

“If you believe, you will SEE the glory of God”

This morning, we are going to read John’s account of the Lord Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

I invite you to enter the narrative. Place yourself at the scene in Bethany, the hometown of Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary. Come to his tomb.

Perhaps you are one of the disciples who accompanied Jesus from Bethany beyond the Jordan to Bethany near Jerusalem.

Or maybe you are Martha, or Mary.

Or you are one of the Jews who came from Jerusalem to console Martha and Mary.

In order that you may join the story at the appropriate time, I am going to begin reading in verse 1 of chapter 11.

Join me as we follow Jesus to the tomb of the dead man Lazarus.

John 11:1-46

Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. 3 So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." 4 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was. 7 Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." 8 The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 "But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." 11 This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep." 12 The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." 13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep.

14 So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him." 16 Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him."

17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother. 20 Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. 21 Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 "Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."

28 When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." 29 And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him.

30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. 31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, 34 and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"

38 So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." 44 The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

45 Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.

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Such a gripping drama. The great issues of life and death are here. Love and grief are here. Suspense and amazement are here.

/This is the seventh and final sign miracle that John records in his gospel. \ This is the greatest miracle short of the resurrection of Jesus. The raising of Lazarus was volcanic, seismic. Nothing was the same after that.

There are some simple lessons for us here.

/1.The first one is the importance of prayer.\

Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that their brother was sick.

Jesus thanked His Father for hearing His prayer.

/Prayer is a gift. It is essential. \

A prayer came, and the Lord acted. Not because the latter depended on the former. Not at all. Rather, it was ordained to be this way in order that God might be glorified. And that His children might learn about the power of prayer.

Let these testimonies strengthen our faith in the power of prayer.

/2.The second lesson concerns death.\

If we learn anything from this story, it is this: /that the Lord came to earth to conquer death.\

Heb 2:14-15

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

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And since that is true, and since the worst fear is the fear of death, /once we learn this lesson, we need not fear any evil.\

/3.The third lesson is the lesson of love.\ Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus. Because of that love, He was deeply troubled by seeing the pain of death in their lives. He loved His Father, and His greatest desire was to glorify Him.

/Love is powerful. It is more powerful than death. (Song 8:6-7)\

1 John 4:16-19

16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. 19 We love, because He first loved us.

/The secret to banishing fear from our hearts is realizing how much God loves us.\

Oh, how He loves us! Nothing will ever separate us from His love.

/4. Our final lesson today is the lesson of glory.\

Glory is a very misunderstood thing. Consider this question:

/Through whom was God glorified by more that day: Thomas, or Lazarus?\

That might seem like a strange question, considering where Lazarus was that day.

After all, wasn't it glorious that Thomas was willing to die with Christ? What boldness, what courage he exhibited. The world is impressed with that sort of thing.

But that's not God's idea of glory.

Lazarus brought far more glory to the Lord that day than did Thomas or any of the disciples.

/But how did Lazarus glorify God? \ Ponder that for a moment.

/He glorified God by dying and by remaining dead for four days!\ That was his role.

2 Cor 12:9

9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

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/God is glorified through our weakness, not our strength.\

The idea of glory isn't that we do great things for God, but that He does great things for us.

Eph 3:20-21

20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

/Jesus brought the most glory of all to His Father that day.\ How did Jesus glorify God?

/

1. By remaining in Bethany beyond the Jordan for two more days.
2. By walking in the right direction.
3. By praying.
4. By speaking the truth, no matter what the consequences may be. \

John 11:4

4 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."

Lazarus come forth!

The Father raised Lazarus that day. Jesus did what His Father told Him to do.

/God will work the great works of our lives. We should just do what He tells us.\

Remain where you are a little longer.

Walk in the right direction.

Pray.

Speak the truth of God's word, no matter what the consequences.

/Others saw the glory of God that day.\ What did they do?

/They believed. They believed that Jesus was sent by the Father. \

They didn't climb mountains.

They didn't start ministries.

They didn't speak in tongues.

They simply believed.

The faith of Martha did not cause the glory of God to show up. /The glory of God was there for all to see. But not everyone saw it.\ They didn't believe that it could be there. So when it came, they missed it.

The star in the east was in the sky for all to see. But the Magi were watching for it, because they believed it would be there and they knew what it meant.

/That's what we are to do. If we believe, we will see the glory of God too.\

We're like Lazarus. We have died, and our life is hidden with Christ in God.

Gal 2:20

20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

We have been crucified with Christ. How do we glorify God? We live our lives now by faith in the Son of God. He is our life. The rest is up to God.