

The Resurrection & Life

Lesson 11

John 11:1-7; 17-45

Opener

**Ask: Is it difficult for you to allow God to have His way in your life?
Is it hard to believe that God is in control when things aren't going your way?**

Job knew what it meant to go through suffering. In one day he lost all ten of his children and all of his herds of animals. Then he lost his health and suffered excruciating pain and sores all over his body. His friends told him it was a result of his sin. His wife told him to curse God and die. But Job remained faithful to God and said, "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God!" (Job 19:25-26). Because of Job's faithfulness to God through his time of suffering, God blessed him with more children, more herds and wealth, and restored health.

We may feel like things aren't going the way we would like. However, if we are following God, we will know that he has a plan and it will work out for our good (Romans 8:28). The people in today's lesson would find out how faithful God is to fulfill his plans.

Scripture

Key Verses: "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish."

Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" And Lazarus came out, bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!" Many of the people who were with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw this happen.
- John 11:25-26; 43-45

Discussion

For Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, all hope was gone. Their brother had been dead for four days. According to Jewish tradition, a person's soul remained hovering over the body for three days, then it left them. By the fourth day, the body would have begun to decompose. They didn't understand why Jesus hadn't come the moment he heard Lazarus was sick. But Jesus had a plan. He tells his disciples, "I, the Son of God, will receive glory from this" (v. 4).

vv. 1-7

In these verses, John (the writer) is giving us a little background about Jesus' relationship with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. He tells us that Mary is the one who in the next chapter will anoint Jesus with expensive perfume. John also tells us that Jesus loved this family. So it is difficult at first to understand why Jesus didn't immediately go to them when he heard that Lazarus was sick. But again, God's ways are not our ways. Jesus knew what he was doing. He knew that soon HE would die and would rise again, so he is going to show his disciples the power he has over death. He is preparing them for his resurrection.

vv. 17-37

We know that Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus (v. 5). But we also know that he tarried in going straight to them when he heard that Lazarus was sick. When Jesus does arrive, Lazarus is already dead and has been in his grave for four days. Martha goes to meet Jesus on his way, and expresses her disappointment in his late arrival. She knows that had he been with them, he could have healed Lazarus (v.21).

Martha has a great deal of faith in Jesus. Even with Lazarus' death, she still states, "But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask" (v. 22). Jesus tells her that her brother will rise again, but she doesn't understand what he means. At this point Jesus gives Mary (and us) the words, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish" (vv. 25-26).

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he used every situation as an opportunity to teach his audience about who he was—that in him was eternal life. So once again, Jesus uses Lazarus' death to teach us that physical death is not the end. Death does not have the last word—Jesus does. And if he wants someone to rise again, he has the power to do it!

Martha expresses her belief that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. But we don't know if she expected Jesus to raise Lazarus from the dead.

It appears that Jesus is upset when he sees Mary and her friends mourning and weeping, and in his distress he weeps.

Ask: Why do you think Jesus wept?

Jesus knew he was about to bring Lazarus to life. So it is unlikely that he was weeping over the loss of his friend. It is more likely that he was weeping over the lack of faith of those who were mourning. Didn't they realize they were in the presence of their Creator and the Giver of eternal life?

vv. 38-45

It is clear that Jesus was troubled and even angered by the people's mourning and their questions such as in v. 37: "Why couldn't he keep Lazarus from dying?"

Ask: Do we ever question why God lets something happen in our lives?

Do you think this troubles him?

Someday we will see the final plan of God, and why things happen the way they do. But for now, we must “walk by faith” and know that God is in control.

Martha again shows a lack of understanding of Jesus’ plan when she hesitates to roll away the stone of Lazarus’ tomb. If she understood what he was about to do, she would have obeyed immediately.

Jesus wants the people to know he is God’s Son, so he speaks aloud to God. And after Lazarus is raised, many do believe in him (v. 45).

Ask: So what can we learn from this miraculous story?

First, as already stated, Jesus allowed Lazarus to die so that he could display his power over the grave. He had healed people’s sickness and could have done so with Lazarus, but he had a greater miracle in mind.

Second, he wanted to give his disciples “another opportunity to believe in [him]” (v. 15). As we have seen in the story of the Resurrection, many of Jesus’ followers were not expecting him to be raised from the dead. They should have remembered his words, “I am the resurrection and the life” and his power over death with Lazarus.

Third, Jesus’ timing was perfect. He was trying to prepare his disciples for what lay ahead for him. Also, the gratitude Lazarus’ sister Mary felt for Jesus caused her to pour expensive perfume on Jesus, which he identifies as “preparation for my burial” (12:7).

Jesus is who he claimed to be. He identifies himself as the Living Water, the Bread of Life, and now the Resurrection and the Life. He is the Creator of life, the Sustainer of life, and the giver of eternal life. “Life itself was in him” (John 1:4).

Application

Ask: What difference is Jesus making in your life?

Has he raised you from the dead?

Romans 6:23 says that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Without Christ, there is death—eternal separation from God. When you give your life to Christ, he sets you free from the power of sin and death. You are raised from the dead!

Ask: Are you letting Christ have his way in your life?

Do you trust in his plans for you?

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”

- Ecclesiastes 3:11

