

## WHO IS JESUS

Week Six: The Resurrection and the Life

John 11:1-4 & 17-44

### INTRO

Good morning. If you have your Bible with you go ahead and open up to John 11. If you're using one of the Bibles in the pew racks our text is on page 897.

### SERMON

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."

<sup>4</sup> 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."

<sup>17</sup> Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

<sup>18</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. <sup>20</sup> So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

<sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup> She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

<sup>28</sup> When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." <sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup> Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved <sup>34</sup> in his spirit and greatly troubled. <sup>34</sup> And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" <sup>37</sup> But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days."

<sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." <sup>43</sup> When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." <sup>44</sup> The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

For the last 5 weeks we've been looking at John's gospel. Our goal in the series has been to see the real Jesus.

- We saw that Jesus is the Word from the Beginning in John 1
- He's the Joy of the Feast in John 2
- Last week we saw that Jesus is the Bread of Life. He's the only thing that satisfies our soul hunger.

So this morning when Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life.” I want you to know three truths about Jesus.

1. JESUS IS THE HOPE THAT CONFRONTS OUR GRIEF
2. JESUS IS THE COMPANION THAT ENTERS OUR GRIEF
3. JESUS IS THE SACRIFICE THAT BEARS OUR GRIEF

Let’s begin by seeing:

1. JESUS IS THE HOPE THAT CONFRONTS OUR GRIEF

The narrative begins when Martha and Mary send word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is ill.” John tells us that Jesus had a special relationship with Martha, Mary and Lazarus. They want Jesus to come and heal his friend.

Now, in the part of the narrative we didn’t read we learn that Jesus actually delayed his trip to see Lazarus by two days after he got the message. Combine that with a 2-day journey we pick up the story in verse 17:

*<sup>17</sup> Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. <sup>20</sup> So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him,*

At this point we can identify with Martha.

- She did everything in her power to help her brother.
- She called out to God in prayer.
- She sent word to Jesus, yet nothing happened.
- Her brother died.
- Now she’s grieving and Jesus arrives—she does the big sister thing—I’m going out to have a talk with Jesus.

*<sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”*

Martha is hurt, she’s frustrated. Jesus—**Where were you?** We can all identify with that. God—where are you?

And it’s here that Jesus confronts her grief:

*<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” <sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*

Now think about this. **Jesus doesn’t offer this grieving woman any words of support.** She’s suffering the loss of her brother and Jesus actually challenges her grief. He doesn’t say, “I’m sorry. I love you.” He says, **“Why aren’t you believing?”** Can you imagine going to a funeral visitation and saying to someone in tears, **“Why aren’t you believing?”**

Why does he meet her grief with **confrontation**?

**It’s because Martha has such a tiny perspective** and Jesus is trying to get her to see the bigger picture. In this moment Martha needed truth, not just support.

You see, Martha thought she had a pulse on the situation. Lazarus is sick—he needs a physician, or even a miracle worker. She calls Jesus, and she’s sure that the problem is solved. Jesus has done miracles for strangers—surely he would do this for a friend. But Jesus was late, and now there’s no hope. “If you had been here, he would be alive. But now he’s dead so we’ll have to wait for the afterlife.”

Martha has a tiny perspective, and Jesus chooses not to console her in her grief **but to speak truth that will move her out of it.**

- Martha said, “We’ll have to wait for the resurrection.”
- Jesus said, “The resurrection is standing in front of you.”

Notice what Jesus does not say. He does not say, “I have the power to raise the dead.” He doesn’t say, “I have resurrection life.” **He says, “I am the power to raise the dead. I am the resurrection. I am the life.”** Martha, you’re despondent and the source of all life is standing in front of you. In other words, Martha, **if you only knew who you were talking to...**

In these words, Jesus is saying:

- I’ve preached good sermons—but I’m not just a good teacher.
- I have gone through the cities blessing the little children—but I’m not just a nice guy.
- I’ve obeyed all the laws of Moses—but I’m not just a Holy Man.
- I’ve challenged the authority of the emperor—but I’m not just a political rebel.
- I’ve called out the hypocrisy of the religious crowd—but I’m not just a reformer.
- I’ve healed the sick, and calmed the sea—but I’m not just a miracle worker.
- I am the source of all life.
- I am the one who spoke the universe into existence when there was nothing.
- I am the one who knew you, Martha, and Mary and Lazarus a millennium before you were born.
- You think a couple of days in a grave can stop my power? I’m not late, I’m right on time.
- You think you need a miracle? **No Martha—you need resurrection power and life—and I’m standing right here.**

To many people—Jesus is just an earthbound healer, and Jesus challenges your tiny perspective. Jesus is the one who confronts our miniscule hopes of physical healing with resurrection reality of life after death.

It’s good to pray for Jesus to heal sick people, but let me ask you this:

**If God answered every prayer you prayed last week, how many people would be moved from their guilt sin and death into the light of resurrection life in Jesus?**

I’m not saying that we shouldn’t pray for God to heal people—but Jesus is confronting our tiny perspective and calling us to a higher reality—a higher plane of living in which he is the exalted Lord of **Life doesn’t just call sick people out of the bed—he calls dead sinners out of their graves.**

**So let’s go boldly to Jesus with prayers for the sick. Let’s go with equal boldness to the judge and plead the case for broken sinners just like we once were and beg God to use us to reach them with the gospel of the resurrection and the life.**

He confronts our grief with resurrection hope. But notice that he doesn’t just confront.

## 2. JESUS IS THE COMPANION THAT ENTERS OUR GRIEF

<sup>32</sup> *Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”*

Now see what happens. Mary comes to Jesus and says the exact same thing that Martha said. “Lord, if you had been here...”

Now, what do you do when someone asks you the very question you just answered? You get exasperated, right? “How many time do I have to explain to everyone my power? Have you learned nothing about me? Ok, let me tell you everything I just told Martha.”

But Jesus doesn’t do that. In fact, Jesus responds in the complete opposite way to Mary. They both say, “Lord, if you had been here...”

Jesus confronts and challenges Martha, but he embraces Mary and enters right into her grief.

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was **deeply moved**<sup>le</sup> **in his spirit and greatly troubled.** <sup>34</sup> And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” <sup>35</sup> **Jesus wept.**

Why the challenge to Martha, and the **comfort** to Mary?

*It’s because Jesus is showing us that he is the great counselor.*

Some people need bracing truth. Others need you to sit and grieve with them. One of the most damaging things you can do is give bracing truth to someone who needs compassionate comfort. And one of the worst things you can do is to give comfort to someone who is in desperate need of shaking truth.

But, why does Jesus weep? Why is **he** deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled? He’s already said he’s the resurrection.

Let me ask this another way. If you knew you had the power to raise Lazarus; if you knew that in 10 minutes he would be alive again and everyone would be celebrating, why would you weep?

It’s because Jesus isn’t just the exalted God who stands above our pain. He’s also the lowly man who enters into our grief with us.

Friends, listen to me. In Jesus we have a God who has suffered. Our Father knows what it’s like to lose a child. Jesus, our brother, knows what it’s like to have a Father turn his back away.

*The other reason Jesus weeps here is to teach us how we are to think of death.*

As a pastor you get to be a part of a lot of funerals. You do a lot of hospital visits. One thing I hear quite often in hospital rooms, and at gravesides, is “**Well, death is just a part of life.**”

My friends, Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus because he is the God **who created all things—but he didn’t create death.** Jesus wept because death is not a part of his plan for life. Death entered this world because we cut ourselves off from the life of God. We broke our relationship with the source of life.

**No, death isn’t just a part of life. Death is a perversion of life.**

That’s why we all hate death so much. It’s why we build hospitals, and work on our diets, and exercise, and develop medicine. We’re constantly trying to delay death. We have an inner compulsion that death is not the way it’s supposed to be.

The words here in our passage say that Jesus was **deeply moved.** But that’s a rather weak translation. Literally—he snorted like an angry animal. Like a bull ready to charge. He shook with emotion.

Jesus isn’t just hurt over Lazarus’ death—he’s angry. He’s about to go to war against death.

He isn’t just the God who confronts our grief and calls us to faith. He’s the companion that sits next to us and gets angry with us. He is utter strength, and utter weakness. He’s the God of truth to Martha, and the God of mercy to Mary. He’s both. You don’t just need the Jesus who stands above you and confronts you with truth. You need the Jesus who comes alongside you with mercy. He’s the companion who enters into your grief.

Finally:

### 3. JESUS IS THE SACRIFICE THAT BEARS OUR GRIEF

<sup>38</sup> **Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.** <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” <sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, “**Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?**” <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.” <sup>43</sup> When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” <sup>44</sup> **The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”**

45 Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, 46 but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. 47 So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." ...

Now—don't miss this—verse 53:

**53 So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.**

Jesus had performed many miracles—and most of them caused the religious crowd anxiety. But this miracle **sent them over the edge**. And Jesus knew it would. He knew that healing blind people, and making bread multiply would cause friction—but raising the dead—that was the last straw. **Jesus knew that by raising Lazarus from the dead he was consigning himself to death.** He knew that to give Lazarus life he would have to give up his own.

**Jesus knew that to bring Lazarus out of the grave, he would have to go into it.**

And that was his plan all along.

Jesus does the unthinkable. He calls the dead back up through death into life. Lazarus wakes up from his sleep. They unwrap him. I imagine a few people fainted. The family is reunited. It looks as if everything is turning out well.

I'm sure that Martha, Mary, and especially Lazarus were thankful for the extra years they got to spend together.

But 10, or 20, or 30 years later guess what happened.

**Lazarus reentered the tomb, and he's still there today. Martha died. Mary died. They are still in the tomb today.**

- What good are miracles if they don't last?
- What good is another 10, 20, 50 years if in the end we lose everything to death's grip?

You see, we stand exactly in Lazarus place.

What good is it to have someone confront our grief?

What good is it to have someone come alongside us in our grief?

What good is all that **if in the end we are crushed and killed by our grief?**

**Listen to me friends: Jesus didn't just enter into your grief. He entered your grave.**

Jesus Christ went into your grave, so that you can come out. He was cut off so that you could be brought in. He was rejected so that you could be accepted. He was put to death so that you could be raised to life.

**But unlike Lazarus, who died and rose and died again, Jesus Christ died, and was raised and will never again taste death.**

Three days after he entered the grave—he burst forth in victorious life. We have entered a new age. The King has returned, and he has reclaimed all that is his. The realm of sin and death has been turned on its head. The black gate of hell is broken. The night is over. The sun is rising, and Jesus is making all things new.