

Christ's Revelation to His Friends

by Ed Miller

God allows difficult circumstances in our lives to test our faith and to manifest Himself in a greater way.

Duration: 58:52

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 11:3-35, 1 Thessalonians 5:16

Topics: "Divine Revelation", "Christian Friendship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses how the Lord Jesus manifests Himself to His friends. The speaker emphasizes that all truth is simple because truth is a person, Jesus. The sermon explores four illustrations from the text on how God tests the faith of His friends. The speaker also highlights different ways in which Jesus manifests Himself to His friends, such as through words, touch, hugs, looks, sermons, and tears, based on the specific needs of each individual.

Transcript

Good evening. It's good to be with you. I'll ask you to open your Bibles, please, to John chapter 11, if you would.

It's a great joy for me to be able to be with you again, mainly because I know the Lord has worked in so many of you a hunger, a desire to know Him. And that's why we gather that we might see the Lord. As we come to the study of God's Word, there's a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable.

And that principle is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. As you study this precious book, you're going to find many, many helpful tools. There are books of sermons and commentaries and concordances and atlases and dictionaries and word studies and all kinds of help.

But we cannot trust the help. We thank God for the help, and that gives us some of the human side. But the other side, the divine side, only God can reveal God.

And He has promised if we would come as little children, that He would dawn His Son upon us. He desires, He's full, and He's filled for you and for me. And there's an infinite longing, a willingness in God to minister unto us.

Open your mouth wide and He'll fill it. That's the promise. And so, I'm going to ask you to join with me, please, once again in prayer as we trust the Lord to show us Himself and to open His Word.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we do thank Thee this evening that we can come. We can come expecting, because of the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and who searches the depths of God, we can come expecting a revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we know when we see Him, we will be changed. We thank You for inspiring this marvelous chapter. We pray as we meditate together that our hearts would be turned in a living way unto the Savior.

We thank You, Lord, for all that You've put in it. Deliver us from flesh and from blood. Give us spirit and life.

Reveal Yourself unto us and then grace us with the faith necessary to appropriate Christ as You propose Him to us. We thank You in advance that You're going to over-answer this prayer because we pray it in the matchless name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Once again, as we come to study God's Word, you listen in vain and I speak in vain if we don't behold the Savior. We have gathered to see Him and we trust that He'll minister Himself unto us. Now, I'm going to ask you please to look at John chapter 11.

And let me set before your hearts what I'd like to share. I don't expect to give you what you haven't heard before, but I pray that the Lord will anoint it and that it would be life. I'm going to look at four verses just to get a theme before your heart and then we'll look in the text.

Chapter 11, verse 3, And so the sisters sent word to him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick. And then in verse 5, if you would, Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. And then verse 11, This He said, and after that He said to them, Our friend Lazarus is asleep, but I go that I may awaken him out of his sleep.

And then if you'd glance at verse 36 please, Behold how He loved him. All of those verses to illustrate this simple truth that there was a special love union between our Lord Jesus and this wonderful family at Bethany. We don't have a lot of information in the Bible about this family, but enough to assure us that there was probably not a happier family or a more honored family on the earth than this precious family in Bethany.

They were loved by Jesus. And they loved Jesus. And He called them friend.

They had a relationship. They had a union together. As you know from the Bible record, frequently our Lord Jesus would visit Bethany and stay with this family.

And so there was a wonderful relationship. I call attention to that because what I'd like us to look at this weekend is how our Lord Jesus manifests Himself to His friends. Sometime when you read the Bible, the Lord manifests Himself to those who are not His friends, His enemies, those that are unsaved.

Sometimes He reveals Himself to those who are rebellious. They may be believers, but they're rebelling against Him. Sometimes He manifests Himself to the false teacher and the enemies of grace and lies.

But in this case, you have those who love Him and are loved by Him. Those who are His friends. They illustrate, I think, those who are doing it right.

They've got it together. They're walking in light. They're walking in fellowship with God.

Usually when someone comes as a messenger of the New Covenant, his message is, come to Jesus or come back to Jesus. What if you're already there? What if you're already looking to the Lord and walking in the light and enjoying the Lord and in fellowship with Him and enjoying a union with Him? Does He manifest Himself to you? And so this, what we'd like to look at, since the Lord Jesus manifested Himself to His friends, and since Jesus is everlastingly the same yesterday, today, forever, I'm suggesting the way He manifested Himself to His friends in John 11 is how He will ever manifest Himself to us. For those that like logical connection, let me just give you the way I'd like to look at it.

This evening I'd like to share several truths on how the Lord Jesus manifests Himself to His friends. Then Lord willing, tomorrow morning, I'd like to take the same passage and look at how the Lord Jesus manifests Himself through His friends. He manifests Himself to His friends and He manifests Himself through His friends.

So that just gives you something on which to hang your hat and you'll know where we're going. Now let's begin then to look at this marvelous passage, how does the Lord manifest Himself to His friends? Before I touch that question, before we look into the text, I'd like to make two general observations to sort of get us into the flow of it, so we can catch the spirit and the heart of our Lord Jesus. The first observation is the words that Martha said to her sister Mary.

If you'll glance at chapter 11, verse 28, please. And when she had called, she said this, she went away and called Mary, her sister, saying secretly, the Teacher is here and He's calling for you. I love that sentence.

The Teacher's here and He's calling for you. Now if you know the context, and I think you do, of this chapter, it's a story of life from the dead. It's a story of resurrection.

It's a story of supernatural life, miracle life. There are great principles in this chapter on the risen life. I think in order to get the text before our hearts, it would be helpful to take Martha's words.

The Teacher's here and He's calling for you. Now in the context, Martha meant the Teacher's here and is calling you to Himself. And in the context, the Teacher's here and is calling you to the truth of this chapter, which is resurrection life.

And brothers and sisters in the Lord, I think that's a good place to begin. The Teacher is here and He's calling for you. He's calling you to Himself and to the truth of resurrection life.

And as we go through the passage, I pray that the Lord will continually remind us of that great reality, that He's here and He's always here, calling to Himself and He always calls to Himself and to the glorious truth of resurrection life. That's the first general observation. Now, the second observation has to do with the heart of the Lord Jesus.

If we're going to understand the principles that are in this wonderful chapter, it's helpful to catch the heartbeat of the Savior. To see the direction of His heart. If you'll glance at verse 14 and 15 please, this is sort of the backdrop of all that takes place in this chapter.

So, Jesus then said to them, Lazarus is dead and I'm glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe, but let us go to Him. I'd like to take the last words of verse 14 and the first words of verse 15 and put them together. Lazarus is dead and I'm glad.

You ever connect those? Lazarus is dead and I'm glad. You might be familiar with Spurgeon's famous sermon on that text, Saints Sorrowing and Jesus Glad. Wouldn't you expect it to read something like this? Lazarus is dead and I'm sad.

But it doesn't say Lazarus is dead and I'm sad. It says Lazarus is dead and I'm glad. And so we've got to understand His heart if we're going to understand the passage.

Notice the comments, please, that were made by Martha and Mary. They were so different, but they said the same thing. Martha speaks in chapter 11-21.

Martha then said to Jesus, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. And then Mary said the same thing in verse 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.

See, their argument was this. This could have been prevented if you were here. If you were here, it wouldn't have happened.

This whole thing could have been changed. It could have been different. We could have been delivered.

If Jesus were present, they reasoned in body, we would have been delivered. Now, is that true? Could Jesus have prevented the death of Lazarus? Well, certainly so. You know that He could have prevented it.

He could have done it from a distance. He didn't even have to be there. He had done that on another occasion.

Would Jesus have prevented it if He were there? Well, see, that's a question all its own. It seems implied that He probably would have when He told His disciples, I'm glad that I wasn't there for your sakes, so that you might believe. We can't say for 100% sure, but probably He would have prevented it.

But now He says, I'm glad. I'm glad I didn't prevent it. Why? You see, He's glad He didn't prevent it, because now He has the opportunity to manifest Himself, not as someone who prevents, but as someone who overcomes.

If He had prevented it, He would have been known as the one that prevented death. But now we see Him as the one who has overcome death. How does the Lord manifest Himself to His friends? One answer is that He loves to overcome for His friends.

Our natural hearts want Him to prevent. We say, Lord, prevent. Deliver us.

Prevent this sickness. Prevent this trial. Prevent this trouble.

Prevent this circumstance. Deliver me from this situation. Deliver me from this hard time.

From this task. From this affliction. God could have prevented the three Hebrews from going in the furnace.

But He wanted something better for them. And He wants something better for His friends all the time. See, we like this deliverance sprawl.

Deliver me from this and from that. But God has more for His friends. Oh, friends in Christ, how much of the knowledge of God is lost by prevention.

When God prevents rather than overcoming. When Lazarus was sick on the low level of earth, that was bad. And when Lazarus got sicker on the low level of earth, that was worse.

And when Lazarus died on the low level of earth, that was terrible. When things go from bad to worse and from worse to terrible, what's the heart of the Lord? He's glad. That's how He treats His friend who needs an enemy.

That's how He treats His friend. He's glad when things go from bad to worse and from worse to terrible. Because now, He has an opportunity to manifest Himself in a richer way, in a deeper way, in a fuller way, in a greater way.

The goal is not deliverance. The goal is not healing. The goal is not having our needs met.

The goal is not being happy. The goal is the knowledge of the Lord. The goal is the manifestation of Christ and the glory of Christ.

It's His desire to manifest Himself. And so, He's glad when things go from bad to worse and worse to terrible. Because now, you can know Him in a way you couldn't have known Him if He had just delivered or just prevented.

Now, you can know Him as the One who overcomes. The more you go on in a heart knowledge of the Savior, the more you're going to think like Him and see like Him and feel like Him. You say, well, Jesus is clapping His hands in glee because things are going from bad to worse in my life.

The more you know Jesus, the more your hands will clap in glee when things go from bad to worse in your life and from worse to terrible. Because it's not only His opportunity to manifest Himself to you in a greater way, it's your opportunity to know Him in a greater way. Oh, how we can bless the Lord that to His friends it's different.

And He doesn't always deliver and He doesn't always prevent. Because He wants them to know Him in a more intimate and a more wonderful way. And so, the heart of the Lord here is in the backdrop of this entire thing.

How does Jesus manifest Himself to His friends? Let me suggest two answers to that question as they're illustrated in this marvelous text. The first answer is this, and it's all over the face of the passage. How does Jesus manifest Himself to His friends? The answer is, He tests their faith.

You can't read this chapter and not see that the Lord Jesus is testing their faith. In this connection, I love to relate 1 Peter 1. Let me read a couple of verses from 1 Peter 1, 6-9. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you've been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of the Lord Jesus.

The proof of your faith, more precious than gold, though tried by fire. What's the proof of faith? What's the test of faith? Well, let's start by asking the question, what is faith? In its simplest form, what is faith? You see, the most important thing about faith is not faith. The most important thing about faith is the object of your faith.

It's the Lord. It's who you're trusting. You don't have faith in your faith.

You have faith in the Lord. Faith is trusting Jesus. What's the test of faith? The test of faith is an opportunity to trust Jesus.

That's all in the world it is. Faith is trusting Jesus. And the trial of your faith, more precious than gold, is an opportunity to trust Jesus.

Friends of Christ, I promise you, if you're His friend, He will engineer your life that you will have many opportunities to trust in. Because He longs to make Himself known. And the trial of your faith is more precious than the gold that perishes at the revelation of Christ.

So may God help us understand this. He tests their faith. And I think you'll agree that the dearer the friendship, the more opportunities He'll bring into your life and mine, so that He can manifest Himself in a full way.

Now let's get back to the text. I know there's probably more than I'm going to mention, but I'd like to illustrate from the text. And this is so simple.

All truth, by the way, is simple. Because truth is a person. Truth has a name.

His name is Jesus. And if you look in an abstract way at truth, you'll get confused. But if you see the person, then everything is simple.

And in this text, there are at least four illustrations of how God tests the faith of His friends. Let me just mention them to you. Number one.

He will test your faith if you're His friend. He'll test my faith by what He allows in your life. You'll be amazed at what the Lord will allow in the life of His friend.

In this record, He allowed sickness. Sometimes the friends of Jesus get sick. Some people have the idea if I'm His friend, He'll deliver me from sickness.

He'll prevent it. I won't get sick. The covenant of grace does not exempt us.

Not a charter of exemption. Some think that sickness is a contradiction of God's wisdom and law. I love that verse 3. He whom you love is sick.

Same verse. His love and sickness put in the same verse. There's no contradiction there.

Jesus allowed Lazarus to get sick. Jesus allowed Lazarus to get very sick. Jesus allowed Lazarus to die.

Amazing what He allows in our lives. I'm not suggesting that if He allows sickness in your life, you shouldn't pray and trust Him for a touch or healing. I'm not saying trust the Lord and throw your medicine away.

You have the illustration in the Old Testament. They call the physicians and not the Lord with Asa. You remember that Bible story.

You don't throw the mechanic away when you get saved. You don't discharge the grocer when you get saved. And you don't discharge the doctor.

You trust the Lord, but you take your medicine. And so I'm not suggesting that. But I am saying that when God allows something like that, it undermines self-confidence and drives you to Christ.

He allows things on purpose in your life. And as I said, He allowed him to die. This is sort of the climax.

This is the seventh sign in the book of John. It sort of comes to a climax. You have other illustrations in the Bible about death and resurrection.

In the New Testament, the nobleman's son, he was at the point of death. And Jairus' daughter, she just died. And the widow of Nain's son, they were on their way to the funeral when Jesus rescued.

But here you have four days. Lazarus is not only dead, he's dead and buried. I'm so glad that God used this illustration because, again, on the low level of earth, death is man's most unsolvable problem.

That's one problem you can't deal with. There's no human solution to the problem of death. In this chapter, our Lord Jesus overcame man's most unsolvable problem.

And if He could overcome man's most unsolvable problem, then any lesser problem can be overcome by the same glorious Lord. And so this is a wonderful illustration. If He allowed death, the most unsolvable problem in the life of His friends, what won't He allow? Everything under that, He will allow as your opportunity to trust Him so He can manifest Himself in a greater way.

I think some Christians are sometimes shocked because of what God allows in their life. And they just all of a sudden, their world caves in. I can't believe it.

I'm trusting the Lord. I've got to go bankrupt. Would He allow a bankruptcy in your life? Oh, indeed He would.

Indeed He would. Sickness. Look at this.

A terminal illness. In my life? Look at my child. What God has done to this child.

Would He allow that in my life? This tragedy, this violence in my life. Would He allow that? A divorce. Would He allow that? I'm not saying He engineers it and institutes it.

I'm not saying that. But I'm saying by the time it comes into your life, you have an opportunity to trust the Lord and watch Him reveal Himself. And God allows many, many things in our lives so that we'll know Him as the One who overcomes.

I'll hold that a moment. A second illustration. How does He test our faith? Not only by what He allows, but by His deliberate delays.

Did you notice that in the chapter? Verse 5. Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, so when He heard He was sick, He stayed there two days longer in the place where He was. You say, well, that wasn't very nice. He hears about the situation.

He receives intelligence that this man is sick and He deliberately stayed there for two more days. His delays don't contradict His love any more than what He allows contradicts His love. His delays are on purpose.

Remember, to Mary and Martha and Lazarus, they're in an emergency. Creatures of time. Now, make haste, O God, to deliver.

To paraphrase it, hurry up, Lord. Make haste, O God, to deliver. I need help and I need it now.

There's no time to wait. This is an emergency. You can't linger.

Omnipotence can take its leisure, and He does because He has His own time. Look at verse 17. When Jesus came, He found He'd been in the tomb four days.

He missed the funeral. It was actually four days later when He came. There's no doubt in my mind that this delay was a great testing of the faith of Martha and Mary.

Another opportunity to trust Him in this connection on God's delays. I love Habakkuk 2.3. You know the story of Habakkuk and how the prophet was wondering how a holy God could use a sinful nation to chasten a less sinful nation and so on. And he said, I'm going to go up on the tower and wait until God answers.

And God gave this answer. Habakkuk 2.3, the vision is yet for an appointed time. At the end, it will speak and not lie.

And I love this. Though it tarry, wait for it, it will not tarry. What does that mean? Though it tarry, wait for it, it will not tarry.

Though it delay, it will not delay. I think what he's saying is though it comes at the last minute by your clock, it won't delay by His clock. He has a perfect time.

But that delay, when God doesn't answer right away, that is a test of faith and an opportunity to trust Him. An opportunity for Him to manifest Himself in a greater way. On my wall, I have all these different Bible verses in my study.

And one of them is John 13, 7, Jesus' words to Peter. He said, What I do, you do not realize now, but you shall know hereafter. Oh, I love that.

Just as a principle. Sometimes you don't know what the Lord's doing and why He's slow and why He delays. But you will know hereafter.

Sorrow is prolonged for the same reason it's sent. So you can know Jesus. So I can know Jesus.

So He tests our faith. Sometimes by the strange things He allows in our life. Sometimes by not answering right away and delaying.

Some saints, I bet if I went around the room, you could give testimony. I've been praying for 10 years, 20 years for this. And He still delays and delays.

It's all to drive you to Him. There's a third illustration in this text on how God tests faith. Not only by what He allows and not only by His delays, but He withdrew His sensible presence.

I say sensible presence because you know He didn't withdraw His omnipresence. He was there. He was there.

He knew it. But the sense of His presence, the feeling, the emotion, Job experienced that. Job 23, verse 8, I go forward, He's not there.

I go backward, I cannot perceive Him. He acts on the left, I can't behold Him. He turns to the right, I can't see Him.

He knows the way I take and when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. As gold. It's an awful thing on the level of earth when God removes that sensible presence.

I don't know how it is with you. When I first came to the Lord, one of the blessings that came with objective faith was this great sense of the presence of God. Oh, I felt God's presence.

And then one day, it was gone. God used the Youth for Christ. That was the instrument by which I came to know the Savior.

1958. And they had a big rally up in Hartford, Connecticut. And I remember the seat I was sitting in.

And God moved in my heart and I responded and I cried for three hours after I got saved. And I had the presence of God. And all of a sudden, it's gone.

So what do you do when you live in Waterbury, Connecticut and Jesus leaves you? So I said to my grandmother, she brought me up, Nanny, I've got to go. And I hitchhiked all the way to Hartford. And I found the janitor.

And I said, you've got to open that door and get me to that auditorium. And I found the seat I was sitting in. And I thought that if I sat in the same seat and prayed again the same prayer, that maybe I could get a sense of that presence again.

I didn't. I didn't need it. Because God began to teach me the fact of His presence.

And I don't need the sense of His presence. He's always there. And this was a tremendous test for them when they lost the presence of God.

Look again at the two statements Martha and Mary made. Lord, verse 21, if you'd been here, my brother would not have died. Mary, the same statement in verse 32.

Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. That statement contains two insinuations to show the test that was in their heart. The first insinuation is this.

It could have been different. This whole thing could have been different. Brothers and sisters in Christ, let me speak very plainly on this tremendous issue.

Christians, you, friends of God, those who love Him and are loved by Him, Christians are never at the mercy of any circumstance. You are never the victim of any second cause. No Christian is.

You're at the mercy of the Lord, not at the mercy of any second cause. We say sometimes it could have been different. If only the messengers ran faster.

It could have been different if only we got more people to pray. It could have been different if we insisted that they take their medicine. It could have been different if only they had worn the seat belt.

It could have been different if I took a rugged stand and said, you can't go with them. You stay home. It could have been different.

It could have been different if this and if that. By the time it reaches you, because He's sovereign, it could not have been different. Don't look to a second cause.

Don't look to a second cause. It's the Lord. And you need to trust Him and not look at some second cause.

That it could have been different if I loved Joseph's comment, you meant evil. God meant good. You sold me.

God sent me. That's the glory of it. God is sovereign and He reigns.

He can avert any calamity no matter how many obstacles are in the way. He can change it if He wants to. He reigns.

And we're not the victim of second causes. Here's the second insinuation and it's even more serious. Not only it could have been different, but in that sentence is the sense it should have been different.

If you were here, and you weren't, where were you when we needed you, when we called you, when we sent for you? If you were here, it could have been different and it should have been different. Once again, the Lord Jesus withdraws the sense of His presence and when He does that, sometime we are apt to hold His love in suspicion and His wisdom in suspicion and say, Lord, this shouldn't have happened. If only it shouldn't have happened, Lord, where were you? You must be punishing me.

I must have sinned. It should have not happened. Maybe you don't love me.

You're not looking. You're not observing. Don't you care that we perish? We have all of those kinds of things and all of that because God does not prevent because you're His friend.

And He wants more for you. He wants you to know Him as the One who overcomes. And so He tests your faith.

And when He tests your faith, sometimes He allows some amazing things. And when He tests your faith, sometimes He delays and delays and delays and sometimes He removes the sense of His presence and the feelings and the peace. You get to wondering oh, it could have been different.

It should have been different. Where was God? He doesn't love me. And all that kind of thing.

And all the time, the Master is here and He's calling for you. Calling you to Himself and to the truth of resurrection life. One more little illustration.

Sometimes He tests your faith by what He allows in your life. Sometimes He tests your faith by long delays. Sometimes He tests your faith by withdrawing the sense of His presence.

And sometimes He tests your faith by confusing you to pieces. He gives a clear Word that's not clear. Did you ever get a clear Word that's not clear? They did.

Look at verse 4. And when Jesus heard this, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, so the Son of God may be glorified by it. The sister sends a messenger to Jesus. Tell Him Lazarus is sick.

The messenger goes. The messenger gets a message. And Jesus says, Go back and tell them, This sickness is not unto death.

What part of those words don't you understand? How clear can it be? If my dear wife Lillian were sick, very sick, and the doctor sent back the Word, Tell Ed this sickness is not unto death, what would I believe? She's going to live. She's not going to die. It's a clear Word.

This isn't one of those fuzzy words. This is clear. It's simple.

Can you imagine Mary and Martha as they got the Word? And Lazarus gets weaker and weaker. As his breathing gets labored. I bet you they were whispering in his ear, Don't worry, we've got Word from Jesus.

We've got a clear Word. He said, This sickness is not unto death. And all the way they were tried right to the end.

And what do you think happened in their hearts when He died? They had a clear Word. And when you have a clear Word, then all of a sudden it's not so clear. And you thought you knew God's way, and it's not that way.

And you expect God to do it that way because it's so clear. And then He doesn't do it that way. Friends, you have an opportunity to trust Him in a fresh way.

And He confuses you to pieces. I love when Moses prayed for the glory of God. You know, glory is not an attribute of God.

Glory is the sum total of all the attributes of God. God is love and He's glorious in His love. He's wise and He's glorious in His wisdom.

He's power and He's glorious in His strength and in His might. Glory is everything God is. And when Moses prayed, Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory.

He was praying, Let me see all of God. Do you remember how God answered that prayer? Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory. The Bible says He picked them up and He put them in a cleft of the rock.

Well, that's a cave. Don't forget His prayer. Glory, I want to see light.

Well, I'd get in the cave. It's dark in here. And then what did God do? Put His hand over the cave.

Talk about light. That's darkness. And God deliberately put them in a dark place and then put His hand over it and passed by.

Because when you pray for light, God sometimes gives you darkness as an answer to your prayer for glory. And you say, Show me Your glory. And He puts you in that dark place and passes by.

And when you're in the cleft of the rock, when you're in Christ, that's when you're going to see the glory of God. And so God tests the faith of His children. The faith of those He loves and those who are His friends.

Don't despise it when God allows things in your life. Don't despise it when God delays a little bit or withdraws the sense of His presence. Confusion is a mighty weapon for good in the hand of God.

It's the Lord's way to give you a word and then to put a death sentence on that word and all the means that lead up to that word and then to raise it again from the dead that you might learn to trust Him and to trust Him alone. If you're confused, if you're baffled, if you're puzzled, don't throw your hands up in despair and just say, God's not doing anything in my life. I don't know what's going on.

God's doing everything in your life, friend. You're His friend. That's why you're confused.

It crowds you to Christ. It crowds you to Him. It causes you to see the Lord.

All these tasks are designed for us to see Him. In mercy, He adds to the cross you must carry. In grace, every trial by Him is bestowed.

He knows in your weakness you'll run straight to Jesus. He adds to your burden to lighten your load. Exactly so.

He puts it on because He knows after a while you're going to wise up and crawl out from under it and lay hold of your Savior. And I'm going to do the same thing. Let me answer a second question and then we'll wrap it all up.

How does the Lord manifest Himself to His friends? First, He tests their faith. In several of these ways, He always tests their faith. He gives them opportunities to trust Him.

The chapter answers the question in a second way. Let me set that before your hearts. How does He manifest Himself to His friends? I like to word it this way.

He always deals with us as we are and where we are in order to make us what He wants us and to bring us to the place that He wants us to be. You know, when you read this chapter, it's an amazing thing how God dealt with Mary and Martha and the people in this chapter. If you want a full description of it, I'll recommend to you Robert Candlish.

He's got a book of sermons on Bible characters. He does a wonderful job as he unfolds this. Every time God does something in your life, it's redemptive.

You know what I mean by that? It's not primarily for you. It's primarily for somebody else. It's for you too.

But it's always for somebody else. Did you notice in this chapter, He's dealing with Mary. You say, yeah, but He's also dealing with Martha.

Indeed, He's dealing with Martha. He's also dealing with the disciples because He said, I'm glad for your sake that I wasn't there that you might learn to believe. You say, He's dealing with the disciples, but look at verse 19.

He's dealing also with those hired mourners, those professional cheerleaders in sorrow. They hired these people to mourn at the grave. He's dealing with them.

Not only Mary and Martha. Not only the disciples. Not only the mourners, but verse 42 says, a great crowd came at the grave, His friends and acquaintances.

And it was for their sake that He prayed. He's dealing with them. And in verse 46, they go and tell the Pharisees.

He's dealing with the Pharisees as well. And don't forget, He's also dealing with Lazarus in this chapter. He's dealing with Mary and Martha and the disciples and the mourners and the friends and the acquaintances and the Pharisees and Lazarus.

And for 2,000 years, anyone who's read the chapter. He's dealing with you. The Master's here.

He's calling for you. He's dealing with me. He always deals with everybody at the same time.

So when the Lord allows you an opportunity to trust Him, He's not only wanting to manifest Himself as one who overcomes rather than one who prevents, but He's also dealing with your doctor and your nurse and the anesthesiologist and the cab driver and the paper boy and the grocer and your neighbors and your mother and your father and your brother and your cousin and your in-law. He's dealing with everybody at the same time. Don't answer.

Just think. You willing to be sick for somebody else? You willing to die that God can deal with them? Like that's what Lazarus did. And there's very little connection.

Don't try to figure it out. Jesus said, I'm glad for your sake. He said, you going to go to Jerusalem? Aren't there 12 hours in a day? Walking the light? You don't stumble.

What was He teaching the disciples? He was teaching them that there's safety in the will of God. What has that got to do with the sickness of Lazarus? There's very little connection. And what God does in your life to teach somebody else something way off the track? You can't figure it out.

Don't even try to figure it out. Just know that what God does in you, everybody else is being affected at the same time. But let's home in on Mary and Martha and then I'll wrap it up.

Mary and Martha, two sisters with the same problem. So different. How does God deal with the problem when you've got two different people having the same problem at the same time? That's why my heart goes out in sympathetic love to all counselors.

I just don't know how in the world they can counsel because God is such a God of infinite variety. He does it differently in so many cases. And everybody has a different... And God deals with us as we are and where we are.

Martha and Mary are so different. Martha is a feminine Peter and Mary is a feminine John. Martha is... She's prose.

And Mary is poetry. One is extrovert. One is an introvert.

One is active and nervous. And the other one is contemplative and quiet. They're different.

And so Jesus deals with them differently. Read the text. I won't take time to look at it all.

But Martha, she won't shut up. I'm serious. She's got to talk.

And so they talk. And they talk about immortality and they talk about the future and they talk about down the road and they talk about the resurrection and talk about the last day. She's got to talk.

And so Jesus gives her a sermon. That's what she needs. And so He talks and He talks and He talks and about the last day and resurrection and all that kind of thing.

Mary, she's different. She doesn't need a theological discussion. She doesn't need a bunch of creedal statements about the future and resurrection and immortality.

She can't talk. She just cries. And so what does Jesus do? You know, we just sort of read this 35, la, la, la.

He wept. Martha needs His ears, so she gets His ears. Mary needs His tears, so she gets His tears.

Most things people know about this is the shortest verse in the Bible, Jesus wept. By the way, it's not even the shortest verse in the Bible. A little trivia here.

1 Thessalonians 5.16 Rejoice evermore. There's two letters less in the Greek on that. So that's the shortest verse in the Bible.

God deals with us where we are. Pull out all the stops and believe that with all of your heart. The centurion needed a word, so God gave him a word.

The blind man needed a touch, God gave him a touch. The humped over woman needed a touch and a word, so God gave him a touch and a word. The man with palsy needed a hug, so the Lord hugged him.

Peter needed a look, so God gave him a look. Martha needed a sermon, so she got a sermon. Mary needed to tear, so she gets a tear.

He knows you, friend. He knows who you are. He knows your heart.

He knows your capacities. And He'll always deal with you as and where you are to bring us to the place that He wants you and to turn you into the person He wants you to be. At any moment in your life, you can be the Christian God wants you to be.

I can't be the husband God wants me to be next week. But I can be the husband God wants me to be now. Now.

You can't be the elder God wants you to be next week. But you can be the elder God wants you to be now. Now.

You can be the Christian that God wants you to be right now because He deals with you where you are. No matter what your hang-ups are, He deals with you where you are to take you to the place that He wants you. How does He deal with His friends? Don't read this la-la-la.

He wants to show Himself. And so He tests their faith. He wants to show Himself.

And so He deals with them exactly where they are and who they are. You're going to come a long way in your life with the Lord if you will just learn to be you and let God be God. Stay out of the Godhead.

Don't try to do His things. Just be yourself and trust in Jesus. That's how He deals with His friends.

He wants to deal through them as well. But that's how He ministers unto them. He longs to have friends who will trust Him when He doesn't prevent.

When He brings things into their lives. When He delays. When He removes the sense of His presence.

When He confuses you to pieces. Can He be trusted? Is He trustworthy? Answer. Oh indeed, brothers and sisters, trust Him.

And let Him deal with you where you are. The Master's here. The Teacher's here.

And He's calling for you. Calling you to Himself. And to the truth of resurrection life.

Let's pray. Father, thank You so much for Your Word. Not what we think we know it means, but all You've inspired it to mean.

Will You work that in our hearts? Thank You for the way You manifest Yourself to Your friends. Forgive us for trying to solve it ourselves. Teach us what it means just to trust You.

Work it in our hearts, we pray. Here we are. Deal with us where we are.

We want to come to You and to the truth of resurrection life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you.

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