

## Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life John 11:1-44

During the heyday of the Boston Celtics in the 60's, the Celtics had a player who was an incredible shooter, Hall of Famer Sam Jones (who incidentally played at NC Central), & who has the second most NBA titles of any other player in history (10).

- He could get his shot off faster than anyone else in the league.
- His release was so quick that when he would catch, shoot, and make a jumper, the people would say, "Too late!" Jones also loved to say that after hitting one over the outstretched arms of legend, Wilt Chamberlin, "Too Late"
- They called him Sam "Too Late" Jones, which was a compliment to him. (Sproul)

In John 11, this description is given to Jesus: "Lord, you're too late," and it was not a compliment.

- He first appears to be "Too Late Jesus." (V 21, 32)

Mary and Martha are dealing with a tragedy, and they say, "Lord where were you?"

- Have you ever said something like that?
- By the time Jesus arrives in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days!

But Christ is never too late.

Jesus moves through this broken situation by displaying four things:

(1) his sovereign love, (2) his truth, (3) his tears, and (4) his power.

What do you need in suffering? Perhaps you are grieving today?

- (1) We need to be assured of his love and his sovereignty
- (2) We need his truth
- (3) We need his tears – to know he cares
- (4) We need resurrection, not just consolation.

You see all of that here in this passage...

In chapter 10, Jesus proclaims himself to be the Good Shepherd.

In Chapter 11, Jesus performs the role of the Good Shepherd.

Chas. 11-12 are **transitional chapters** in John's gospel, in between his public ministry among the Jews (1-10), and his passion (chs. 13-onward). The subject in chapel 11&12 is **death**..

- 11:1-44 — Raising Lazarus from the dead
- 11:45-57 — Plot to Kill Jesus
- 12:1-7 — Anointing Jesus, and a reference to his death
- 12:9ff — A plot to kill Lazarus
- 12:12 — His entry
- 12:20-36 — Statements about his death
- 12:37-50 unbelief and Jesus appeal to believe and have eternal life

Further, for John this is the **“seventh” sign**.

- There are seven miracles, which serve as little “sermons” — (1) water to wine, .... (7) now the ultimate sign: raising Lazarus.
- **Both the first, and the seventh sign appear before personal friends and family.**

**This story displays Jesus power over death, as the resurrection and the life. And it also anticipates Jesus’ death and resurrection.**

**We will look at it in four scenes...**

### **#1: Jesus Dialogues with His Disciples (11:1-16)**

**V. 1:** Jesus is in the **wilderness** region (Batanea? miles away NE of Jerusalem), where JB was baptizing when he got the news.

- Three characters: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. **An adult sibling group.**
- These names were found on **an ossuary near Bethany in the late 1800’s**. This doesn’t mean that it actually belonged to these three individuals, but that these were common names.
- **Bethany is on the east side of the Mount of Olives.**
  - Today it’s the modern village of **El-Azariyeh** (an Arabic name, for “place of Lazarus”).
  - Other first-century tombs are located around the hillside.
  - It’s less than two miles from Jerusalem along the road toward Jericho.

**2:** This is the first mention of this family in John’s gospel.

- We read of the sisters Mary and Martha in **Luke 10:38ff**.
- Jesus obviously **loved this family, and they served him throughout his ministry.**
- Jesus mentions this **anointing** of Mary **before** the event actually took place (12:1-8). This probably means the readers were already familiar with that story, as it spread by word of mouth. Further, John is a good story-teller, and often **good story tellers were drop references ahead of time, only to describe them in more detail later.**
- **John also means for his book to be read more than once.**

**11:3:** They bring their trouble to Jesus. An example of prayer.

**“he whom you love”** — is a **very touching note.**

- Jesus **loves** his followers.
- He had a **special relationship with this Bethany family.**
- Verse **5** — we read that Jesus **“loved Martha and her sister”** also.

**This is important to keep in mind when discussing why Jesus **delayed** going to Lazarus.**

- It **can’t mean he didn’t love him.**
- It can’t mean he was indifferent or calloused to them.

**11:4. “This illness doesn’t lead to death” **doesn’t mean that Lazarus won’t die from the sickness; it means he won’t ultimately die** — because “whoever believes will never die.”**

**4b:** This death will **lead to a resurrection, and that the glory of God.**

- This is similar to the sign in **9:3**. “so that the work of God may be displayed...”
- **God’s glory does not always involving sparing us from difficulties and death.**
- This resurrection will **reveal much about the nature of God and His Son...**
- The Father and the Son are committed to the glory of each other.

**11:5–6: Why does he wait two days longer where he was?**

**What’s up with that? How can this delay be *loving*?**

I think the answer is pretty obvious. I don’t think it’s because Lazarus would have already been dead by the time he received the news of the illness (v. 4 suggests otherwise; also v. 11).

- **Nor does it make him responsible for the death.**
- **If Jesus had left immediately, Lazarus would have still been dead for two days...**

**The Lord wanted these loved ones to witness his power over death.**

- **By the time he arrived, there would be no doubt that Lazarus was dead.**
  - “**Not mostly dead, or kind of dead, but dead, dead.**” To quote the Princess Bride!
  - He went when it was most profitable, not immediately after the invitation.
  - There were many ideas floating around about possible recessitations during the first three days of death.
- **Jesus, then, had something more important in mind: revealing God’s glory to the utmost.**
- He wanted to reveal God’s glory to this family, to others, and he wanted to fulfill the Father’s will and purposes.
- And all of this was an expression of love.
- The way Jesus loves them in this particular story is by showing them his glory.
- And that glory would be most seen by allowing Lazarus to die, and the sisters to go through grief.
- To say it another way, his delay was “**a delay of love**” and a “**delay of purpose.**”

**Application: We will not have all the answers to what we perceive to be the Lord’s delays and our own personal hardships, but that doesn’t mean he doesn’t love us!**

- What do we do in these moments? **We simply trust in his sovereign love.**
- **Nothing** will separate us from his love – not trouble, hardship, persecution, nakedness, hungry, danger or sword. Nothing.
- **Don’t base your assurance of his love on your circumstances.**
- Everything that Jesus does in this story is **both sovereign and loving.**
- It’s hard for us to get these two things together about the nature of God, but we must.

**Application #2: The Lord does not always answer prayers as expected.**

- But this also doesn’t mean he doesn’t love you.
- You can pour out your present your need to him. He’s not upset that they sought him.
- He responds in his own way, and that for their good and God’s glory.

### **11:7:8** — The Disciples are like, “What you talkin about Willis?”

- The Jews just tried to kill him in **Judea** (Jerusalem in 10:31, 39).
- **Bethany was within arms reach, so who knows what could happen?**

**11:9-10:** In response, Jesus launches into a little sermonette.

- People worked during the daylight hours. Work was over at night.

**9a:** Jesus’s earthly work continues. It’s still **daylight**. It’s not dark yet.

- This means he **is safe as long as he is doing the Father’s will.**
- **And part of his Father’s will, involved raising Lazarus and revealing his own glory in this ultimate sign.**
- **This is a model of courageous leadership. He goes to risk with trust in the Father.**

**9b-10:** The disciples were w/ the light of the world himself; so as long as they have him, they should keep following him... **keep believing and obeying him**, to do otherwise was to walk in the dark (to walk without him).

**11-13:** As further explanation as to why he is determined to go up to Judea, Jesus says he’s going **to wake up Lazarus**.

- **Sleep** is a common metaphor for death in Christian theology.
- **He can go and awaken him because he is the resurrection and the life.**
- **Lazarus’ resurrection is a preview of everyone in Christ Jesus.**

**Application:** For us, death will be like sleeping.

- “Talitha, get up.” (Mk 5:41).
- **Every morning, remember you are having resurrection practice!**

**11:14–15.** Jesus removes all ambiguity: “Lazarus is dead.”

- **Jesus is glad he was not present when Lazarus died because he wants this resurrection to bring about faith, to the glory of God.**

**11:16.** John speaks the most about Thomas (here; 14:5; 20:24–29; 21:2).

What do we make of his statement?

- **First, it reflected great devotion.**
  - We could call him “**Devoted Thomas**” here; not Doubting Thomas.
- **Second, it lacked understanding.**
  - **He** didn’t comprehend vs. 9-10, that Jesus was not going to die yet.
  - He couldn’t die *with* Jesus, since only Jesus was the Lamb of God.
- **Third, he spoke better than he knew!**
  - All would-be disciples are called to take up a cross and follow Jesus.

In your suffering, **be assured of his love and of his sovereign purposes...**

### **#2: Jesus Speaks Truth to Martha (11:17-27)**

**In our suffering, we also need his truth, as our minds are often busy and clouded.**

**17:** Various sources report the rabbinic belief that the soul hovers over the body for three days... After which, death was irreversible.

- That seems to be present in the story. There's an emphasis on **four days**.

**18–19:** There's a suggestion of **prominence** here in this family, given the fact that **Jews traveled to Bethany to mourn**. Not every villager had these kinds of mourners.

- The fact that Mary used expensive perfume to anoint Jesus' body, also supports the idea that they had some wealth and social standing.
- The mention of the proximity of Jerusalem also makes us aware of the threat of death.

**11:20.** **Martha's busy, practical activity** here, while Mary sits at home, reflects Luke's account of these sisters in Luke 10:38–42.

**11:21.** She wonders where Jesus was?

- **She has confidence in Jesus, but she is perplexed.**
- **Jesus is *not* turned off by this question.**
- **You can express your heart to him like the Psalmists, "How long oh Lord?"**

**11:22:** Despite her struggle, **she still has confidence in Jesus.**

- **She recognizes his uniqueness; his intimacy with the Father, and the effectiveness of his prayers.**

**Application:** When the Lord doesn't do what you think he should do, do you lose confidence in him? You have to go back to his word, and remind yourself of his truth.

**23-24:** Martha understands Jesus to be saying that Lazarus will rise at the final resurrection; **she shared a common Jewish view of resurrection.**

- The **Sadducees** denied the resurrection; **that's why they were sad ... you see.**
- The **Pharisees** believed in a final resurrection (Acts 23:8).
- But Jesus is saying more — **he is referring to an immediate resurrection.**

Martha doesn't understand that... and now Jesus makes a remarkable statement that serves to explain his raising of Lazarus.

**11:25–26:** While the Jews believed in a final resurrection, **Jesus has repeatedly said that he alone, under the sanction of the Father, would raise the dead** (5:21, 25–29; 6:39–40).

- Now that same truth is stated with a pithy, "I am" saying.
- **He is taking Martha's thought away from just a general belief in final resurrection, to a *personal belief* in Him, as the only one who can do it.**
- In John 6, Jesus **gives** the Bread and **is** the Bread.
- Here, he **gives** the resurrection and **is** the resurrection (Carson),
- Which means this: **There is neither resurrection nor eternal life outside of him.**
- He is saying: **"I hold the keys of life and of death. I have the power to raise the dead."**

Those who believe enjoy resurrection life — **now**.

- And they will **ultimately never** die, but will enjoy eternal life forever.
- **Resurrection life is like the other dynamics of the gospel — already and not yet!**

**Do you believe this?** That is, does she believe in *him*, not just the idea of resurrection?  
Do you believe that I am the only one who can give you resurrection life?

**11:27: Martha's confesses her faith in Jesus as the Messiah.**

- She believes that Jesus is 'the resurrection and the life' and that means he is the **promised Messiah**.
- Her faith is not mindless but rooted **in truth about Jesus**.

**Application: When you are dealing with grief and pain, it's easy to doubt Jesus' truth, but allow this story to remind you to treasure Jesus' truth in hard times.**

**"If you're word had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction" (Ps 119).**

### **#3: Jesus Grieves with Mary (11:28–37)**

Martha now filled with hope, and wants Mary to have a private meeting with Jesus...  
It was a time filled with much emotion, and so a private talk was desired.

**11:29–31:** But she didn't get the private meeting because everyone followed her, **like children following their mother around all over the house!**

**32:** She fell at his feet. That's where we find Mary in the gospels, at the feet of her Lord.  
• Here, **she can't restrain her emotion.**

**33. Jewish families hired at least two flute players and a professional wailing woman** (you can read this in the Mishnah, Ketuboth 4:4).

- So while there were "**real tears**" from Mary and her grieving friends, there would have also been some "**professional tears**."
- **When Jesus saw this drama, John says he was "deeply moved in his spirit" and was "greatly troubled."**
  - None of the modern translations get this right – they're timid.
  - He **quaked with rage!**
  - **Some put in a footnote, "Indignant" or Angry" – Well why don't you say "angry!"**
  - This word *embrimaomai* [deeply moved] in extra-biblical Greek, was used **to refer to the snorting of horses**.
  - When applied to human beings, refers **to anger, outrage or emotional indignation**.
  - It occurs twice in this chapter (cf. v. 38), and elsewhere only in Matt 9:30; Mark 1:43; 14:5.
  - **English translations tend to soften it — "deeply moved in spirit" is more civil than snorted like a horse!**
  - **Jesus is angry. That's the point. He's outraged.**

## Angry at what?

- Many options have been proposed, including the hypocritical mourners?
- Some think he is angry at the unbelief of people?
- Or, it's that Jesus is moved by their grief, and is expressing anger at sin, sickness and death.
- It's possible that all three are in view; though I think the third one is the surest.
- Jesus is angry at the effects of sin, death, and for the grief it causes.
- He has come to reverse this curse; in holy zeal he will set things right.
- He will defeat his enemy of death through his death and resurrection.

If you have ever walked out of a hospital and said, "I just hate cancer!" then I you know this feeling.

- This is not the way it's supposed to be. And one day it will be no more.

What gives you agony? We live in a world in which people are angry at things that aren't most important.

**34-35:** When Jesus reaches the tomb, "he weeps."

- Think about has two things we don't have (1) He knows that in ten minutes everyone will be happy because he will raise Lazarus, and (2) He has all power.
- And yet – he weeps.
- He doesn't smirk and say, "Just wait until you see this."
- Why? Because his love is perfect. Because he is the Wonderful Counselor.
- Even though he has power over the grave, he still weeps with his friends.
- His not dispassionate. He's no brain on a stick.
- He's not detached. He enters into the grief. He can't even talk!
- He's near. He weeps with those who weep.

What do you need in suffering?

- You need a Savior that is both loving and sovereign
- You need a Savior who speaks truth to your clouded mind.
- You need a Savior who sheds tears with you.

**App:**

- We need the tears of Jesus, not just the truth of Jesus.
- Jesus has both the ministry of tears and the ministry of truth.
- And we need both in our ministry to wounded people.
- We need an integrated ministry of both mind and heart; emotions and theology, tears and truth.
- Jesus was the most perfect person to every live, and he wept.
- That wasn't a sign of immaturity but maturity.

- Keller: “The best people will be the biggest weepers; not a sign of immaturity but maturity. They can’t avoid grief but are pulled into it.” There is something very right about that.
- Before Nehemiah built the wall, he wept.
- God never blesses a tearless ministry.

It’s not only nothing wrong with just collapsing in grief with people, but there’s everything right about it. Blessed are those who mourn.... Weep with those who weep.

**36:** Another touching note of **love**. But they were only **partially right**.

- Jesus did love Lazarus, but **he’s not weeping because he has lost him**.
- His tears **are focused on the effects of sin and death and the grief it causes**.

**37:** They are right at one level. He could have prevented it.

- **But they don’t know the purposes of Go**.
- Jesus doesn’t always do things the way people think he should, or when he should, but we trust him. Remember his mother’s requests in John 2?

#### #4: Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead (11:38–44)

**38:** Jesus once again **snorts at sin and death**.

**The furious love of Jesus is on display**.

**38b.** Caves were common burial sites, commonly sealed by a stone.

- It calls to mind Jesus’ own tomb.

**39:** Martha, the practical one objects to Jesus’ request. She highlights the **odor of the body**

- **She’s like, “I know you’re a single guy, and you may not realize this, but he’s going to stink!”**
- **Doesn’t anyone have any febreze? And hand sanitizer.**
- **(She reminds of ladies who want to be buried with high heels because they’re not rising in flats!)**
- **I love the King James, “He stinketh.” Like my little league dugout.**

**40:** He summarizes his intent: **the glory of God** manifested.

**41-42.** The stone is taken away, and **then Jesus prays**.

Jesus’ prayer is instructive and inspiring.

- He addresses the **‘Father’** (cf. 17:1, 11, 25).
- Secondly, **Jesus thanks the Father ahead of time; the prayer assumes that He already asked for Lazarus to be raised. Our prayers should be filled with thanksgiving!**
- Third, **his prayer seeks to show the hearers of his intimacy of he and the Father, and hence Jesus’ unique identity as the Son of God — so that they would believe.**
- **Pray in public, not just for your sake but for the sake of others.**

**43–44.** The climactic moment in the story...

- “A Loud voice”
- “Lazarus, come out!”
- Someone has said that if Jesus didn’t say his name, he would have emptied the whole graveyard!
- Jesus’ sheep hear his voice and they follow him!
- They know his accent; his call, his manner.
- Even when those sheep are in a cold dark tomb!

This is a powerful illustration of **Ephesians 2:4-5**

Ephesians 2:4–5 (ESV): But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

Because he was bound up, he could only hop and shuffle, but not walk.

- So Jesus said, “Unwrap the chap!”

**Why?** Well because this resurrection wasn’t the final resurrection.

- This resurrection is different from Jesus’ resurrection, when he arose with a glorified body and could pass through the clothes and the tomb.

So what do we make of Lazarus’ resurrection?

- **Jesus had something in mind beyond raising his friend: this miracle was a sign.**
- A sign of what? A sign that He is the resurrection and life; that HE is the Divine Son of God.
- You are to see this and believe in Him, and you too will have a glorious resurrection, not like Lazarus here, but like Jesus’ resurrection in the future.

**D.A. Carson:**

Readers cannot help but compare the resurrection of Jesus, after which the linen strips were still present and the sou-darion [facecloth] was neatly ‘folded up by itself, separate from the linen’ (20:7). The differences are of a piece with the general New Testament witness to the uniqueness of Jesus’ resurrection. Lazarus was called to a restoration of mortal life. Small wonder he groped blindly for the exit, and needed to be released from the graveclothes that bound him. Jesus rose with what Paul calls ‘a spiritual body’ (1 Cor. 15), leaving the graveclothes behind, materializing in closed rooms. Though his resurrected body bore the marks of his five wounds and was capable of eating and of being touched, it was raised with the power of endless life, the firstfruits of the resurrection at the end. Those who hear Jesus’ shout on the last day will participate in his resurrection; the resurrection of Lazarus, occurring before that of Jesus, could only be a pale anticipation of what was yet to come. It was, in fact, a ‘sign’ (cf. notes on 2:11), rightly the climactic sign.

Amen.

**This passage makes us love Jesus.**

**Let me summarize: What do suffering and dying people need?**

- 1. We have a Savior who is both loving and sovereign.**
- 2. We have a Savior who speaks truth to us.**
- 3. We have a Savior who weeps with us.**
- 4. We have a Savior who provides resurrection, not just consolation. He will restore all things, better than before. He will make all things new.**

**Jesus both weeps with you in your grief;  
and promises to raise you from your sleep.**

**And then all the crying will stop.**

**And we will praise him with lungs that will never fail us.**

**And he has provided us with this hope through his crucifixion – through his suffering -- through his tomb, and his resurrection.**

**He is the resurrection and the life.**

**He is the Good Shepherd.**

**Believe in him.**