

Introduction

I have often heard discussions about who is the greatest golfer of all time. Many say that Tiger Woods is the greatest, having won 82 tournaments and 15 majors. Others point to Jack Nicklaus, who has won 73 tournaments and 18 majors. They have an acronym for the greatest of all time, GOAT. In football, Tom Brady is generally referred to as the GOAT, having won seven Super Bowls. In basketball, Michael Jordan is most often thought of as the GOAT, with six NBA Championships.

In the Gospel of John, there are seven spectacular miracles or signs given. In John 2, Jesus did His first miracle, turning water into wine. In John 4, Jesus performed His second sign, and healed the royal official's son. In John 5, at the Pool of Bethesda, Jesus healed the man who had been ill for thirty-eight years. In John 6, Jesus fed the multitudes, and there may have been close to 25,000 who ate the meal and experienced that miracle. Many consider that Jesus' greatest miracle because of the number of people who saw and partook of it. In John 6, Jesus also walked on water, which was the fifth sign that He did that showed that He is the Son of God. In John 9, Jesus did the sixth sign, healing a man that had been born blind. Nothing like this had ever been heard of from the beginning of time. Finally, in our text today, John 11, Jesus performed His seventh sign, raising Lazarus from the dead. Many scholars consider it the greatest sign that He had performed.

Seven Signs in John

1. Water into wine (Jn 2)
2. Healing of royal official's son (Jn 4)
3. Healing of man at the Pool of Bethesda (Jn 5)
4. Feeding of multitudes (Jn 6)
5. Walking on water (Jn 6)
6. Healing of man born blind (Jn 9)
7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11)

When I consider all the signs that Jesus did, I cannot say that one is greater than the others. They are all spectacular, and all show that He is the Son of God, and prove His deity. In John 1, we find that Jesus was in the beginning and all things came into being through Him. He is the creator, and the miracle of creation is so incredible that I can hardly fathom it. Every day I am in awe of all the varieties of trees, plants, birds, animals, and the rest of creation. But many scholars say that the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead was Jesus' greatest miracle, and that is what we are looking at this morning.

Our passage is different from many theological passages, where there is a spiritual truth or principle being taught. The resurrection of Lazarus is a story, a true story, but a story that John tells us. We draw many varied truths and principles from it, but the outline reflects that it is the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. It begins with the setting. Second, we will look at Jesus' decision to return to Judea, to raise up Lazarus from the dead. Third, we will look at Jesus' encounters with Martha and Mary, Lazarus' two sisters. Fourth, we will look at the resurrection of Lazarus. Fifth, we will look at two very different responses, the response by many who observed it, and the response of the Chief Priest and Pharisees.

The Resurrection of Lazarus

1. Setting (Jn 11:1-6)
2. Decision to Return to Judea (Jn 11:7-16)
3. Jesus' Encounters with Martha and Mary (Jn 11:17-37)
4. Resurrection of Lazarus (Jn 11:38-44)
5. Responses (Jn 11:45-54)

1. **Setting** (Jn 11:1-6)

At the Feast of Dedication, the Jews had tried to seize Jesus and stone Him to death, so He left Jerusalem and went beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing. Bethany is the place beyond the Jordan where John had first baptized. There are two Bethany's in the Bible. There is the Bethany which is two miles outside of Jerusalem, where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived. There is also a Bethany beyond the Jordan, which is where Jesus went to. It is called Bethabara in the KJV, but most Bibles and scholars refer to it as Bethany beyond the Jordan. Bethany means the house of misery or the house of the depressed. While Jesus was in Bethany beyond the Jordan, many people came to Him, and believed in Him.

(Jn 10:40–42) “And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. {41} Many came to Him and were saying, “While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true. {42} Many believed in Him there.”

(Jn 1:28) “These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.”

Our text begins by saying that a certain man was sick, Lazarus. Lazarus is a compound Hebrew word, from el and azar (Strong's G2976, H410, H5826). El is the name for God and azar means to help. Lazarus means “the one God helps”, a very fitting name for what Jesus is going to do for him. Lazarus was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister, Martha. Jesus probably stayed with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus when He was ministering in Jerusalem. Bethany is on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives, a place that Jesus frequently went to pray. As the crow flies, Bethany is about 18-20 miles from Bethany beyond the Jordan, but by road it is about 22-25 miles. It was one-day walk for most people at that time. They walked everywhere, and were more in shape than we are today.

(Jn 11:1) “Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.”

John records that this was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. It may seem a little out of order, because John does not write about that until John 12. In that account, Lazarus is reclining at the table with Jesus, which is after he had been raised from the dead in our account today.

(Jn 11:2) “It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.”

(Jn 12:1–3) “Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. {2} So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him. {3} Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”

Lazarus was sick, and so the sisters sent word to Jesus, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” The word for love that the sisters used is phileo (Strong's G5368), which means a brotherly love or friendly affection. Jesus had a great relationship with these three, and He loved them as friends or brothers. In verse five, John records that Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. This time, the Greek word, agapao (Strong's G25) is used, which means a perfect and

moral love. It is the perfect love that God has for us. Jesus loved them as friends, and He loved them with the love of God. That is the same love that God has for all of us. It is sacrificial. It is intentional. It is patient. It is kind. It does not seek its own. It is the love that God wants us to have towards one another. (See 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.)

(Jn 11:3) “So the sisters sent *word* to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.”

(Jn 11:5) “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.”

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, 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.” Jesus did not say that Lazarus would not die, but that the end would not be in death. Jesus knew exactly what He was going to do. He knew the purpose of the sickness, and He knew the final outcome. In John 9, we looked at some of the causes of sickness. There are some sicknesses caused by the fallen world we live in. There are some sicknesses that comes as a result of judgment. There are some sicknesses that comes as a result of our sins or the sins of parents. There is a sickness unto death, and there is also a sickness for the glory of God. When Jesus was asked about whether the man born blind was blind because of his sin or his parent’s sin, Jesus told the disciples that it was neither. It was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. This is also what was going to happen to Lazarus; the works of God were going to be displayed in him. God was going to be glorified, and Jesus, the Son of God, was going to be glorified by it.

(Jn 11:4) “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.”

(Jn 9:3) “Jesus answered, “*It was* neither *that* this man sinned, nor his parents; but *it was* so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed two days longer in Bethany beyond the Jordan. Jesus knew the purpose of the sickness, that it was to glorify God and Himself. Jesus knew that Lazarus was going to die, and that He was going to raise him from the dead. Jesus stayed around two more days before going to Bethany to make sure he died and was buried.

(Jn 11:6) “So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days *longer* in the place where He was.”

2. Decision to Return to Judea (Jn 11:7-16)

After those additional two days, Jesus said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?” In the setting, I mentioned that He had left the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem after the Jews tried to stone Him to death. This is in the forefront of the disciples’ minds. They are also thinking that if they stone Jesus, they will probably stone us too. They were surprised that Jesus was going to go back to Judea, knowing that they had an arrest warrant for Him, and were intending to put Him to death.

(Jn 11:7-8) “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?”

Jesus replied, “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. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” Jesus was using the analogy of traveling in the daylight to tell them that His hour had not yet come. The Jewish workday began at six in the morning and went until six in the evening. It was fairly safe to walk while it was light. Throughout the Gospel of John, we have seen the phrase, “his hour had not yet come.” Jesus’ ministry on earth was likened to a work day, and as long as it was still daylight, he was going to be working in it. It was not quite time for the Feast of Passover, where He would be laying down His life. So, there is still time for Him to do the work that the Father had sent Him to do. While Jesus took precautions and did not test the Father, He knew that the Father would not allow Him to be put to death before His appointed time.

(Jn 11:9-10) “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.”

Then Jesus told His disciples that Lazarus had fallen asleep, and He needed to awaken him. Sleep was a common way for people to refer to death. For example, in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul said that a number of the saints were sick and some had gone to sleep because they had not judged themselves correctly. It is clear that some of them had died, and that was what was meant by sleep. Some believe that the sleep refers only to a believer’s death, because his soul and spirit are at rest, and he is with the Father. In this case, Jesus simply meant that Lazarus had died, and that He was going to raise him up from the dead.

(Jn 11:11) “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.”

(1 Co 11:30) “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.”

The disciples did not understand what Jesus had said. They responded, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” In other words, there is no need for You to go to Judea and put yourself in harms’ way if he is just sleeping; he will wake up on his own. John then explains what Jesus had meant. Jesus had spoken of Lazarus’ death, not literal sleep. So Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.”

(Jn 11:12-14) “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,”

Then Jesus made a great statement, “I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.” Jesus was always thinking of how He could help others grow in their faith. We will see later how He prayed loudly so that others could hear and believe. Jesus wanted the disciples to see that Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus raised him from the dead. It was something for them to deepen their understanding of who He is, and to grow in their faith. He concluded by saying, “but let us go to him.”

(Jn 11:15) “and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.”

Many years ago, when I was playing professional golf, I decided to take my oldest son, Bill, to the Fort Myers Open with me. On the drive down to Fort Myers, I prayed specifically that one of the amateurs in my pro-am group would invite us to stay at their house for the week. I did not pray silently, I told my son what I was going to pray, and then prayed out loud so that he could hear what I had asked God to do. We got to the last hole in the pro-am that afternoon, and no one had invited us yet. Then, as we walked off the 18th hole, one of the amateurs asked us where we were staying that week. I told him that I did not have a place yet, and he answered, “You do now. You will stay with us.” We stayed with him in his beautiful home, and we greatly appreciated his hospitality. I had prayed out loud because I wanted my son to grow in his faith. I wanted him to see how God answers prayers. This is what Jesus did. He did things in a way so that those around Him could grow in their faith.

Thomas, often referred to as “Doubting Thomas, responded to Jesus. Thomas was called Didymus, which means twin. We do not know who his twin was, or if it was an identical twin, but only that he had a twin. He said, “Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.” Several things are apparent. He was not tracking with Jesus about the twelve hours of the day. Jesus was on a mission, and His time had not yet come. Jesus was not concerned about dying prematurely. Second, Thomas was more concerned about them being stoned to death than going to Bethany and raising Lazarus from the dead. Third, he was not really believing that Jesus was going to raise him from the dead. They had seen lots of people healed, but raising someone from the dead was not something that they had seen, or were anticipating.

(Jn 11:16) “Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to *his* fellow disciples, “Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.”

3. **Jesus’ Encounters with Martha and Mary** (Jn 11:17-38)

Jesus had separate conversations with both Martha and Mary. Martha was more of the outgoing one in the family, and Mary was more reserved. Luke records that it was Martha that welcomed Jesus into her home. It was Martha who was doing all the preparations for the meal. She was an outgoing and industrious woman. Mary was not helping; she was sitting at Jesus’ feet listening to Him. Mary was relational, and she was not as goal and task oriented as her sister. It is not surprising in our text that Martha is the first one to go to Jesus; that fits her personality.

(Lk 10:38–42) “Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. {39} She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. {40} But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up *to Him* and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.” {41} But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; {42} but *only* one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

a. **Conversation with Martha**

When Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. Jesus already knew that Lazarus had died. After hearing that Lazarus was sick, He stayed an additional two days. It was a one-day journey, which tells us that Lazarus died right after the messenger was sent to tell Jesus that Lazarus was sick. I believe this information was given for our benefit, since Jesus already knew that He had died.

(Jn 11:17) “So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.”

Bethany was only two miles from Jerusalem, and because it was so close, many of the Jews came from Jerusalem to console Martha and Mary. Some scholars believe that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were prominent people, and well-known to many people. Since many had come from Jerusalem, it means that what Jesus was about to do was going to be known in Jerusalem very quickly.

(Jn 11:18-19) “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.”

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him. We do not know how she heard, or who gave her the news, but she came to Jesus before he arrived at their house. Mary stayed at the house. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.” It is obvious that Martha believed that Jesus would have healed her brother.

(Jn 11:20-22) “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.”

It also appears that she believes that He could bring him back. However, after Jesus tells her that her brother will rise again, she said, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” This indicates that she was not thinking about him being raised from the dead, especially after being in the tomb for four days.

(Jn 11:23-24) “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.”

Jesus answered her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” Jesus had proclaimed, “I Am the Bread of Life.” He proclaimed, “I Am the Light of the World.” In John 10, He proclaimed, “I Am the door”, and “I Am the good shepherd.” He also told the Pharisees, “I Am the Son of God.” Now, Jesus added another “I Am” statement, “I Am the resurrection and the life.”

(Jn 11:25-26) “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?”

When Jesus refers to living and dying, He is referring to eternal life with God. Those who believe in Him will live eternally, even if they have died in the flesh. Those that believe in Him will never die, or be separated from God. They will live with God forever. For those that have lost a loved one who is a believer, we can be assure that they are alive and with the Father in heaven. The key to having eternal life and not experiencing the second death, which is being judged and going into eternal punishment, is believing in Jesus.

Martha has a great response to Jesus. She said, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.” Martha is a believer. She believed

that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, who had come into the world. After her confession, she went away and called Mary, saying secretly, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” I believe that Martha said it to her secretly because of the many Jews. The term, Jews, usually refers to the religious leaders. She knew that some of those Jews were part of the group that had tried to stone Jesus, and were still planning to seize and kill Him. In the midst of her grieving, she is cognizant of that fact, and tells Mary in secret that Jesus was calling for her.

(Jn 11:27-28) “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.”

b. Conversation with Mary

When Mary heard that Jesus had come, she got up quickly and went to Him. Jesus was not yet into the village, but at the place where Martha had met Him. The Jews in the house, who were consoling her, saw her get up quickly and go out, and followed her. They supposed that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

(Jn 11:29-37) “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.”

When Mary came to where Jesus was, she saw Him and fell at His feet. Earlier, when I introduced Martha and Mary, I gave the account of her sitting at the feet of Jesus. In the beginning of this passage, John introduces Mary as the one who anointed Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. Mary has a humble, reverent and submissive posture before the Lord. When a king defeated his enemy, he would place his foot on the conquered king, showing that this man is now under his authority and rule. Mary fell at His feet in a reverent, submissive posture.

(Jn 11:32) “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.”

Mary said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” Those were the exact words that Martha had said. They obviously had discussed this and both of them believed that Jesus would have healed their brother, and he would not have died.

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews that were with her, also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled. They were weeping out loud, and the sound of their grieving deeply moved and troubled Him. The Greek word that is translated, “moved in spirit”, is *embrimaomai* (Strong’s G1690), and it literally means to snort with anger, or to murmur against. Why would this scene cause Jesus to be angry, troubled, and moved in spirit? These Jews were with Mary, at His feet, weeping, and it was all fake. These are the same Jews that tried to stone Him to death. These are the same Jews in John 12:10 are planning to put Lazarus to death. Jesus sees through all of their fake weeping and He sees their hypocrisy. In Matthew 23, Jesus gave eight woes to the Pharisees and religious leaders, and it was about their hypocrisy. Jesus hated hypocrisy, and in the midst of the genuine weeping and grieving that Mary is experiencing, they have a mockery of sorrow, and it stirred up His anger.

(Jn 11:33) “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her *also* weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled,”

Next, Jesus said, “Where have you laid him? They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.” It was not just Mary who answered, but the group with her answered Him. Jesus knows what He is about to do, and so He wants them to lead Him to where they have Him.

(Jn 11:34) “and said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.”

I find the question very intriguing. Jesus knew that Lazarus died. He knew when he died, and He knew what He was going to do. I believe He also knew where they had laid him. Jesus was the Son of God, omnipotent and omniscient, and did not need to ask the question. At the same time, He was the Son of Man, and fully human. John wrote that “Jesus wept.” The Greek word is *dakryo*, which means to shed tears. Jesus began to cry and shed tears of sorrow. It was not a sign of weakness, but of love. He shed tears and wept because Mary was weeping. He was grieving with her. He had compassion and feelings for Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. They were His friends, and they were full of sorrow and grief, and He was weeping with them. In Romans 12:15, Paul wrote that we are to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Jesus is weeping with those who weep.

(Jn 11:35) “Jesus wept.”

(Ro 12:15) “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”

Because Jesus wept, the Jews said, “See how He loved him!” They saw the love that He had for Lazarus through His weeping over Him. When we rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep, we are showing our love and compassion.

(Jn 11:36) “So the Jews were saying, “See how He loved him!”

Some of the Jews who were with Mary said, “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man from dying?” Some saw the love and compassion, and others were suspicious, even doubting that He had really opened the eyes of the man born blind. They are now pointing fingers at Jesus for not coming and healing Lazarus so that he would not have died. There are some people who are always looking for what someone did wrong. These Jews were not in a position to make a determination like that. Jesus could have kept Lazarus from dying, but He allowed him to die because He was going to do some far greater than just heal him. He was going to raise him from the dead, after he had been in the grave for four days.

(Jn 11:37) “But some of them said, “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?”

4. Resurrection of Lazarus (Jn 11:38-44)

Jesus was again deeply moved within. The same Greek word is used, *embrimaomai*, which means to snort with anger. Jesus knew the thoughts of these Jews, and He was stirred up inside, or deeply moved. He came to the tomb, which was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. The large stones did a several things. First, they kept out wild animals. Second, they kept the stench from the decaying bodies inside the cave, instead of making the whole area wreak with a foul

smell. Third, these large stones provided a barrier to Jews coming in contact with a dead body, which would make them unclean.

(Jn 11:38) “So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.”

Jesus said to them to remove the stone. Martha responded by saying, “Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days.” At that time, when someone died, they wrapped the body in grave cloths and put spices there to offset some of the smell. In John 19:39, when Jesus was buried, Joseph and Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. That is a lot of spices, but that was the custom of the Jews. When a person dies, if they are not embalmed like we do today, the body loses all of its body heat in the first 24 hours, and rigor mortis sets in. After 36 hours, the muscles begin to lose the rigor mortis and begin to relax, and this is complete by the 72nd hour. After 72 hours, the cells begin to break down, and a green fluid are emitted. There is a release of hydrogen sulfide, which gives off a terrible smell. It has been four days, so by this time, there would have been a terrible stench. Martha has no idea what Jesus is about to do, or she would not have made that comment.

(Jn 11:39) “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.”

(Jn 19:39) “Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds *weight*.”

Jesus said to Martha, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” John did not record that comment that Jesus had made with Martha in His earlier conversation. He had simply told her that her brother would rise again.

(Jn 11:40) “Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

So, they removed the stone, just as Jesus had requested. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 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.” Earlier, Jesus had told the disciples that He was glad that He was not there when Lazarus died, so that they could believe. Jesus was always thinking of helping others grow in their faith. Now, in a similar way, He prayed loudly so that those around Him could hear His prayer to the Father. He wanted them to know that the Father had sent Him, and to believe in Him.

(Jn 11:41-42) “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.”

When Jesus taught the disciples about prayer, He told them to go into their inner room, close the door, and pray to the Father in secret. Now, He prays so that people can hear Him. This seems like a contradiction, but it is not. The Pharisees were praying so that they would be seen by men and appear righteous before men. It was a religious front. They were hypocrites and not sincere in their prayers. Jesus was praying out loud for a much different reason, so that people would know that He was praying to the Father, that the Father was listening, and the Father had sent

Him. He wanted people to believe and be saved. His motive and His goal were radically different than the Pharisees.

(Mt 6:5–6) “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. {6} But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.”

Our application from this is to be looking for ways to build up others in their faith. Paul wrote in Philippians to not merely look out for our own interests, but also the interest of others. Jesus always had the interest of others in mind. That was the attitude that was in Christ Jesus. The sign of maturity is selflessness. Immature believers, or baby Christians, are primarily concerned about getting their own needs met. Mature believers are looking out for the interests of others, and trying to help them grow in their faith.

(Php 2:4–5) “do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. {5} Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,”

After praying to the Father, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.” Jesus did not have to say it with a loud voice; He said it so those around Him would hear exactly what He was saying. The Greek word for “cried out” is *kraugazo* (Strong’s G2905), which means to cry out or shout. Jesus shouted out the words with a loud voice. The Greek word for loud is *megas* (Strong’s G3173), and the Greek word for voice is *phone* (Strong’s G5456) (which is the root word for our English word, megaphone. Jesus did not need a megaphone, but He cried out with the same effect as using a megaphone.

(Jn 11:43) “When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.”

After Jesus cried out, Lazarus came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. He was wrapped with the typical burial wrappings, and it would be extremely difficult for him to walk or to see. So, Jesus told them to unbind him, and let him go.

(Jn 11:44) “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.”

5. Responses (Jn 11:45-54)

In John 20, John gave the purpose for all of the signs recorded in this book, and it was so that people would believe, and have eternal life. With all the miracles, there were some who believed, and there were some who do not believe. Even with what is considered the greatest miracle of all time, some believed, and some did not believe.

(Jn 20:31) “but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

a. Response by many of the Jews (Jn 11:45)

Many of the Jews who came to Mary saw what Jesus had done and believed in Him. Some of these Jews were probably Pharisees and Chief Priests, as that is who the term frequently refers to. A great number of these Jews saw the miracle and believed in Jesus. They may have been mocking Him earlier, but they had a change of heart when they saw Lazarus walking around, having been raised from the dead.

(Jn 11:45) “Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.”

b. Response by the Chief Priests and Pharisees (Jn 11:46-54)

But some of these Jews went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done. They knew that the Pharisees had a death warrant on Jesus, and going to the them was just going to stir up their anger against Jesus. I do not believe that those that went to the Pharisees were the ones that believed. I don’t believe they went and gave a testimony to Jesus. They would have likely been put out, and possibly stoned themselves. I believe these Jews were not believing that Jesus was the Messiah, even though they had just personally witnessed this incredible miracle.

(Jn 11:46) “But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.”

When the chief priests and Pharisees heard what Jesus had done, they convened a council. This would be the Sanhedrin Council. They said, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” Notice that they could not deny the miracle that had taken place. Lazarus had been dead for four days. They had no doubt seen that he had died, and been buried. There were too many witnesses. An undeniable miracle had happened, like nothing ever done before, and they did could not deny it. One would think that seeing the sign would cause them to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He was exactly who He told them He was, and that He had been sent by the Father. The miracles He had done all bore witness that He was the Messiah, and was the Son of God. But these Pharisees were not moved by any of this. They had already made a decision to put Jesus to death, and nothing, not even raising Lazarus from the dead, was going to change their minds.

(Jn 11:47-48) “Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. {48} If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”

The Pharisees had evil motives. They liked the power, control, and authority that they had. They did not want to lose their power and control over the people. They were blinded by their selfish and evil motives. Jesus was a threat to their power and position, so they thought they needed to find a way to get rid of Jesus. They did not want people believing in Him. They did not want the Romans to come and take away their place and their nation. Interesting enough, that is exactly what did happen. The Romans did take away their place and their nation. The thing they thought would preserve their place and their nation did exactly the opposite. By the time that John wrote this gospel, Jerusalem had been destroyed, and the Romans had taken their place and nation.

At the council meeting, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.” Caiaphas was a Sadducee, and the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection or in miracles. This undeniable sign was a difficult thing for him and the other Sadducees. He did not want any further deliberation about the matter, and told them they know nothing at all. Second, he simplified what needed to be done, and said it was expedient for them to put Jesus to death. That means that he thought this was necessary for them to accomplish their goals, so that they could remain in power and control.

(Jn 11:49-50) “But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, {50} nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.”

Even though Caiaphas said it to promote their own selfish goal of remaining in power, he was actually being led by the Spirit to say this. As the high priest, he was prophesying that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. God is sovereign. He can make the mouth of a donkey speak to Balaam. He can turn the hearts of ungodly kings to go against Israel to discipline them for turning away from Him. God is going to accomplish His plans and purposes, and sometimes He chooses to use unbelievers. God spoke through Caiaphas because he was the high priest that year, and he had the final say and authority to implement what was going to happen.

(Jn 11:51-52) “Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, {52} and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”

In John 10, Jesus said that He had other sheep, which are not of this fold, and that He must bring them also, so that they will become one flock with one shepherd. Caiaphas’ prophecy included provision for Jesus to gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. That would be the Gentiles and peoples from the other nations. Jesus died not just for the Jews, but for the sins of the whole world.

(Jn 10:16) “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd.”

As a result of that council meeting, the chief priests and Pharisees planned together to kill Jesus. They had already made that decision, but they made it again, with more resolve than ever. They had rejected Jesus as Messiah, and were only concerned with keeping their power and place, so they needed to put Jesus to death.

(Jn 11:53) “So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.”

Therefore, Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and He stayed there with the disciples. Ephraim is now called Taybeh, and is a Palestian village in the West Bank. It is located about nine or ten miles northeast of Jerusalem. At that time, it was a remote area, and not a place that the Pharisees would have gone to look for Him.

(Jn 11:54) “Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.”

Jesus and His disciples would remain there for the next few weeks until the Feast of Passover, when He would return to Jerusalem to lay His life down.

Conclusion and Applications

In this amazing account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, we see the omniscience and omnipotence of Jesus. He knew that Lazarus had died, and He knew that He was going to raise Him from the dead. He had the ability to undo and reverse the deterioration of Lazarus’ body, and to heal him. He had the ability to bring his spirit back from Hades. He had all power and authority. We also see the humanity of Jesus. He was troubled by the hypocrisy and phony mourning by the Jews, and He shed tears and wept with Mary and Martha. He was both the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Our first application is to live for Christ. We see that Jesus was committed to doing the works of the Father as long as it was still day. He knew His hour would come, but it had not come yet, so He went to Judea in the face of danger to raise Lazarus from the dead. We can learn from Him, and use the hours of our day, the days of our lives, to do the Lord’s work. His work and calling are different for all of us, but the goal should remain the same. Paul said in Philippians 1:21, “to live is Christ.”

Our second application is to look out for the interests of others. Jesus was always trying to build up the faith of the disciples. When He prayed out loud, it was not to appear righteous, but to let people know that God was His Father, and that He was doing the Father’s will. He wanted people to believe and have eternal life. Our decisions and actions should help those around us become believers, or grow in their faith. (Php 2:4-5)

Our third application is to show practical love to others. We should rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Jesus knew that He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, but He still wept with Martha and Mary. (Ro 12:15)

Our fourth application is to always do what God tells us to do. Our first response should be obedience. God’s ways and thoughts are higher, and we may think that the body in the tomb will smell, but Jesus knew that He was raising Lazarus from the dead, and there would not be a stench. He needed the stone removed so that Lazarus could come out.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for this rich passage. Help us to learn and apply the lessons from this passage in our lives. Help us to use our hours left on this earth to do Your work and bidding. Help us to stay in constant fellowship with You, and to seek Your counsel about what You want done in every situation. Help us to be compassionate and weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice. Help us show the love of Christ to others, and may all men know that we are Your disciples by our love. Help us to be unselfish, and not to just look out for our own interests, but for the interests of others. Help us to be like Paul, and strive to present every man complete. We pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- How was the faith of the disciples tested when Jesus decided to return to Judea?
- Why did Jesus stay an additional two days in Bethany beyond the Jordan? How does this line up with knowing what the Father wanted to do?
- Martha and Mary both said the same thing to Jesus, that if He had been there Lazarus would not have died. Jesus, stayed an extra two days before coming, and His plan was very different than what Martha and Mary had in mind. Has God ever done things in your life differently than what you thought He should?
- Why was Jesus so deeply moved and troubled in spirit?
- The Jews saw Jesus cry, and remarked about how much Jesus loved Lazarus. What are some ways that people know that we love them?
- When Jesus told them to remove the stone, they began to tell Jesus why that was a bad idea. Do we often question what God tells us to do, and tell Him why it is a bad idea? What should be our first response?
- Jesus told the disciples that He was glad He was not there, and it was for their sake. Then, when He raised Lazarus from the dead, He prayed loudly so that others could hear. He was always doing things that would help others believe or grow in their faith. Do we always do the things that will help others grow in their faith? Do we have the attitude of Christ, who did not merely look out for His own interests, but the interests of others?
- The Pharisees could not deny that an incredible sign had just happened. How can they dismiss this sign, and seek to put Jesus to death? How do selfish motives cloud our actions?

The Resurrection of Lazarus

Introduction

1. **Setting** (Jn 10:40-42, 1:28, 11:1-6, 12:1-3, 9:3)
2. **Decision to Return to Judea** (Jn 11:7-16, 1 Co 11:30)
3. **Jesus' Encounters with Martha and Mary** (Jn 11:17-38, Lk 10:38-42)
 - a. Conversation with Martha (Jn 11:17-28)
 - b. Conversation with Mary (Jn 11:29-37, Ro 12:15)
4. **Resurrection of Lazarus** (Jn 11:38-44, Mt 6:5-6, Php 2:4-5)
5. **Responses** (Jn 20:31, 11:45-54)
 - a. Response by many of the Jews (Jn 11:45)
 - b. Response by the Chief Priests and Pharisees (Jn 11:46-54, Jn 10:16)

Conclusion and Applications

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.