

The Resurrection and the Life

John 11:1-46

April 12th, 2026

Big idea: Jesus wields power over death for God's glory, even while He empathizes with suffering people.

Intro

Think of a time where you have done something that is for someone else's good, but they didn't see it that way at the time.

Parents – micro manage their toddler so they don't lick the outlets, force a 7 year old to do their school work, require a teenager to stick with a tough job.

Coach – requiring players to run lines at the end of a two hour practice.

In each case the coach/parent had a perspective that the players/kids did not. Trust over time allows each of those to function well. Without the trust or before the trust, it would be difficult.

God sometimes does things we don't understand. If we trust His character, His heart, His love, His wisdom, we can live with that lack of understanding. Without it, it will be difficult.

In John 11 we see a great example where Jesus does something that people don't understand at first, but His actions flow out of love and a desire to put the glory of God on display.

1. Jesus **delayed** out of love. (11:1-16)
 - a. At the end of chapter 10, Jesus left Jerusalem because they were once again attempting to kill him. He went to a region "beyond the Jordan," probably about a day's walk away.
 - b. While there he got a message that a friend from a family he cared about was sick in Bethany, a village 2 miles outside Jerusalem.
 - i. He was in their home in Luke 10, where Mary was listening and Martha was serving and distracted.
 - ii. John mentions a scene that actually hasn't happened yet, Mary anointing His feet with oil and wiping it with her. He will record it in John 12, but it was such a well-known incident that John could make mention of it here in chapter 11 to help make connections for his readers.
 - iii. Lazarus is described to Jesus as, "he whom you love"
 1. It's a touching hint of friendship that is in the background of the gospels and occasionally bubbles to the surface.
 - c. Purpose statement (v. 4)
 - i. not to end in death
 1. He does die but doesn't end there
 - ii. For the glory of God – that the Son of God may be glorified
 1. Must read the rest of the story in light of this statement.
 2. Not for Lazarus that he would live more happy years, not for Mary and Martha that they would receive this great gift.
 - iii. The curtains are pulled back on reality here.
 1. Nothing happens by chance, nothing is out of control. God's glory can be displayed even in great hardship, sometimes uniquely in great hardship.
 - d. He loved so He stayed (vv. 5-6)

- i. We would expect the opposite, He loved so He rushed to Jerusalem.
- ii. Was it unloving to stay? It might have felt that way.
 - 1. It might feel that way to us when God doesn't do what we want.
 - 2. There was an implied request from Mary and Martha, but Jesus delayed.
 - 3. But our feelings are not infallible. Our feelings can be wrong. Our feelings can miss the bigger perspective.
- iii. Note that he didn't delay so Lazarus would die
 - 1. Says in v. 39 dead four days
 - a. Jesus was beyond the Jordan so 1 day for the message to reach Jesus, delay two days, 1 day to travel
 - b. Lazarus must have died just after the messenger left – so he was already dead by the time Jesus got the message.
 - 2. Three reasons He delayed
 - a. strengthened sisters and disciples' faith by forcing them to trust in Jesus for something bigger than they could imagine.
 - b. made clear that Lazarus truly dead
 - c. Jesus operating on God's timetable, not man's
 - i. Jesus not coerced – runs His schedule according to God's timetable and will.
- e. When He announces His intention to go, His disciples are nervous. (vv. 7-16)
 - i. They were just seeking to stone you! (v. 8)
 - ii. Jesus uses a metaphor to say that He is safe on God's timetable. (v. 10ff)
 - 1. It's still the daytime – the light of the world is still with them – His life won't be taken until He is ready.
 - iii. Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe. (v. 15)
 - 1. Not glad that He died. Not glad for the mourning. Glad for them, for their sakes, because it will lead to greater belief.
 - 2. They were His closest followers and He is nearing the end of His 3 year ministry – surely they believe in Him?
 - a. 2:11 – believed after water to wine
 - b. 6:69 – believed after feeding 5,000 and teaching on bread of life.
 - c. 11 – Lazarus
 - d. ultimately after the resurrection
 - 3. Why does John keep recording that they believed as if it was a new thing?
 - a. Progressive nature of belief.
 - b. Their belief/faith/confidence in Christ was reaching new and deeper levels.
 - iv. Thomas is perhaps brave and loyal, but also kind of a downer and a doubter. (v. 16)
 - 1. More like Eeyore, "I guess we'll die with him."

2. Jesus **wept** with the mourners. (11:17-37)

- a. He arrives to find Lazarus has been dead for four days.
 - i. A day for the message to get to Jesus, a two day delay, and then a day to travel to Jerusalem means that Lazarus died just after Mary and Martha sent the message.
- b. The crowds had started to come to console Mary and Martha.
- c. Martha pulled away from the crowded house and met Jesus on the way (v. 20ff)
 - i. You'll notice that Mary and Martha both say the same thing, which probably indicates it's been a talking point on repeat between the two of them. "If He had been here, Lazarus wouldn't have died."
 - ii. I don't think they are words of attack, but they are words of grief even mixed with faith.
- d. "Your brother will rise" "I know, on the last day"
 - i. Seems to Martha like perhaps the modern equivalent of consoling a person with, "He's in a better place."
 - ii. With the exception of the Sadducees, who denied any type of resurrection, the Jewish people did anticipate a future resurrection. But it was not an individual resurrection, which is also why many rejected Jesus' resurrection as well. They anticipated a future corporate resurrection on the last day.
- e. But Jesus has something different in mind.
 - i. I am the resurrection and the life
 1. The language catches our attention.
 2. Just as He not only gives the bread from heaven (6:27) but is himself the bread of life 6:35, so also he not only raises the dead on the last day but is himself the resurrection and the life. (source?)
 3. Carter: He doesn't say, "I *can* resurrect people, and I *have* life." He says, "I am resurrection, and I am life". Our hope is not in an event (resurrection) but in a person (Jesus). Nothing can hinder him from giving life because he doesn't have life; he is life.
 - ii. Interesting phrases side by side
 1. V. 25b he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,
 2. V. 26a and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.
 - a. "even if" – the believer finds great comfort in the "even if"
 - i. Final resurrection in mind
 - b. But how does that fit with v. 26 which says we will never die?
 - i. We might die physically, if Jesus doesn't return first, but we will have eternal life in the presence of God now and with a resurrected body in the future.
 - ii. Paraphrase "whoever has eternal life and believes in me will never die"
 - iii. Jesus' question, "Do you believe this" goes beyond belief in the general future resurrection, but to belief in Him as the very source of resurrection, eternal life.

1. And she answers with faith in Him.
 2. She picked up what the Pharisees in 10:24 were demanding to know but rejecting when they said, “If you are the Christ, tell us plainly!”
- f. She called Mary from the crowd, likely a room full of mourners seated on the floor or on low stools that they had brought. (v. 28ff)
- i. Kent Hughes describes how a traditional mourning period would have unfolded at the time. After the sisters had returned from the grave, they had eaten a traditional meal of lentils, boiled eggs, and round loaves of bread, which by their shape symbolized that life was rolling on into eternity. ...She too was probably disheveled in appearance because mourners were committed to not washing themselves or wearing sandals. And the mourning had reached its peak on this day because Lazarus’ body had begun to decompose.
 - ii. Like Martha, she repeated the same statement with perhaps a hint of accusation.
 1. Unlike Martha, she collapsed at his feet in weeping.
 - iii. How do we understand Jesus’ emotional response here?
 1. When He saw them weeping, he was ‘deeply moved in spirit’
 - a. The word comes from a Greek word that has the idea of a horse snorting, like an involuntary gasp, with a hint of anger.
 2. “He was troubled” – to shake, stir up, unsettled, be upset
 3. “Jesus wept” – not the word for wailing, but for tears running down.
 - iv. At what was He weeping, troubled, deeply moved?
 1. At their unbelief?
 - a. That doesn’t seem adequate because He hadn’t yet clearly told Mary and Martha and the crowd of mourners that He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead.
 2. At the reality of death in a sin cursed world?
 3. In empathy with them?
 4. I think it’s best to see if wrapped in the whole of the chapter to not misunderstand the nature of God.
 - a. Jesus says, “If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father” in John 14
 - b. John told us in the prologue, John 1:18 “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” He’s the exegesis of the Father.
 - c. Jesus is motivated by love to take the actions in this chapter, including delaying to make it clear Lazarus was really dead.
 - d. Jesus knows this will not “end in death” but for the glory of the Father and the Son (v. 4)
 - e. He plans this so that “they may believe” (v. 15)
 - f. We might draw that wrong conclusions about God – that he doesn’t care. That He is cold and calculating. That His glory as the end goal means we are mere pawns. That His sovereignty means we should be unemotional and

detached from the tragedy of death. No, His glory and our good are mutually compatible goals. The heart of Christ grieves with hurting people, even while indignant at death that He will overcome and eradicate.

3. Jesus ***raised*** Lazarus from the tomb. (11:38-46)

- a. The miracle itself takes up little real estate in the narrative.
- b. Delaying two days was effective – they knew he was really dead and anticipated the stench (v. 39)
- c. He is in constant contact with the Father, but He prays this way out loud in the presence of the people “so that they may believe that You sent Me.”
 - i. The Triune God in perfect unity, perfect relationship, real interaction.
- d. And he called Lazarus forth.
 - i. I think it was Spurgeon who first made the well-worn observation that if he wouldn't have specified Lazarus by name, all the tombs would have emptied.
- e. What was the result?
 - i. Many believed, some didn't.
 - ii. It's hard to imagine how some could see this evidence and not believe, but that is indicative of the hardness of the human heart.

4. Applying the Word

- a. We don't always ***understand*** what God is doing.
 - i. What they experience over days we experience over decades
 - ii. People we love die, even though we ask God to heal them
 - iii. We don't understand why it happens
 - iv. But He loves us and is working for His glory
 - v. He grieves over sin and death, He grieves with us
 - vi. He is the resurrection and the life
 - vii. He will raise those who believe in Him. Our loved ones “sleep.”
- b. God's ***glory*** and our ***good*** are not at odds with each other.
- c. Those who place saving faith in Jesus have ***eternal life***.
 - i. **Revelation 21:4** and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”
 - ii. That's our certain future, but right now we might be living in “Mary and Martha day 3.”

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