stretch, really, when it comes to Jesus' ministry. And there's been plenty of evidence that would suggest if Jesus shows up and Lazarus is still sick and He's still with us, Jesus can fix that problem.

He has shown, wherever He goes, whole communities are transformed by His touch. Whole cities are changed because of His ability to influence and impact and heal diseases and cast out demons.

[5 : 16] Whether you're born with a certain illness or whether you come with leprosy or whether you come with blindness or whether you come with withered limbs or whether you come with a hunchback or whether this is something that a doctor has been trying to fix for the last 18 years.

One touch, one word of the Savior will fix all those problems. So Jesus, you just show up and we'll be okay. So Jesus gets this word, this word from special people, Mary and Martha.

And what does He do? What would you do? You get this urgent request from one of your kids, please show up!

And you're in the car, you're moving your way to their house right away. But Jesus, for some reason, decides to stay. There is a profound lesson that Jesus wants to convey.

There is something more important than just healing another disease. There is something more important in Jesus' mind than just fixing another problem.

[6 : 36] Jesus wants to communicate a message. And now, not just to communicate that message privately, He's healed at least two other occasions. He's raised two individuals from the dead in a private setting.

But now, He's moving into the public. Now there is a message that cannot be missed, especially considering the fact that He's just months away from the cross.

What is that message? What does Jesus want to convey to you and to me this morning? No, I have to admit that when I come to the Scriptures and especially come to stories like this, I have to admit that sometimes I wonder, what's the point?

I like the fact that this narrative is here. I appreciate the fact that Jesus is ministering to this family and He's showing up for them, but what does that do for me?

How does that help me? What do I do with that and take that with me in this week so that my life will be different? We've all memorized the two words, Jesus wept.

[7 : 53] We know this story well. And if you haven't memorized it before, now you have. You've got John 11:35 down. But there's an account here of this running narrative of Jesus' life and I think at times we're in the danger of just scooting right through because we've already heard this story so many times.

But I've come to see this story this week with new eyes. I've come to believe that this story, as with other stories in the scripture, should infuse within us fresh enthusiasm and energy and passion for Jesus.

Not only in what He came to accomplish, but in how He came to accomplish it. That's what makes this story truly remarkable.

So I want to answer this question this morning. What does Lazarus' resurrection mean for you? What does Lazarus' resurrection mean for you?

And I'm going to take it step by step. These three pieces. Lazarus, resurrection, and you. And we're going to look at that this morning. So let's take a look briefly then, or initially, at the life of Lazarus.

[9 : 24] Who was this guy, Lazarus? And why is he so important in this narrative? First, I want you to know that he was an ordinary man. Lazarus was an ordinary man.

And if you turn back with me to chapter 11, verse 1, you'll see that. The first few words of that verse say, now a certain man. Now I know this might seem a little obvious.

Okay. I get it. He's an ordinary man. Big deal. Here's the big deal. If you, like Lazarus, consider yourself to be ordinary, this story is for you.

If you, like Lazarus, just seem to kind of fit in with the crowd, and there's really nothing quite remarkable or noteworthy about your life, this story is for you.

Jesus shows up in this story. We find that Lazarus is just a passive player. Matter of fact, Lazarus is a lifeless player in this story.

[10 : 33] This story is significant not because of Lazarus. It is significant because of what Christ does through Lazarus. So, if you, like me, and like Lazarus, consider yourself to be ordinary, this story is for you.

It's for us today. Lazarus was ordinary. He wasn't an apostle. He wasn't a prophet like John the Baptist. As far as we know, he wasn't a priest.

He wasn't distinguished in any way. He was just an ordinary man, just another player in this story of Jesus Christ. We do find that he was a friend of Jesus.

A special friend, the kind of friend that Jesus would actually spend time with. And we find at least one account before this situation that Jesus showed up in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Luke 10, verse 38.

That's a familiar story too where Martha's about service and Mary is about listening and Jesus commends the listening part of Mary. Lazarus must have been there seeing this scene as well.

[11 : 46] Jesus traveled and spent time with his family. It was a special family. We find even in our chapter this morning, John chapter 11, in Mary's plea for Jesus to come, she says, your brother, excuse me, so the sisters in verse 3 sent to him saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill.

There was this affection. Affection for Jesus and affection from Jesus to this family. They felt a special bond. we'll find in chapter 12 as we continue to make our way through the gospel of John that Jesus shows up in their house again.

And during the entire Passover week, there was situations where Jesus would spend time with his family. They had a special bond. But like any other ordinary man, we find in verse 1, there was a certain man, now a certain man was ill.

You ever get sick? Lazarus got sick. He was just like any other person. He got sick.

Nothing sets him apart from you or I. The impact of this event was not due to Lazarus, but it was due to Christ. And as friends of Lazarus and Martha and Mary, Jesus begins to make this trek.

[13 : 24] But what we find the people that preceded him were friends of Lazarus and Martha and Mary. There is some significance in this gathering.

These influential individuals who came, we find that in verse 19. It says, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary. Now, throughout the Gospels we find this title, the Jews.

It's used five times in Matthew, six times in Mark, five times in Luke, but 66 times in the Gospel of John. And in the Gospel of John, this title, the Jews, is referring to those who would be Jewish leaders.

Those who had headship and oversight over the Jewish people. We saw that in our recent discovery of Jesus and that blind man who was healed.

Remember the response of his mom and dad who were afraid of what the Jews would do? It says, his parents kind of deferred responsibility because, it says, they feared the Jews.

[14:34] For the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. This was not just a collection of Jewish people.

That's described several other ways. A crowd or the people or the masses. But specifically, the Jews referred to those who were Jewish leaders. I love this.

Jesus would capitalize on this fact. Somehow, the influence of this family had reached into this leadership of the Jews.

Jesus was now giving them one last opportunity, extending grace one more time to this group of Jews who continued to reject him time and time and time again.

Jesus is setting up this awesome opportunity. It was by design so that God could use this family to showcase his glory.

[15:43] Lazarus, though an ordinary man, was a means of showcasing God's glory. That should bring incredible joy to your heart this morning.

Why did Jesus delay? Why a death and then subsequent resurrection? resurrection? Was it simply for Jesus to show one more way that he had power over the affairs of life?

Was it just simply to convey his continuing compassion and love and care for individuals? Or was it to make a definitive statement? Was it to state categorically something new about his identity?

We find that Jesus actually tells us what his intention of this is. In verse 4, he 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. And then in verse 40, several verses later, Jesus says to her, did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

[16:59] Jesus is interested. In staking his claim, in helping to provide full vision to his identity as God, establishing once and for all that he was from God and that he was God.

The only role that Lazarus would play is that he would be dead. He would be lifeless. He would be just the subject, just the instrument by which God's glory would show up.

You think he can do that? God's power can shine through ordinary people. Amen? That brings us to the resurrection.

Lazarus, this ordinary man, and now this spectacular event that takes place, this resurrection. We find in verse 45, let me read this for us.

This is kind of the beginning of our passage for this morning, from 45 to verse 57. What is the result? The result of this resurrection? It says in verse 45, many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.

[18:19] Many of the Jews believed. Now we understand that this is kind of the running narrative, the running purpose of the apostle John in relationship to the writing of these words, in the account of this gospel narrative.

As we've heard many times in John 20, 31, these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus stakes his claim here in this passage, I am the resurrection and the life, I am God.

And up to this point, many have believed in Jesus. We find his disciples believing in him in chapter 2. We find that many in Jerusalem believed when he performed miracles in chapter 2.

We find the Samaritans believing in chapter 4. We find that many of the people believed when they heard and saw him do these signs in John chapter 7.

We see that even in chapter 8, some of the Jews, some of these religious leaders had this superficial faith that wasn't quite adequate. We find that in chapter 8 verse 30 and 31.

[19 : 34] In chapter 10, we find that he went his way across the Jordan and many came to him and many believed in him there. People are coming to faith in droves because they are beginning to see Jesus is the person he claims to be.

now Jesus in grace and mercy shows up once again to these Jews, these leaders, those who have invited him into their homes and those who have repelled him in the temple, those who have sought to disrupt and sought to discredit his ministry.

ministry. And Jesus continues to extend grace to this group of men. And now we see that many believe.

They believe. It is a pivotal moment for them. Up to this point, what had been private is now pushed into the forefront. Jesus' ability to raise the dead and in seeing this sign and seeing this miracle and understanding that only God is the author of life and seeing Jesus who identified and connected himself with the Father in this act of resurrecting Lazarus, making a definitive statement, I am God, some believed.

What grace. Remember, this was not a question of future resurrection. resurrection. Jesus was trying to help them understand this is an issue of present resurrection, present life that I give to you.

[21 : 18] In him was life and the life was the light of men. And Jesus now shows up to say, I am life. I am resurrection.

If you were standing in the audience, what other proof would you need? What else is there to do? What other sign could you even ask for?

Only God is the author of life and Jesus deliberately makes this hard connection between himself and the Father immediately before this miracle. We see that in verses 41 and 42.

His prayer that says, I am praying to you so that those who are watching this know where this is coming from. It's coming from the Father. No one asks their gods to raise the dead.

No one even dares go there because they know it would be futility. Only God the Father is the author of life. And Jesus in a previous discussion in John chapter 10 says, The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

[22 : 30] But I am come that they might have life and that they might have it abundantly. Have you ever considered what kind of life God has given to you?

Have you ever thought about that resurrection life that those of you who have because of faith, what has that life accomplished in you and for you?

He is abundant life. He is eternal life. He is godly life. But he is also the source of the redeemed life. the kind of life that has meaning and purpose.

The kind of life that provides fulfillment and true gratification. The kind of life that propagates life in the world around you. It's the kind of life that experiences life to the full because it's able to conform to the design of the Father for us and for our lives.

Just as a hammer, will find its greatest fulfillment in driving a nail. You will find your greatest fulfillment as a Christian as you submit yourself to the giver of life and as you are living the abundant life, the design of life that God has entrusted to you.

[23:50] And we'll talk about that more in a moment. Notice here it says in the end of verse 45, it says, Many of the Jews therefore who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed.

Isn't that neat? God uses instrumentally Mary. Whatever compassion and love that she poured out and then received from this group, she's the one who they're coming out with and they see this miracle that takes place and it's a result of the impact, some impact that she had in their life, that they're there at the tomb and they see Jesus show up and they believe.

I wish I could say that that was true of the entire group, but there was another response, not only a result in faith that we see in point number one, but also a result in frustration, result in faith and now a result in frustration.

We see that show up in verse 46, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, what are we to do?

For this man performs many signs, meaning the rest didn't believe and provides another confirmation of the fact that these are part of the religious establishment who now make their way, they have connections with the Pharisees and now they're ratting out Jesus.

[25:32] How is this possible? How is it possible that they saw Lazarus' body wrapped? And whether hovering out of the tomb or hopping out of the tomb, but it was clear that he had been dead.

They had been sitting with Martha and Mary, they had been consoling them, comforting them for the last four days. Lazarus smells like rotting flesh.

And this miracle takes place in front of their eyes. And Jesus' enemies, these individuals that go back to the Pharisees confirm that what has been claimed to happen has in fact actually taken place.

He has done many signs. people who are not in the world. They do not believe. How are such things possible? Well, it's possible because as we find in 1 Corinthians 2, verse 14, the natural person does not accept the things of the spirit.

For they are foolishness to him and he is unable to understand because they are spiritually discerned. There is something broken inside that we are not able to understand the truth that stares us in the face because the spirit of God hasn't activated our life to be able to perceive what can only be perceived in a spiritual way.

[27:00] But in addition to that, we find in 2 Corinthians 4 that Satan has blinded the minds of those who believe not. Satan also kind of stands in the way, blinding eyes, keeping us from seeing the beauty of the gospel.

And here's another clue that these Pharisees, these religious leaders, although they see the evidence, it's smacking them in the face. They reject. Their hearts are hardened.

So it says in verse 47, so the chief priests and Pharisees gathered the council. Here we see the meeting of the minds, those, the greatest intellect perhaps in the known world meeting together.

together. We understand that those who know God's law are those who, it says in the Proverbs, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. They knew God's law. They had it memorized, the first five books of the Old Testament.

They had committed to heart. They had gone to temple, they had performed sacrifices, they had attended feasts, they had known the history of God's people, they offered confession for sin, they provided spiritual leadership for the people.

[28:11] They were it. and yet they missed the most important truth that they could ever embrace. What will be the outcome of such news?

What will be the result of such divine power? What will we see in their life? Will they call for revival? Will they say let's worship, let's celebrate?

No, we find in the next section, verses 49 to 57, it resulted in finality for them. Resulted in finality. One of them, Caiaphas, who was the high priest, this is verse 49, said to them, it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.

You get that? Here is the high priest. Here is the one who represents righteousness for the people. Here is the one guy who enters every year, once a year, the holy of holies, to act as a mediator for the people, and what is he doing?

He's calling for a breaking of the ten commandments. Let's murder. Let's take care of this Jesus. He calls this council, we find this later, it's better that one man should perish for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.

[29 : 44] What is the issue for Caiaphas? Well, we find in verse 48, the Romans, they're afraid the Romans will take away both our place and our nation. We find from Caiaphas' own words in verse 50, that it's better for one man should die for the people and not that the whole nation should perish.

They're worried about the nation itself. They're worried about the traditions and they're worried about their system. Jesus was a threat to the religious establishment.

The writing was on the wall. Jesus represented something completely different. He had a different view of the law, a different view of the temple, a different view of righteousness, a different view of the heart, a different view of the Sabbath, a different view of God.

Jesus shattered everything that was familiar. Jesus shook the foundations of their traditional understanding. Jesus, in all of his I am statements, was helping these group of people to understand that what was symbolized in the Old Testament was a reality in him.

It was pointing to him, but they had loved the symbol more than they loved the object that that symbol was pointing to. He says, I am the bread of life.

[31 : 13] Before, they had received the manna in the wilderness and it was sustenance and they thought of themselves as providing this or being the owners of the word and those who could dispense this word to others.

Jesus says, I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. Those who had been the light to the Gentiles was now represented in Christ himself. And on and on it goes.

Jesus was the fulfillment of all that had been pointed to in the Old Testament. There is no wonder why the Pharisees hated Jesus. Those who were given the responsibility of overseeing the religious practices, they were seeing Jesus as a legitimate threat.

but let's not get too haughty. Let's not get too proud because are there not times in our own lives where God has had to confront us with the doctrinal premises that we once had because of heritage and tradition but now God has woken us up and helped us to see the deficiencies of those views.

Whether it be our system of religion, our ideas of spirituality, our structure of church, our pursuit of getting attention, our priorities in life, our desires are to go perhaps to the motions and get credit for it somehow.

[32 : 43] In many ways we are not a whole lot different than the Pharisees. We need Jesus to change everything in our lives. Jesus.

Interesting, it says in verse 51 that Caiaphas did not say this on his own accord. Unwittingly, Caiaphas is prophesying of the substitutionary death of Jesus that would not only be for the Jewish nation but would be for all of mankind.

I find it interesting that in this event, the event that pushed these men over the edge was the event where life shows up front and center.

And their response to the God of life was, kill him! Life shows up and their hearts are exposed.

Jesus has already pinpointed it. In John chapter 8 he says, you are from below, I am from above, you are of your father the devil and your will is to do your father's desires.

[33 : 49] He was a murderer from the beginning and has nothing to do with the truth. I'm life. Who will you follow?

Who will you embrace? And they made their final decision. We're going with death. We're following our father, the devil. We're pursuing the murder of Jesus.

We're getting rid of this threat. It says in verse 53, from that day they made plans to put him to death. This was the moment of finality.

Grace was expended for these men. It says in verse 54, Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews but went from there to the region near the wilderness to a town called Ephraim and there he stayed with his disciples.

A ministry that was public. a ministry that was accessible. The word that had been close to them is now withdrawn. They had made up their minds.

[34 : 58] We don't want this Jesus anymore. Up to this point we have seen the remarkable response of faith across the board. We see if you chronicle and if you've been taking notes and underlining in the scriptures many believed, many believed, many believed in almost every chapter.

From this point on we don't see those words again. Except for in chapter 12, verse 11 that refers to this event. But from this point on we don't see many believing anymore in the gospel of John.

Finality had been rung. This marks a radical shift in Jesus' ministry. It moves from the public now into the private. And now the city is on high alert.

We find that in verses 56 and 57. They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, what do you think? That he will come to the feast at all? Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was he should let them know so they might arrest him.

The city is put on high alert. If Jesus comes in privately, if he comes in secretly, let us know we want to deal with him. Isn't it amazing that Jesus picks that moment to parade himself in with grand array?

[36 : 24] The triumphal entry? You don't have to worry about missing me. Another statement that he'll make in chapter 12. So what about you?

What does Lazarus' resurrection mean for you? What do we do with this information? First, it's been sung about and talked about through our worship service.

We know that resurrection power is for you. It's offered to you. Have you embraced, received, accepted the resurrection power in your life?

It is available for you. Paul talks about our previous status. In Ephesians chapter 2, he says, you were once dead in trespasses and sins.

You were once like Lazarus. You had no hope. You contributed nothing to spirituality. It was lights out for you. There was nothing you could do.

[37 : 25] It was over. But, it says, but God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

The invitation that was available on that day when Lazarus was raised from the grave and two categories of individuals were there, those who believed and those who rejected, it stands front and center.

That decision is offered to you this morning. Have you embraced, received, taken hold of the power of the resurrection that's available for you today?

It's available through faith in Jesus Christ. As you confess your sin, as you make him the Lord of your life, the miracle was not in question for these men.

It was the implications of this miracle. that were in question. Resurrection power is offered to you. Number two, the resurrection power for those in faith is in you.

[38 : 37] Romans chapter six talks about this. It says, if we've been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. It says, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Death no longer has dominion over us. You don't have to be enslaved to sin anymore. You don't have to perform the rituals and the duties and the bondage that sin has once placed over you.

You can be free. You can live the abundant life that God has called you to live. Free from guilt and free from self. Free from despair.

Free from enslaving sin. Freedom from the pressures of this life. Freedom from the burden of performance. In pleasing people, you are free to live in Christ.

His power working in and through your life. And finally, there's resurrection power through you. Resurrection power through you.

[39 : 45] That you can be a conduit of God's power to others. As the power of God shows up in your life and people notice God, not you.

They notice God shining through. Wonderful example of this is the church of Thessalonica. This group of individuals that just were broken in every way.

And Paul talks about the power of the gospel that came to them and he noticed it and because of the power of the resurrection working in their life, it says that the word of God not only sounded forth among them, but in Macedonia and Achaia.

Does our life evidence the power of his life? Does our life evidence the priority of his life? life? I came, Jesus says, that they may have life and that they might have it abundantly.

Or is it possible that the priorities of our life actually give way and seem to point to the father, the devil?

[41 : 02] are we of the father of life or do we represent the father of death? I just want to make a brief comment to the teens, to the singles, to those of you who are younger.

father, I see this tendency, this tendency to be caught up with the grotesque, this tendency to be caught up and involved in those that are exalting violence and brutality, those that are grisly and horrifying.

The games that we play, the video gaming that we do, the music that we listen to, the things that we watch on TV, the things that we do on Halloween, the ways that we dress up, the athletics that we enjoy to watch, that exalt brutality, exalt death, which is from the author of death and not from the author of life.

Does our life advocate life? Does life show up in us? the life of God showing through, that we treasure life, we have a love for life that dominates our focus, our service, attention, resources, affection, prayers, leisure, passion, and priorities.

That we must promote life as a representative of God, who is the God of resurrection and life. Let's pray.

[42 : 43] Lord, as we look at the life of Lazarus, and we see that although an ordinary man, you showed up and you made his story truly amazing.

And not because of Lazarus, but because of your resurrection life that transformed his dead status, God of God, you could be a testimony to what you could accomplish.

And as we'll see in chapter 12, it was a testimony that continued to smack the Pharisees in the face. And this morning, as we evaluate our own lives, God, I pray that we would be conduits of life.

I pray that our lives would demonstrate the power of God working through, helping us to overcome the dead works of unrighteousness and moving forward to abundant life and obedience so that we can exalt the God of life.

So this morning, if you don't know Jesus, if you've not experienced that power, that resurrection power that transforms life, that helps to establish fellowship with God, we would love to invite you to experience that.

[44:08] God, and maybe you have accepted Christ as your Savior, but you know that there are things in your life that mimic the old life that you once had.

Conformity to dead works and not demonstrating conformity to obedience to Jesus. We would love to pray with you. So Lord, we pray.

We pray that you would do a work in us this moment. help us to be a church that reflects the life-giving words, message, and testimony of our Savior.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's pray.