

## John - Part 36 - Sermon Manuscript - Real Comfort & Hope

Believe it or not, last year at this time is when we started our study in the book of John. And after today, we'll officially be half way! If you're new here and that sounds a little overwhelming, it's okay...

Back when we decided to go through John we knew it would take a couple years, but we also knew we would take breaks along the way as we felt led.

So today we'll cover the majority of John chapter 11. Go ahead and turn there with me - John 11:1. This is the chapter that contains the shortest verse in the Bible (does anyone know what that is?)...

### Jesus wept! (John 11:35)

This is the famous account of when Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from the dead.

**John 11:1-3** - Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you **love** is sick."

Okay so right away we learn that Mary and her sister Martha sent word to Jesus about their brother Lazarus because he was sick. They knew that if anyone could heal him, Jesus could.

It's interesting that their message said, "Lord, the one you **love** is sick."

**"Love" there is *phileo*, which is a love of friendship.** Think: **Philadelphia** - the city of brotherly love.

So, Jesus is good friends with this guy named Lazarus. In fact, as we'll see, Jesus is good friends with the whole family. I love this because we don't often see the day to day interactions of friends and family within the pages of Scripture. But there are clear glimpses of these strong bonds of friendships.

Jesus wasn't just an acquaintance of Mary, Martha and Lazarus... again, they were close friends - It's just like when we say we love our close friends because they are like family to us.

**[Blank 1] John 1:4** - When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

Jesus isn't saying that He's going to cure Lazarus. He's just saying that death won't have the final say in what happens to Lazarus. Jesus is going to do something miraculous. And just like all His other miracles, this miracle is going to point to the fact that He is God.

**John 11:5-7** - Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, **he stayed where he was two more days**, 7 and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

**Does the fact that Jesus stayed where He was for *two more days* seem odd to you?** You'd think that because they were such good friends that Jesus would have packed his bags and headed out as soon as possible. But He doesn't seem to be in a hurry!

It reminds me of a similar situation in John chapter 4 where a royal official came to Jesus begging Him to go back to Capernaum to heal his son. But Jesus didn't feel the need to go because even though He was miles from this man's son, He healed him anyway.

**Remember: Our prayers aren't dependent upon location.**

So, Jesus could have healed Lazarus from a distance, but He chose not to. He chose to stay where He was because there was a larger plan of God at work. Then, when the time was right, He'd go back to Judea - to the town called Bethany, just a couple miles outside of Jerusalem. But His disciples weren't exactly excited to go...

**[Blank 2] John 11:8-10** - "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?" 9 Jesus answered, "**Are**

**there not twelve hours of daylight?** Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. 10 It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

The disciples are scared... which makes sense because it wasn't that long ago that the religious leaders in Judea tried to have Jesus killed by stoning Him to death! But Jesus says, "Are there not 12 hours of daylight?"

Seems like a weird thing to say, but remember, this culture didn't have the luxury of digital clocks. They broke the days up in half - half with light, and half without. Jesus is saying that while it's still light out, He's got work to do. It makes me think of...

**John 9:4-5 - "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."**

Remember, Jesus has a plan - It's not yet His time to die. He is in control of exactly when that happens, but that time hasn't come yet. There's still light in the world (He is the light) and He still has things He must do.

**[Blank 3] John 11:11-16** - After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." 12 His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. 14 So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16 Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

### **Two things:**

1. How did Jesus know Lazarus was dead? This is Jesus flexing His supernatural muscles. He knew because He's God. This is why Jesus stayed where He was for a couple extra days. He had a plan that would bring many people to believe in Him.

2. Verse 16 mentions Thomas. This is the same Thomas that's famous for doubting. And yet here he's willing to go with Jesus to Judea to honor the death of his friend, even if it means risking his life.

So, they leave, and from where they were in Galilee it would have taken at least an entire day to make the trip.

**John 11:17-19** - On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, 19 and **many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.**

Okay, so it's not that Lazarus was a really popular guy that Jews came from all over to pay their respects. When it came to someone dying, the Jewish culture back then was very different from our culture.

Back then, when someone died, the funeral was held on the same day they died. They would take great care to wrap the body in linen... and not in a loose way. They'd make it tight enough that there was no chance of the limbs bending.

Then, if you were of the lower class, you would lay the body in a common burial ground somewhere outside the city. They'd dig a trench, lay all the bodies in there, and then cover them with rocks.

But if you were of a more wealthy family, you'd have your own family tomb.

**[Ketef Hinnom Burial Caves - Slideshow]** Tombs would be cut into rocks, and the larger ones could have 3 or 4 places carved into the stone to lay the body.

**[Dr. Soden Pic]**

**[Lazarus Tomb in Bethany - Traditional site]** Once they laid the body in there, they'd roll a large stone in front of it to seal it off from animals and grave robbers. They'd keep the body there for a year until it was fully decomposed.

**[Ossuary]** Then they'd take the bones and place them in the family ossuary (bone box).

**[Blank 4]** Now, our funerals today might take up about half our day, or maybe the whole day depending on how involved you are with the service. But during the time of Lazarus, the family would take an entire week off to mourn.

And during that entire week, family and friends from all over would visit them and provide for their needs. People would literally come into their homes and do all the daily chores for them so that they could just focus on their mourning.

In fact, the family of the deceased would only leave their house during that first week if they decided they wanted to visit the grave. They'd mourn by tearing their clothes, sometimes wearing sackcloth, they'd have certain prayers that they would recite... it was a very intentional time to grieve. It strikes me that maybe our culture could learn from the way they grieved...

I know I tend to push my grief down and just try to get on with my life, but back then they didn't try to hide it. In fact, mourning for the dead was so important for them that there were actually people who were professional mourners - that's what they did for a living! You could literally hire people to mourn if you felt it was necessary!

I remember sitting in my 7th grade guidance counselor's office and she said to me: "*Scott, what would you like to do for a living someday?*" I can't imagine saying, "*I'd really like to be a professional mourner!*"

But again, mourning for the dead was taken very seriously back then. So when John tells us that many Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother, this is why! They were coming to take care of them so that the sisters could properly mourn the loss of their brother.

**John 11:20-24** - When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

**Many Jews back then believed in a future resurrection. There was one group of Jewish religious leaders called the Sadducees that didn't believe in a future resurrection, and that's why they were so Sad-u-see!**

**[Blank 5] John 11:25-31** - Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

Again, if you're the family in mourning, the only reason you'd usually leave the house was to visit the grave site.

**John 11:32-33** - When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, **he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.**

"Deeply moved" has this sense of suppressing your emotions forcefully... like you're holding yourself back. In this case Jesus was probably holding back His tears.

But I don't think He was about to cry only because His friend died. I think He was experiencing extreme emotions because He's seeing all the people around Him that didn't recognize Him as God... at least not yet.

**John 11:34-37** - "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Again, here's where we see a glimpse of the unbelief from the Jews around Him. They're saying: *"Hey didn't Jesus open the eyes of the blind man? We know that only God can do that! So, if Jesus really is God as He claims, then why didn't He keep Lazarus from dying?"*

It's a backhanded way of saying, *"See, Jesus isn't God. If He were, then he would have healed Lazarus."* Personally, I think their unbelief was the main reason Jesus wept.

**John 11:38-42** - Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." 40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone...

**They're thinking that Jesus wanted to go inside to pay His respects. But instead, Jesus prayed.**

**John 11:41** - ...Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but **I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.**"

Jesus said this a few days ago to His disciples, but here He says it again... the reason why He didn't heal Lazarus from a distance was so that Lazarus would die and then Jesus could perform a miracle that would reveal exactly who Jesus is to those that didn't believe in Him.

**John 11:43-44** - When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Can you imagine this scene? Imagine seeing the astonished looks on people's faces when Lazarus walked out. Imagine the gasps and whispers among the crowd. Imagine Mary and Martha rushing to their brother with absolute joy!

Their brother who was once dead is now alive. And because of this miracle...

**John 11:45 - Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.**

Many people came to put their trust in Jesus that day. That was the whole point of Jesus allowing Lazarus to die so that He could raise Him back to life four days later. And that power that resurrected Lazarus back from the dead is the same power that gives us eternal life as followers of Jesus!

**[Blank 6]** I like to remind people of this at graveside services. I've only done a couple graveside services so far, but in each one I've read 1 Thessalonians 4 which says...

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** - "Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words."

**The fact is that we are not without hope - we have Jesus!**

Those that don't have Jesus are without hope.

Have you ever been to a funeral where you just feel a heaviness because you realize that most of the people around you don't believe in Jesus. They grasp at words, just trying to grab on to any kind of comfort, even if the words are hollow...



I remember one mom saying that everytime she looks up at the night sky, she sees a certain star, and she knows that star is her daughter looking back at her.

I heard those words and I felt her pain. But I know that those words can't really give her the kind of comfort she longs to have. Those were hollow words spoken from a broken mother.

But this is how the world mourns without Jesus! They make statements that don't really mean anything, and then they might even go home and drown their grief with anything that distracts them from how they're really feeling.

But those of us who believe in Jesus are not of this world and therefore we don't have to grieve like the everyone else that has no hope.

Anyone and everyone who puts their trust in Jesus has the promise of eternal life with Him! That is our *hope*. Ours is a biblical kind of hope. When hope is used in the New Testament, it's not the kind of hope that we have around our birthday - like, I hope to get that new \_\_\_\_\_?

A biblical kind of hope is an *assurance*! It's a confidence that we have in the promises of Jesus. This is why Hebrews 11:1 says...

**Hebrews 11:1 - "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."**

We don't need to live our lives with a worldly definition of hope. Ours is a biblical kind of hope that gives us real comfort during our time of grieving. It's the kind of hope that gives us a deep joy... not *happiness*... but a deep joy; a deep satisfaction and confidence that only God Himself can give us in our time of need.

**Matthew 5:4 - Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be *comforted*.**

One of these days, after our future resurrection that I spoke about earlier, John describes what it'll be like for us who trusted in Jesus. He says in Revelation 21...

**[Blank 7] Revelation 21:3-4** - And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

That's the hope and assurance that we have in Jesus! The only question left for us as John's readers is this: **Have we put our faith and trust in Jesus?**

**Let's Pray**