

PP I Am: The Resurrection and the Life

Text John 11:1-44

10/22-23/2016

Several years ago, a letter appeared in the national news that was sent to a deceased person by the Indiana Department of Social Services. It read as follows: *Your food stamps will be stopped effective March 1992 because we received notice that you passed away. May God bless you. You may reapply if there is a change in your circumstances*

“The statistics on death are quite impressive: one out of one people die.” George Bernard Shaw
We begin this message keeping pace with our passage in John 11 on the topic of death, but we will end the chapter does, talking about life

We are in the **‘I am’** sermon series in the gospel of John, where 7 times Jesus specifically and uniquely revealed an aspect of Who He is and what He came to do as the Savior

We have seen 4 of them, ***I am the Bread of Life, I am the Light of the World, I am the Door of the Sheep*** and ***I am the Good Shepherd***

We’ll look at the fifth one, **John 11**, through 3 different scenes:

PP Scene One: Jesus helps the disciples believe

As **John 11** opens, Jesus had left Jerusalem (**10:40**) to cross the Jordan River as the religious authorities were trying to arrest and kill Him

A messenger finds Him to tell Him that His close friend Lazarus was sick

In **11:3**, we are told that Jesus loved Lazarus

PP The word **‘love’** there is the *emotional affection of a deep friendship*

Two verses later, **11:5**, ***“Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus”***, all siblings

PP **‘love’** here is a different word, that perhaps is best translated *devotion*

Jesus had a devoted love for these three siblings, and a deep friendship with Lazarus, echoed in verse **11**, ***‘Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep’***

He clarified for the disciples in verse **14** that ***‘Lazarus has died’***

But imagine their shock as Jesus had said 2 days prior, ***“This illness does not lead to death.”*** ⁴

But now Lazarus had died, and Jesus had not even tried to get there in time, something that went against Jewish custom

The Rabbis taught that whoever visited the sick delivered their soul from hell

One Jewish scholar wrote that visiting the sick was more important than all other good works

So it seems puzzling that ***“when He heard that Lazarus was ill, He stayed two days longer in the place where He was.”*** **John 11:6**

We are given a peek at the reason in **11:15**, ***“and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe.”***

Something is about to happen and it has to do with the disciples’ faith

PP John wrote his gospel ***“so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”*** **John 20:31**

Faith is critical for a person to be saved

PP ***“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*** **Ephesians 2:8**

The bible tells us what faith is: ***“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction***

PP ***of things not seen.”*** **Hebrews 11:1**

Faith is trust and reliance...perhaps summed up in the word 'entrust'

Saving faith is the confidence that what Jesus has done in His death, burial and resurrection can save a person from hell and give eternal life

It is the willingness to trust yourself to that hope

PP Over and over, Jesus kept saying, ***"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life"*** John 3:36

If you were invited to go ice skating on a pond this winter, and after putting on the skates, you edge carefully out over the ice, trusting that it will support your weight

That is faith...and it might be uncertain faith, weak faith at first, and you might avoid the deep part in the middle, but you are in the ice

And as you skate, and see others in the deep area, your confidence grows, and before long you are out there

Your friends come over and reason with you that the ice is thick, and encourage you out, you go

What's missing in the ice skating analogy that is true of spiritual faith is that God Himself is helping you to believe, He Himself is working in you to trust Him the more deeply

The disciples' faith must grow if they are going to change the world

PP Scene Two: Jesus helps Martha believe

"Now when Jesus came, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother."

Lazarus had been dead and buried 4 days, usually burial was the same day as death

There was a Jewish superstition that has endured up until a little more than 150 years ago

Upon death they believed that the soul hovered over the body 3 days looking to reenter it

Only after decomposition set in did the soul leave and death was considered irreversible

Jesus didn't believe this superstition, but because the Jews did, He delayed so there was no possibility of them discounting this miracle He was about to perform

At the point of death, a long blast on the horn would have alerted all in the town that death had come to one of their own

Everyone who could was expected to come and join the procession to the grave

There were two distinct periods of mourning: deep mourning, lasting 7 days, of which the first 3 were days of weeping

During the deep mourning, they were not to bathe, or anoint themselves, put on shoes, or engage in any study or work

After the 7 days were completed, they then had 30 days of lighter mourning

It was right after the 3 days of weeping that Jesus arrived at Bethany

"So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. John 11:20-21"

Martha goes to meet Jesus when she heard He was in town, but Mary stayed in the house

She had anointed His feet earlier (John 11:2), and sat at His feet learning (Luke 10:39), yet now was too grief-stricken to even move toward Him

There are times in deep grief, that a Christian cannot even move toward God, cannot even pray

The pain is too much and too intense for it, and all resources go to just enduring it

Mary is more the feeler, Martha the doer, and she ***'went and met Him'***

“Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.’”

Notice where her faith is in need of correction

First, she tells Jesus *‘if you had been here’* believing that Jesus could have done something 4 days earlier but now the opportunity had passed and there was nothing He could do

Second, she says, *‘if you had been here’*, limiting the power of Jesus to being present to perform a healing miracle

Recall in **Luke 7** the faith of the Centurion who asked Jesus to heal his valued but dying servant, and expressed such faith that he knew Jesus could heal him from a distance

PP ***“Jesus...marveled...and said, ‘I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.’”*** 9

Not even Martha, who loved Jesus and was loved by Him, had this kind of faith

Yet she is not without faith, for she said next: ***“But even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You.”***

I believe she is asking for comfort, not expectation that Jesus would raise her brother to life

For when Jesus said to her, ***‘Your brother will rise again’***, she responded, ***‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’***

Martha knew Lazarus would rise again, but at the final judgement when all people rose again

She is skating over shallow water, and Jesus would have her confidently skating on the depth

Hers was a faith in need of correction and strengthening so Jesus does exactly this and it leads us to the 5th ***‘I am’*** statement in the gospel of John

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”

Jesus isn’t revealing that He has authority from God to resurrect the dead and give life

Both Elijah and Elisha had young men who had died in their ministry, and each had prayed to the ***‘LORD’***, Yahweh, the ***‘I am’*** of the Old Testament

In each case, the LORD answered and brought the boy back to life

The power was not in either prophet, but in the LORD, the ***‘I am’***

Jesus is telling Martha, ***I am*** the power that gives life to the dead, ***‘Do you believe this?’***

Faith isn’t a static commodity that one acquires, it is spiritually organic, and a healthy faith is a growing faith

Difficult experiences can weaken and sicken faith

PP But Jesus is the Great Physician, ***‘the founder and perfecter of our faith’*** Hebrews 12:2

He know how to nurse sick faith back to healthy and growing faith, and Martha’s is growing!

He asks her a question to nurse her faith to health: ***‘Do you believe this?’***

“Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

She answers yes with her mouth, but her actions will betray that she still does not quite believe

PP **Scene Three: Jesus helps the people standing around believe**

“When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.” John 11:33

PP ***‘deeply moved’*** was a word for a snorting horse heading into battle or one under a heavy load

I believe both describe the heart of Jesus as He is about prove His power over death

His heart is also heavy and troubled in the depth of grief of His friends, ***‘Jesus wept.’*** 35

Yet death is an outrage to Him, contrary to His being, and He came to conquer it and give life
 Death is the result of sin, and Jesus came to break its power and give life
 Recall two weeks ago He said, ***‘I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.’*** 10:10
 He did that by atoning for that sin with His own death, taking our sin and blame on Himself

Illus In Kenya, Africa, an 8 year old named Monica fell into a pit and broke her leg. An older woman, Mama Njeri heard her cries and climbed into the pit to help her, but both of them were bitten by a Black Mamba snake. Monica was taken to Kejave Medical center and admitted, but Mama Njeri went home, fell asleep and never awoke. She had been bitten first, the poison of the snake expended in her body, none into Monica's.

PP ***“For our sake He (Father) made Him (Son) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him (Son) we might become the righteousness of God.”*** 2 Corinthians 5:21

The Holy Son of God became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God
 The raising of Lazarus was a demonstration of His work to out Death to death
 Death will not have the last word...Jesus the Son of God will!

“And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.’” 11:41-42

Do you see that this miracle that is about to happen is for more than just Lazarus...it was to help the people standing around to believe in Him

To get them out on the ice...entrusting their souls to Him for eternal life

He wants to save them, so He breaks asunder the very fabric of death, and brings life!

PP ***“...He cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out.’ The man who had died came out”*** 11:44

Jesus had resurrected a little girl that had been dead for several minutes, a boy that had been dead for several hours, and now, He raises to life a man dead for 4 days
 Christ is the great I am, the Resurrection and the Life

And in His raising of Lazarus, the gospel is being preached for those who have ears to hear
 The bible calls every person a sinner who dead in his or her sins

Meaning that not only is every cell in their body heading toward death, but worse, spiritually they cannot respond in faith to God, nor hear Him or love Him

Our sins rendered us spiritually unresponsive, alienated from God, unable to fix our situation

PP ***“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*** Ephesians 2:4-5, 8-9

In raising Lazarus, He is showing that we who were dead in our sins, can be forgiven, and given eternal life

Though we may die physically, we will be raised one day and live forever in a life where death and pain no longer exist

The disciples must believe; Martha must believe; the people standing around must believe

And if you are to be saved, you must believe and Jesus asks you the same penetrating question

He did to Martha: ***'Do you believe this?'***

You must, if you are to live!

Amen?

Pray