

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Lazarus, Come Forth John 11:28-37 Part Four

We are continuing our study of the resurrection of Lazarus in **John 11**. We have already considered two major parts of this story.

The first part of the story was the preparation for the *miracle* (John 11:1-16).

In this part, Martha and Mary had sent a message to Jesus informing Him of Lazarus' illness. His initial response was to tell His disciples that this illness was not unto death but for the glory of God that the Son of God might be glorified.

Then what happened? Jesus remained where He was two more days. Was this a problem for the disciples? Absolutely not! They were happy where they were and fearful of returning to Judea.

But this was not true of Christ. He had work to do and only a limited amount of time to do it, so Jesus announced to His disciples His plan to return to Judea.

Though this may not have been what the disciples initially wanted to do Thomas, the courageous pessimist, wanting to stay close to Christ, effectively exhorted His fellow disciples to follow Him into Judea so that they might die with Him.

This devotion of Thomas to Christ, even when He was anticipating the worst, should be very inspirational to us as Christians since we know that the Scriptures teach us that, "**It has not only been granted to us for Christ's sake to believe in Him but also to also suffer for His sake.**"

So, hopefully, looking to Thomas as an example of courage, we will press forward in following Christ even though we know that in doing so we will often, if not invariably, cause us to encounter difficulty.

So, what was the first part of the story about the raising of Lazarus? The first part of the story was the preparation for the miracle. What was the second part of the story?

The second part of the story was the *arrival* of Jesus and His disciples in Bethany (John 11:17-37). This part of the story described two separate encounters with Christ by the sisters of Lazarus. And who was the first sister to encounter Christ?

Martha was the first of the sisters to encounter Christ (John 11:17-27). In this encounter we saw Martha in her initial greeting of Christ confirming her faith in Him as a healer. And though this expression of faith in Christ as a healer certainly was good, her faith still needed to be stretched.

She needed to see Jesus not only as a healer, but she needed to see Him also as the resurrection and life.

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In other words, she needed to see Him as the source of all life whether physical or spiritual and capable of impacting her present just as forcefully and dramatically as her future. And because she needed to see Him in this way Jesus took the time to instruct her.

And how did she respond? She made a wonderful confession. Let me read for you **John 11:27**. **"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.'"** She, by this confession, apparently embraced what He said as true to the extent that she could understand it, and this new and expanded understanding led her to reconfirm her faith in Him as the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

Did this mean that she knew that Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead after being dead four days? The answer would have to be no. She might have been closer to this conviction because of Christ's instruction, but we still did not believe that Jesus was capable of such a thing based on her later remarks to Christ in **John 11:39**.

We are now ready to consider Christ's encounter with the second sister of Lazarus, and who was that sister? Mary was the second of the sisters to encounter Christ (John 11:28-37).

As we examine this second encounter I would hope that what would particularly strike us is how emotionally connected Christ is to us. Jesus is not a passive or an uninvolved by-stander when it comes to our suffering. He not only is aware of our pain, He feels our pain. If you have tears in your eyes, He will have tears in His eyes. Hopefully this truth will come alive for us this weekend causing us to want to spend more interacting with Him in prayer.

Let us now read John's account of Christ's encounter with Mary in **John 11:28-37**. **"And when she had said this, she went away, and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, 'The Teacher is here, and is calling for you.'** (29) **And when she heard it, she arose 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) **The Jews then who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.** (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.'** (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,** (34) **and said, 'Where have you laid him?'** They said to Him, **'Lord come and see.'** (35) **Jesus wept.** (36) **And so the Jews were saying, 'Behold how He loved him!'** (37) **But some of them said, 'Could not this man, who opened, the eyes of him who was blind, have kept this man also from dying?'"** Obviously Mary's encounter with Christ and the events surrounding that encounter are far more emotional than the encounter that Martha had with Christ. And our exploration of these emotions, I believe, can be very helpful to us in understanding how closely Christ is truly attached to us.

Let us begin by looking at **John 11:28**. **"And when she had said this, she went away, and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, 'The Teacher is here, and is calling for you.'"** This verse tells us that after Martha's confession Jesus directed her to go back and tell Mary that He had arrived and that He wanted her to come to Him. You will notice that Martha tried to do this very discreetly, apparently attempting not draw too much attention to herself as she entered the house.

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So, what happened next? After Martha had delivered the message to Mary that Jesus had now arrived and wanted her to come to Him she immediately got up and left. Let us read **John 11:29**. **"And when she [Mary] heard it [that Jesus had arrived and wanted her to come to Him], she arose quickly, and was coming to Him."** And where was that she was going?

Let us read **John 11:30**. **"Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him."** Obviously we do not know exactly where Jesus and His disciples were located. But we do know, as I shared with you last week, that it was not in Bethany proper and was therefore somewhere on the outskirts of the village.

So, did anyone notice Mary's quick exit and most likely Martha's as well? Let us read **John 11:31**. **"The Jews then who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there."**

Obviously, though Martha may have tried to be discreet, Mary's quick departure was not unnoticed. Everyone in the house who had been consoling her knew that she had left and they thought she was going to the tomb, and they certainly were not going to let her mourn the death of Lazarus in private so they all followed. Now this is where the story gets very intense.

Let us now read **John 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.'"**

What we see in this verse is very interesting. We see Mary sharing the exact same words that her sister Martha had shared with Jesus in **John 11:21**. She like Mary in this greeting was not in any way rebuking or chastising Jesus for not having been there earlier since Lazarus had died so shortly after they sent the message. Rather she, like Martha, is by these words confirming her faith in Jesus as a healer.

But even though Mary's initial greeting was the same as her sister's, her actions were very different. Mary, unlike Martha, fell at His feet. In light of the fact that His encounter with Mary was less constrained than Martha's encounter, more emotional, and also more public, it is not surprising that the following interaction between Christ and Mary will also be different.

Let us therefore continue to read **John 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."**

So, what exactly was going on in this verse? First of all, John tells us that Mary was weeping, and the Jews who came with her, also were weeping. The word "weeping" (KLAIO) denotes loud, audible weeping; in other words, "sobbing." This is an amazing scene.

So, how will Jesus respond? Let us continue to read the verse. **"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her, also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled."**

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So, how did Jesus respond? First of all, John tells us that He was deeply moved in spirit. The word "moved" (EMBRIMAOMAI), when referring to people, usually denotes anger or indignation. So, how did Jesus respond to all of this "weeping" and "sobbing?" Jesus began angry. Jesus became indignant.

So, why did He become so angry or indignant when He saw Mary and those with her weeping, or in other words sobbing?

One possible explanation for Christ's anger was their immature faith. But if this were the cause then Christ, I believe, would have been angry with Martha during the first encounter. But the truth is that He wasn't angry with Martha during the first encounter even though her faith was not any more mature than the faith of Mary. They both were unable to get their arms around the fact that He, as the Resurrection and the Life, was very able to raise Lazarus from the dead even though He may have been in the tomb four days. So if Jesus was not angry with Martha because of her immature faith certainly He would not have been angry with Mary for her immature faith. Nor would He have been angry with the others who were with her.

If Christ's response of anger to the weeping of the mourners was not because of their lack of faith in Him as the resurrection and the life then what was the cause for His anger?

Christ's anger was not directed at the immature faith of the mourners, but rather Christ's anger was directed at cause of their mourning. His anger was directed at death itself (1 Corinthians 15:50-57).

Jesus is not indifferent to death. It is His enemy. Let me read for you **1 Corinthians 15:20-26**. **"But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. (21) For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. (23) But each in his own order; Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, (24) then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. (25) For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. (26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death."**

Death is clearly identified as the enemy of Christ and it is this enemy that Christ will ultimately destroy. So let me ask you again, who is Jesus angry with here in **John 11:33**? Is He angry with the mourners because of their lack of a mature faith or is He angry with His enemy, which has produced their weeping and sobbing? I believe that we have to believe that He is angry with His enemy, which has produced all of this weeping and sobbing.

So what happens next? Let us go back and read the verse one more time. **"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her, also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit [He became very angry and indignant], and was troubled."** Notice that last phrase, **"and was troubled."**

The expression "was troubled" literally means "He troubled Himself." He voluntarily took on the sorrows of those who had been impacted by the death of Lazarus.

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When Jesus saw all the trouble that His enemy "death" had caused among those whom He cared so much about, He chose to be troubled with them.

This is a wonderful thing that He did. It is not often that we see someone when we are troubled, trouble themselves, or in other words to take on our pain and our suffering as if it were their very own.

We see the reality of this in the very next verse. So, after John tells us that He troubled Himself, the apostle then records for us His very next words. And what were those words? Let us now read **John 11:34**. "**And said, 'Where have you laid him?'**" He is now prepared to act. He is going to attack His enemy by raising Lazarus from the dead. So, how did the people respond? "**They said to Him, 'Lord, come and see.'**"

And of course we would have to assume that all these people were even now continuing to weep and were continuing to sob. And then John records for us two very wonderful words in **John 11:35**, "**Jesus wept.**"

Rather than using the Greek word for loud audible weeping (KLAIO), John used the word (DAKRUO) that refers to a quiet weeping (John 11:35). Jesus shared their grief. Why? He can't help Himself. He is a loving and compassionate God.

This is a wonderful picture of Christ that I would hope that would be forever imbedded in our minds and hearts. Jesus is not a passive by-stander as we pass through pain. In fact, He not only is aware of our pain, He feels our pain. If you have tears in your eyes, He will have tears in His eyes.

Do you believe this? Do you actually believe that Christ is not only aware of your pain but actually feels your pain? Hopefully, based on this passage in **John 11**, your answer would be yes. This is important for us to know. We are never alone in our pain. He is not only there with us in our pain; He is sharing our pain.

This morning, in light of this truth, I would encourage you to come boldly into His presence with all of your trials, with all of your heartaches, with all of your pain and cast your cares upon Him, not only because You know that He is able but also because you know He cares.

So, how did the Jews understand the tears of Christ? Let me read for you **John 11:36**. "**And so the Jews were saying, 'Behold how He loved him.'**" They misunderstood Christ's tears. They thought His tears were a response to the pain of His loss rather than a response to the pain of their loss (John 11:36).

How do we know that His tears were more a response to the pain of their loss rather than a response to the pain of His loss? We know this because unbeknown to them He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead.

May God not only give us the grace to see His power but may God also give us the grace to see His love.