

Another Resurrection

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[0 : 00] He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.! And he came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes,! And his face was bound about with a napkin.

Jesus said unto them, Loose him and let him go. And I would like to preach to you for just a few minutes this morning on this subject.

But another resurrection. Another resurrection. And I pray that the Lord would help us today to be inspired by his word. Amen.

Death always precedes resurrection. And so the story of what we call Easter is always preceded by something that is very unpleasant.

And that is death. And death actually surrounds a lot of these stories that we find in the Gospels.

[1 : 17] And there's always this underlying thing. In fact, Jesus told his disciples several times. He was going to have to go to Jerusalem. He was going to have to suffer at the hands of the elders.

He was going to be put to death. And they rebuked him. They said, No, that's not going to happen. We're not going to let that happen. Or we're going to go with you. We'll die with you. All of these things. There was always this underlying theme of death.

And it was really, really important because Jesus was trying to teach them something. But even in this particular story, and some of you may be very familiar with this story of Lazarus.

This is not the Lazarus that is the rich man in Lazarus' story. This is another Lazarus who is the brother of both Martha and Mary. And they all live together.

And that Martha is the Martha that had washed Jesus' feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, had anointed them with oil. And all of this kind of comes together.

[2 : 18] And this is really right before Jesus is about to go to Jerusalem. And be given over to the Romans for crucifixion. But this story is very, very important to all of us.

Because it really does show that there is something that everybody gets to participate in. And so when we talk about this man, Lazarus, who was really the only person in the Bible that we can find, or that I can find, at least in the writings of the New Testament, that was dead not just for a moment, but had been dead for several days, he was risen from the dead.

Jesus brought him back to life. And it's very remarkable because it tells us a lot. It tells us a lot about the time, what they believed in, what was going through their mind.

But it also is going to reflect upon us and tell us a little bit about our own view of death and our own view of how resurrection actually happens.

And so the theme of death is very much throughout all of these parts of the Gospels. And it seems to us, and all of you have probably, maybe not all of you, but most of you have probably been to a funeral or a wake or somewhere where somebody had died.

- [3 : 53] And death to us seems very final, doesn't it? It seems like that's the end, and there's nothing else. We're completely and forever and permanently separated from that individual that went off to be buried or to be cremated.
- And that brings a tremendous amount of pain to a lot of people. If they were very loved, if maybe it was somebody that had been in the family a long time, somebody that had been respected, it can create a tremendous amount of pain.
- Just a couple of weeks ago, I was conducting a service at the funeral home. And there was a lot of pain in that family.
- And it was evident. It just seems like when somebody is taken from us, it hurts. It hurts quite a lot. And so every one of us has been touched by death in some way.
- Some of us have experienced it with somebody close at hand or maybe just somebody that was a good friend. But Jesus, even preceding all of what we're going to get into, he starts to say things to his hearers, and he says things like this.
- [5 : 14] He says, I am the good shepherd. And the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. He's already talking about laying down his life.
- And he says to this, and he says about this, he says, my sheep, they know my voice, and they hear my voice.
- He continues to talk on. And Jesus begins to tell the crowd who he is. And he begins to say things to them that they are all of a sudden confronted with this truth about what he is saying about himself.
- He says things like, before Abraham was, I am. Or he says, if you destroy this temple in three days, I will raise it up. And they actually take up stones to stone him because they are so offended at the truths that he is telling them, they don't know what else to do except kill him.
- That's what they want to do. And they are constantly trying to conspire to kill him. They are trying to set him up so that they can take him to court, have him deemed guilty, and then pass sentence on him.
- [6 : 31] And so Jesus knows that his day is coming and that his time is coming. And by the time we get to this story about Lazarus, he is not really too far away from it.
- But the crowd is constantly seeking to take hold of him. And these are not people who are officials in the government. These are just the normal, everyday people just like you and I.
- They are so angry with him that they want to stone him to death. That's a pretty rough way to go. It's not quick. It's not simple. It's not easy.
- It's very protracted. It's very prolonged. And stoning was something that was very common in that time. But then we get to this story of a man whose name is Lazarus.
- And the Bible tells us in John chapter 11, John records this. He says there was a certain man that was sick, and his name was Lazarus. And he was of Bethany, the town that Mary and her sister Martha lived in.
- [7 : 40] They lived together, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. They lived there in Bethany. And he was very sick. And word was sent to Jesus who was not near Bethany at that time.
- Bethany was very close to Jerusalem, just a couple of miles away. And so it was in proximity of the place where they were conspiring to somehow take Jesus and crucify him or have him killed in some way.
- And so when Jesus gets this word, his disciples are with him, and they say, we should go see him.
- And Jesus says, well, Lazarus is sleeping. And they say, oh, well, if he's sleeping, then he's doing well. He must be okay.

As if he's just resting. And so Jesus doesn't go right away. And when he gets the news and he hears that Lazarus is sick, and probably the fact that word had been sent to him that Lazarus is sick is so that you could come right away, lay your hand on him, heal him.

[8 : 49] You're good friends. You love Lazarus. Or this is really urgent, Jesus. This is like going to the emergency room. But instead, Jesus says, we're going to wait a couple days.

We're not going to go right away. We're just going to wait a couple of days. And so the Bible says when he hears it that he stayed two days where he was at.

And then after, he says to his disciples, let's go. We're going to go down to Judea, to Bethany. And his disciples said, Master, I don't know if you forgot, but recently, the last time you were down there, they were trying to stone you.

And so that's probably not the best place to go. This is probably the wrong time to go. Let's not do that. And Jesus insists. He says, no, we're going to go. We're going to go down to Bethany.

We're going to go see Lazarus. And they said, okay, well, if we're going to go, then we're all going to go. And we're all going to be stoned with you. That's how loyal they were.

[9 : 51] And they said, we're just going to go. Thomas especially says, you know what? I'm going to go, and I'm going to be stoned with him. And so they had just made up their mind that that's what they were going to do.

These were the loyal followers that would go with him just anywhere. Jesus decides to go, and they go. And when Jesus gets there, something very interesting happens.

He says, on the way, I should say before he got there, as they're all talking about it, he says, boys, I need to tell you something. We're headed over there, but Lazarus is already dead.

And he springs that on him like it's some deep, held, dark secret. But he just tells them, he says, Lazarus is already dead.

And in their mind, they must be thinking, well, why didn't we go earlier? Why did you wait a couple of days before you even started out? Why did you do that?

[10 : 56] And the fact that Lazarus is dead now has painted this whole thing in a completely different way. And they don't really know what to do with this. And so they're headed down toward Bethany.

Lazarus has already died. And Jesus probably could have made it earlier, but he just decided to wait. I don't know if you've ever had something important happening in your life, and you called on somebody and said, you know what, I need your help.

And they said, of course, I'll be there. But they don't really tell you when. Just at some point, I'll be there. A couple days, a couple weeks maybe, who knows.

And when they finally got there, they said, you tell them, you know, yeah, I needed your help then, not now. So Jesus gets down there, and he founds in this passage, it says, when Jesus came, he found that they had lain, that he had lain in the grave four days already.

Four days. Now, I'm not an expert on this, but I know that if you leave some things out of the refrigerator for four days, they start to get a little unpleasant.

[12 : 20] They start to look a little bit different. You open it up, and it starts to smell a little bit different. And things happen in four days, and especially in an area that can get very warm or very hot, and where things can just spoil very quickly.

It says, Bethany was close to this, close to Jerusalem. And the Bible says here, it says, when Martha hears that Jesus is near, she goes out to meet him.

And she wants to talk to him. And she wants to say some things. And she says, you know, Lord, if you had been here a few days ago, my brother would still be alive.

Almost as if to say, why didn't you come when you first got the news? And Jesus says to her, he says, your brother is going to rise again.

Now, that was not unusual for Martha, because they believed in a resurrection. And so she says, I know he will rise again on the last day, Lord.

[13 : 44] I know that, but right now it really hurts. And I don't like this. And so she says, I believe in what you're saying, because there's some day far off in the distance where he's going to rise again.

And Jesus says unto her, he said, No, I am the resurrection and the life. And he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

And listen to what he says. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. And then he says, do you believe this? Now, Jesus is kind of changing the game here.

He says, you're talking about a resurrection that's way off in the future. He said, but I want you to know that not only am I that resurrection, but I am bringing it forward right here, right now.

Now, I'm the resurrection. And then he says, and whoever dies, though he were dead, yet he's going to live.

[15 : 03] He says, if those that believe in me will never die. And then he asks her, you believe this? Now, I don't know if you ever had somebody ask you, do you believe this?

Because that's kind of where the rubber meets the road. Like, I hear that. I can give mental assent to that. I can agree to that.

But what he's asking her is this. Do you wholeheartedly embrace this idea that I am the resurrection? That there is no death around me?

This is the one that's about to go off to die. But he says, I'm the resurrection right here, right now. I'm not waiting for that day in the future that you're waiting for.

We're talking about two different things here. I am the resurrection. I'm bringing this whole thing forward. And so Martha says to him, yes, Lord, I believe that you're the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

[16 : 11] After that, she goes and calls her sister Mary, who's back at the house. And Mary comes out, and she falls at his feet and says, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would still be alive.

And so Jesus says, when she had come, he says, tell me where he is. Tell me where you have laid him.

And so they take him to the place. And Jesus is so moved by this whole scenario here, this whole scene. Jesus is so moved.

He begins to weep. He is weeping. And this is the only place where we ever find that it says that he wept.

But he is weeping. He is so close to these people. These are not just casual acquaintances. These are his deep friends. And he is weeping for them.

[17 : 19] And Lazarus is dead. And they say, behold, how he loved him. And so some of them begin to say, couldn't this man, the one that had opened blind eyes and had done all of these other wonderful works, couldn't he have prevented death?

Now, this is interesting. Because we are still trying to prevent death. We are a generation.

And in fact, this current generation is living longer than any other previous generation. And with the help of medical advancement, people are living longer today.

And people are living longer today than they have ever lived. And we sometimes have this idea that death is never supposed to come.

Unless we are so old and gray and not really able to do very much. Then we kind of expect it. But we never really embrace death.

[18 : 34] We never really think about it as our friend. We never really think about death as something that is welcome. We are constantly trying to prolong life and become even younger if we possibly can.

And that is something that is just kind of built into us now. And so even these people say, couldn't he have prevented death?

I mean, isn't that the whole idea of never die? To not have to go through that? Isn't that why we are here? We are supposed to live and never ever pass away?

That's the mindset here. But that's not what Jesus is really all about. And so they take him to the grave.

They take him to the place. And it says, Jesus, therefore, again, groaning in himself, came to the grave. And it was a cave. And a stone laid over it.

[19 : 38] Now, this was very common in that time. They didn't really dig holes in the ground and lay people in them like we do. They would dig out a cave.

And they would roll a stone over it. And some of these stones were very heavy. They were very large. It took many people to move them. But once you were sealed in there, you were sealed.

You weren't coming out. You were there. And so they laid him in one of these. And Jesus says this.

And this is really kind of what I want to get to. Jesus said, take away the stone. And Martha, the sister of Lazarus, says, Lord, he's been dead four days.

If we roll this thing away, he's going to stink. Now, here's the question.

[20 : 50] What do you want? Do you want to see a miracle? Or would you rather avoid the stink? Do you want to see something happen?

Or would you rather avoid the unpleasantness that you're about to experience? Because you're about to experience unpleasantness.

It's not going to be nice. It's not going to be pretty. It's not going to be lovely. It's going to stink. That's the potential right here.

You have two things. Do you want a miracle? Or do you want a stink? And most of us would say, well, I want a miracle.

To that, I would say, are you ready for the stink? Are you ready for what's ugly? Before you get the miracle.

[21 : 54] And here's where we are like Martha. God wants to hand us something that is wonderful. But at that moment, we think of all of the negative things that can potentially happen along with all that.

And we begin to say, well, I'm not so sure. I'm not really sure I want this. Because if that happens, I might potentially have to go through something that is very unpleasant.

And something that I really don't want to experience. I don't like those smells. I don't like that experience. I don't want to see what's behind the stone.

I don't want any of that. I don't want to know. I just want to turn a blind eye to it. But that's not how it works. See, here's the thing.

If I was to ask those of you today, how many of you would like a miracle in your life? Most of you would say, yeah, sure, I want one.

[23 : 04] So my next question would be, are you prepared to go through the unpleasantness to get there? Are you prepared to go to let go of some things or to have to experience some things that may be negative or potentially negative, that may expose something that is ugly in life, that may expose something that is not so pleasant to everybody around you?

In other words, are you willing to be opened up enough, as it were, to say, you know what? I'm just going to let it go here and take a chance.

And people might not appreciate what they're going to know about me or hear about me or experience about me. But somehow I've got to get to the miracle that God's got in my life because I need some resurrecting.

I need some power to happen in my life. I need something to happen in my life. But you know what? I don't really want to go through that. I don't really want to have to have that exposed.

I don't want that told about me. I don't want people knowing what my past was like. I don't want people knowing what my present is like. I don't want people knowing what's in my heart.

[24 : 23] I don't want people knowing what's in my mind. I'm not really willing to roll away that stone. And to that I would say then you're not really willing to get the miracle that you really want.

But if you are willing to allow God to do in your life what He really wants to do you might have to roll away the stone that's going to expose maybe some of the things that are inside here or inside here or some of the beliefs that we carry around that are contrary to what God is trying to do.

And this is where Martha's at. She's saying Lord I'd love to see my brother alive but he stinks right now.

And it's really going to be ugly if we do this. It's not going to be a happy time. And so we don't see it in the dialogue but I would imagine that Jesus looking back on her saying then tell me what you want.

Because if we don't roll it away He's not coming back. So if we don't take the risk here of removing it and exposing all that then we don't have the potential to bring Him back.

[26 : 06] You know when I first kind of saw this I thought what are all the ideas that I've ever had to carry around in my own head?

What are some of the things that I'm going to have to let go of to let God do the miraculous in my own life? What are some of the unpleasant things that have happened to me?

What of those am I going to have to let go of in order to let God do the miraculous?

Things that I need to forgive. People I need to forgive. Stories that may need to be exposed.

things about my own personal life that I just may have to put out there for others to judge so that God can do the miraculous.

[27 : 12] Because some of us here today we really do need a miracle. Some of us here today we really would like to have something done but the truth is is that some of us may be extremely unwilling to roll away that stone.

we may be extremely willing unwilling to let people know what the real deal is. What the real truth is.

What is really behind there that is not going to look good and is not going to smell good and is not going to sound good. And that's really that's really what repentance is all about.

It's not just simply saying I'm sorry but it's from turning around from what we were and headed in a completely different direction but guess what we might risk people knowing what all that was.

And so we go on to the rest of this story. so she says Lord by this time he stinks for he's been dead four days and Jesus said to her did I not tell you that if you would believe that you should see the glory of God.

[28 : 28] So here we go let's do this they get a hold of the stone and they roll it away and it's then that Jesus lifts up his eyes and he begins to pray and he says Father I knew that you would hear me and I know that you'll hear me but because of all of these people that are standing around he said I said it that they may believe that you have sent me and after he prays the Bible says when he had thus spoken he cried with a loud voice Lazarus come out of there now let me just tell you what happens because we know that Lazarus came out because I read that to you right at the beginning we know that he's already coming out but here's the thing when he says to roll away the stone that's not a one man job because these stones are extremely heavy they're big boulders basically and so there are people that have to get in there and begin to push and to push it and to push it and it's not easy work it's work that has to be done though otherwise

Lazarus is stuck in the grave but it is what we would call a group effort it is what we would call a community project it is what we would call an all hands on deck effort and project and let me just say this to us collectively today that the miracle doesn't happen unless everybody puts their hands on the work the miracle that God wants to give to the church doesn't come through one person or even two people it comes through a collective effort of everybody saying you know what I'm with you on this I'm going to do this I'm going to be with you I'm going to push and labor with you and we're all in this thing together it's not one person who has more faith than anybody else but it's everybody saying

I'm going to be there I'm going to be on time we're going to have this happen God's going to do it everybody gets involved in it and so they finally get the stone rolled away and Jesus prays and then he cries out Lazarus come out of there and from the deep dark recesses of this cave Lazarus begins to come forth and he's like this because he's bound up in wrappings that they did when people died they bind him up he's like a mummy coming out of there and here he comes slowly I don't know if he stinks or not but that's not the point anymore that part is already taken care of because they already ascended and said yeah we're going to take the chance here but he comes forth and when he's at the foot of the cave right there exposed to everybody

Jesus says there he is I want you to loose him I want you to let him walk and let him go because he's been bound up that way the last four days here again we see that it's not just a miracle between Jesus and the man but he gets everybody involved he says I want you to go and take those napkins or those wrappings off of him you want him to walk you loose him you want him to go free you loose him do you want him to be productive again you loose him do you want him to go out and be a part of his family again you get involved and loose him here's the thing here's our prayer Lord help them you help them

Lord I'll wait right here and when you're done helping him and he's all cleaned up and he smells good then I'll go help see that's what we pray you do all the work Lord you're the miracle worker I don't know how to do miracles but you know how to do it you loose them you raise them from the dead you heal them you opened his blind eyes you heal the leprosy and then we'll go put our arm around him you get them all cleaned up and then we'll go help Jesus is saying no you want you want to be loosed now think about this Lazarus is alive that's one thing that's a miracle but he's still bound up he's still bound up he still needs to be liberated he still needs to be loosed otherwise he's going to be like that can you imagine leaving somebody like that man what a great miracle you're on your own that's exactly that's exactly what happens to people we are so glad for what

[34 : 42] God did in your life we'll see you next Sunday we are so glad for what God did for you I hope you get the rest of the help that you need and by the way I'll be praying for you see that's what we have turned religion into but James says this he says true religion is this to visit the fatherless and the widows in other words as my old pastor used to say to put legs on those prayers prayers to go out and put your hand on people to go out and touch them to visit them to pray with them to do all of those things that they cannot do for themselves because there's still some wrappings on them let me tell you a little bit about wrappings!

and this is I didn't plan on saying this but let me tell you about this when somebody is born again of the water and of the spirit when they're baptized in Jesus name filled with the baptism of the Holy Ghost we say they're free I say they're just getting started because to become completely liberated at least from my experience from what I have observed with people is a process it takes time there's some things I'm still trying to unlearn I'm still trying to remove some of the wrappings of what I used to be and every now and then I need somebody to come off and peel another piece off and it's like oh that hurts yeah but it needed to come off but you know who does that the church does that the body does that and here's where

I'm going with this and I'm coming down to where I want to finish what I'm here to say Lazarus his raising is a miracle it's a miracle it's a true resurrection this is the defiance of death but Lazarus is going to die again at some point but his raising is a miracle but the other part of it is that it's a group effort it's a group effort and so what I want to tell all of us is that if you want to see people raised and I know people that need to be raised if you want to see people loosed and I know people that need to be loosed it's going to require everybody not just one or two not just me not just the guy that puts on the suit not just the guy that puts on the tie none of this means anything what matters is that everybody puts their hand on the stone that everybody puts their hands on the wrappings and says we need to loose him we need to loose him it's about really doing it as a whole and not doing it as an individual when the

Lord when the Lord started his kingdom it's not a kingdom of individuals it's a kingdom that is that is only made up of many many parts and you and I are just simply the many parts that's what we are but we have to be able to do that we have to be able to put our hand on somebody else and on people that and I'm just going to tell you something it can be inconvenient it might stink it might smell it might be really unpleasant and the minute that you decide that you're going to help somebody or that you want to help somebody and trust me I've been here many times but the minute that you decide you really want to help somebody you're going to experience some unpleasantness because people are people and they're not perfect and none of us is perfect and people have issues and problems in their life that they need help with and

I can't tell you how many conversations my wife and I have had have listened to or times that we have gone somewhere late at night because somebody needed some help or went to the hospital when it was inconvenient or experienced some things that were extremely unpleasant but she and I did that because we were taught long ago you got to go put your hand on people you can't just say hey I'm going to pray for you that doesn't cut it you've got to go and put your hand on somebody and say you know what he did it for me he lifted me up out of the miry clay as we used to sing he brought me out of the grave I don't have those grave clothes any longer as we sing sometimes I've let all that go but if he can do it for me he can do it for you and there might be some people they don't even realize that they need to be lifted up and resurrected and brought back to life but that's where we go to prayer and we say

[41 : 15] God would you somehow show them and then let me be a participant to see them raise up from the dead and can I tell you something that once we are born again of the water and of the spirit and once somebody enters into new life it is what Jesus said they'll never die again we just transition from this life into the next one but Paul said there is no death he said no death where is your sting grave you have no more victory why because Jesus paid the price and he brought it to you and I and I'm just asking us today I'm just asking us today are you willing to put your hand to the stone are you willing to put your hand to the wrapping on somebody's life and loose them are you willing to do that if he was willing to do that for us can we be willing to do that for somebody else to lay aside our preferences and lay aside our time and our wants for somebody can we do that

I think we can I think we can I think we can do that I want us to stand because we're going to pray right now but I think we can do it I don't think Jesus rose from the dead just so that we could have one day every year where we could say hallelujah he's alive no I don't think that at all I think that he rose from the dead to show us there's more than what is in this world there's a kingdom that needs to be built there's a kingdom that needs to be apprehended there's a kingdom that we need to participate in we are not passive bystanders we cannot be passive observationists we cannot we have to put our hand on it we have to put our hand to it we have to join up with the brother or sister or somebody say come on let's do this let's let's let's bring a

Lazarus out of the grave let's do this there are plenty of people today let me just tell you something we live in uncertain days we live in uncertain times there are a lot of people today that are fearful you know what they need they need a savior they need the one that conquered death they need the one to help them understand that life does not consist!

of what you and I think it consists! of but it consists of something that is far greater God I pray for everybody that's within this room right now Lord and I pray right now Lord that you would help us to understand and to realize that every one of us has got to put our hand on this we have got to put our hand on people we have got to put our hand on people situations Lord we have got to put our hand Lord on the things that bind them and we have to put our hand oh Lord so that they can be brought back from the dead and so that they can be loosed from the things that they have been bound by oh God I pray right now in the name of Jesus that you would help us that you would help us that you would help us oh God I pray right now Lord oh

I feel like we need to pray right now I feel like we need to pray right now would you help us oh! would you help us Lord would you help us right now God we have got to be able we got to be able to put our hand on it Lord we got to do it Jesus I pray that you would help us oh God I pray that you would help us Lord I pray that you would help us oh God I pray that you would help us God we need your help Lord we need your help oh God we need your help Lord we need your help oh God Jesus this is