

Day 208, John 11

by David Servant

David Servant's sermon explores the profound lessons of faith, healing, and compassion illustrated in the story of Lazarus' resurrection in John 11.

Scripture: John 5:28, John 11:4, John 11:35, John 11:44, Romans 12:15

Topics: "Divine Healing", "Eternal Life"

Description

David Servant delves into the story of Lazarus' resurrection, highlighting how Jesus' delay in coming to Lazarus was a test of faith for Mary and Martha, and how their belief in Jesus' power over death was ultimately rewarded with Lazarus' miraculous resurrection. Despite Jesus' love for Lazarus, his sickness was not a reflection of Jesus' lack of love, but rather a test of faith that could ultimately bring glory to God through healing. The resurrection of Lazarus serves as a powerful testament to Jesus' divinity and his ability to offer eternal life to those who believe in Him, foreshadowing the even greater resurrection to come in the future.

Transcript

It is interesting that when John first mentions Mary in today's reading, he identifies her as "the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair" (11:2), an incident that hasn't occurred yet in the chronology of John's Gospel (12:1-3). John assumed that his readers already knew of that incident. It was that Mary, not any of the other three women named Mary mentioned in the Gospels---Jesus' mother, Mary Magdalene, and the mother of James---whose brother Lazarus, was sick.

Concerning Lazarus' sickness, Jesus said that it was "not unto death, but for the glory of God" (11:4). Obviously, Jesus was not saying that God was glorified by Lazarus' sickness, but rather, that God would be glorified by Lazarus' healing and resurrection. I mention this only because we occasionally hear a sick Christian claim that his or her sickness is like Lazarus' sickness, one that glorifies God. God is not glorified by sickness, but by healing.

Notice that even though Jesus loved Lazarus (11:3, 5), He didn't prevent Lazarus from becoming sick. By the same token, there is no reason to think that sickness is an indication that Jesus doesn't love you. Your sickness could, perhaps, be permitted by Him as a test of your faith. In that case, your sickness could also then be said to be "for the glory of God," if you, like Lazarus, are ultimately healed. So trust God!

Speaking of tests of faith, Mary and Martha certainly had their faith tested. Jesus deliberately delayed His coming to them when He received their news of Lazarus' sickness. It is more difficult to believe that someone is going to come back to life after being dead four days than it is to believe that someone who is ill will recover. Martha, however, certainly expressed faith that Jesus' arrival was not too late (11:21-22).

Mary and Martha both had their faith tested again when Jesus ordered that the stone across Lazarus' tomb be removed. Martha reacted with concern that Lazarus' body would stink. Jesus reassured her that if God could raise her dead brother, He could also take care of little things like bad odors! (My paraphrase.)

I would love to see a video of this entire incident, but just imagining it tickles my brain. When Jesus commanded Lazarus to "come forth," a mummy appeared at the cave's entrance. Lazarus was "bound hand and foot with wrappings" and even "his face was wrapped around with a cloth" (11:44). There is a good possibility that his legs were wrapped together, meaning that he crawled or perhaps supernaturally floated to the cave's entrance. Imagine the reaction of the multitude (12:17) who were there! If the entire Bible consisted of just this single chapter in John, it would be enough to convince any open-minded person that Jesus is the Son of God who is offering eternal life to everyone who will believe in Him. Yet, amazingly, some who witnessed what was perhaps the greatest miracle of all human history up until that time ran to deliver a negative report to Jesus' greatest antagonists, the Pharisees (11:46). More amazing, however, is the fact that this miracle is nothing compared to what is coming in the future, when Jesus will call forth every dead body in the world from their tombs (5:28-29). Jesus was just warming up at Lazarus' tomb!

If you aren't good at memorizing Bible verses, you are in luck today if you still would like to give it a try by memorizing John 11:35: "Jesus wept." That is the Bible's shortest verse.

Why did Jesus weep if He knew Lazarus would be raised from the dead? I wonder about that. Since Jesus was the most compassionate person to ever walk the face of the earth, perhaps He wept simply because He was among other weeping people. Paul wrote that we should "weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15). Or perhaps Jesus wept for Lazarus because He knew he was going to have to return to this sinful world after spending four glorious days in paradise. Going from earth to heaven is quite a joy. I understand the return trip, however, can be quite depressing!

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