

Sermon Notes & References

The Raising of Lazarus
John 11:1-46

September 11, 2016

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A. Introduction

1. Come, See This Jesus

- a. in some ways, the first three gospels
 - (A) Matthew, Mark and Luke
 - (B) called the synoptic gospels – “seen with one eye”
 - (C) are like a video, covering the wide sweep of Jesus’ ministry
- b. but this book of John
 - (A) is more like a series of snap-shots
 - (B) relating incidents in that ministry
 - (C) that in some cases only represent a few hours, or a day or so
 - (D) incidents that introduce us in an intimate way to Jesus
 - (E) so is this case with the major part of John chapter 11

2. The Chronology of this Event

- a. the last part of the preceding chapter took place at what is now called Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights or Dedication – in December
- b. in that chapter the Jewish rulers sought to stone Him & to seize Him
- c. but Jesus went away out of their midst
- d. to the place where John first baptised, Bethany the other side of the Jordan river (1:28), possibly situated up near the sea of Galilee
- e. and now it is the following January or February, a few months before the Passover and Jesus’ death & resurrection

B. The News of Lazarus’ Illness 11:1-6

- 1. 11:1-2 – 1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 And it was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.
 - a. it is only in this section of John that we are introduced to Lazarus, and who is is made clearer by
 - (A) giving his home town, Bethany
 - (B) and his relationship to Mary & Martha who are otherwise known

- (C) showing that this is the Judean Bethany – the one near Jerusalem
 - b. it is his sister Mary that is known – and when, Lord willing, we get to John 12, the reason for that will become more evident
 - (A) but Mary – Miriam in Hebrew, “Miry” in short form today – was then as now a very popular name (there are several in the NT)
 - (B) so she is identified by her famous act
 - c. this is the Lazarus who is sick –
2. 11:3 – **The sisters therefore sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.”**
- a. their words are both an exhortation and a supplication
 - b. ‘Behold’ – look on and to us, O lord
 - c. ‘the one you love’ – this word is phileo, the love of two friends
 - d. ‘he is sick’ – there are no details needed in this prayer to the Lord
 - e. the fact of his sickness given is an implied call for Jesus to come
 - f. in reading of the ministry of Jesus, of the opposition and hardships he faced, we can easily lose sight of the fact that He was a friendly man
 - (A) He took time to speak with people one on one
 - (B) the various disciples as they were called
 - (C) Nicodemus, the woman at the well
 - (D) and He can be your friend: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” is a testimony of that fact
3. 11:4 – **But when Jesus heard it, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”**
- a. the message sent was a call for Him to heal
 - (A) but Jesus saw beyond this sickness to God’s purpose in it
 - (B) too often our prayers are “God, do this!” instead of “God, what is Your plan in this?”
 - (C) this sickness will not have death as its final end
 - b. rather the end, or purpose, of this sickness is God’s glory
 - (A) that glory is to be effect upon the Person of God the Son
 - (B) how this message must have puzzled Mary & Martha as they had seen Lazarus grow weaker each day
 - (C) and Jesus did not come to heal His beloved friend

4. 11:5-6 – 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. 6 When therefore He heard that he was sick, He stayed then two days longer in the place where He was.
- a. here the word for love is agapao, a love that seeks and sees the good of another – and that not a single act, but a continuing attitude
 - b. this is said so that we may understand that this was not a cruel delay, for Jesus love is constant, but for the best spiritual welfare of all who are concerned: Mary, Martha, Lazarus, His disciples, the witnesses

C. Jesus Returns to Judea 11:7-16

1. 11:7-10 – 7 Then after this He *said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." 8 The disciples *said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."
- a. two days have passed, Lazarus has died, and Jesus knew it
 - (A) Jesus, who always works according to the Father's time-table, now prepares to take His disciples with Him to Judea
 - (B) but they have an immediate and most natural objection
 - (C) just now: 'Just a few weeks ago we left Judea because the Jews (Jewish rulers) were trying to kill you, Jesus.'
 - b. Jesus answers with an illustration
 - (A) In Jewish time-keeping, there were always 12 day-time hours, and this was true in both summer and winter.
 - (1) when the sun was at it's highest, then it was noon
 - (2) when it was half-way up it was what we call 9 a.m.
 - (3) when it was half-way down it was what we call 3 p.m.
 - (B) so there were always 12 hours of day-light
 - (C) and daylight was the time for working
 - (D) when night comes, you cannot work; our eyes receive no light
 - c. the meaning of the illustration
 - (A) often we can hear an interesting illustration in a message, but easily miss its application to what is being said
 - (B) but this illustration Jesus has used elsewhere
 - (C) and His time of ministry is like the day, having a fixed number of hours, with each hour assigned by the

Father for certain work

- (D) if we work according to God's schedule, the night will not overtake us and we be left in the dark to stumble and be hurt
 - (E) so let the disciples come with Jesus now to Judea, to behold what God is going to do in Bethany
2. 11:11-13 – 11 This He said, and after that He *said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep." 12 The disciples therefore said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." 13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep."
- a. now Jesus explains the necessity, despite any danger, of their going back to Judea – He must go to awaken Lazarus
 - b. of course, even though the metaphor of sleep for death was very common then as it is now, the disciples misunderstood
 - (A) how comforting are Scripture's terms for the believer's death
 - (1) 'resting in Abraham's bosom'
 - (2) 'be in Paradise' (the Persian word for a beautiful park)
 - (3) 'being with Christ'
 - (4) make a list for yourself as you read your Bible
 - (B) Lazarus was to get up from death as one gets up from sleep
 - (C) as this was about a four day journey, it should have been evident to the disciples that this was not an ordinary rousing from sleep
 - c. yet, given the normal course of illnesses and recovery, their remark was very natural – and perhaps prompted by a reluctance to go to Judea!
3. 11:14-15 – 14 Then Jesus therefore said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him."
- a. the first reason for Lazarus' sickness was already given – to glorify God through God the Son
 - (A) now the second is given: to impart added faith to the disciples
 - (B) we believe in a sovereign God who orders all things
 - (1) not believing with the fatalism of Islam: "it is the will of Allah"
 - (2) but the belief of trust in the God who on the believer's behalf "works all things together for good"
 - b. though the delay may have hurt Jesus' beloved friends Mary and Martha, yet the ultimate good accomplished gladdened Jesus' heart

4. 11:16 – Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”
 - a. both Thomas, the Aramaic, and Didymus, the Greek, mean twin
 - b. we know him as “doubting Thomas” on account of his refusal after the resurrection to believe the witness of the other disciples
 - c. but here, he is far from doubting
 - d. but rather has a faith – pessimistic it is true – willing to follow Jesus even if it means death to himself; and encouraging the others

D. Jesus Meets Martha 11:17-27

1. 11:17-19 – 17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.
 - a. the Jewish practice was to bury the body on the day of death – so that when Jesus called His disciples to go to Judea, would have been about the day of his burial
 - (A) they had been travelling since then
 - (B) by this time there is no doubt that Lazarus is really dead
 - b. mourners had come to console the sisters
 - (A) the word means to ‘tells stories’ and as at funerals now, time is often spent telling remembrances of the deceased
 - (B) but they were not always comforting: remember Job?
 - (C) some of them may have been professional mourners, crying out with loud wailing – more likely to upset than to calm the sisters
2. 11:20-22 – 20 Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him; but Mary still sat in the house. 21 Martha therefore said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”
 - a. where we find the sisters elsewhere, we find that it was Martha who was bustling about to get things ready while Mary was in repose, listening to the teaching of Jesus
 - (A) the same personalities seem evident here
 - b. Martha’s greeting sounds like how we sometimes pray: quarrelling with God as to what He should do

- (A) but note the remarkable faith that she shows in the midst of adversity in the conversation with Jesus that follows
 - (B) Jesus may have come too late to heal Lazarus, but though she dare not say openly what she wants, she affirms that God will hear Jesus – and her words are a very broad hint of her desire
 - c. faith & grief are engaged in deadly combat in Martha's heart
3. 11:23-24 – 23 Jesus *said to her, "Your brother shall rise again." 24 Martha *said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."
- a. Martha has some hesitancy in her faith – that feeling should not be strange to any of us: often we are fearful of praying for a desire
 - b. so she takes Jesus' words and conditions them to a part of her Biblical knowledge: the general resurrection from the dead at the last day
 - (A) so she does not see His words as a direct response to her own
 - (B) she has asked Jesus to pray her request on her behalf
 - (C) Jesus says that the answer is already given
 - c. how we should be careful not to limit God's power because our human mind cannot reconcile it with some other truth we know
 - d. "Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; And the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the discernment of their discerning men shall be concealed." (Isaiah 29:14)
– His thoughts & ways are not our thoughts & ways
4. 11:25-26 – 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
- a. Here is one of the great "I AM" statements of Jesus
 - b. He is the resurrection
 - (A) He is the resurrection at the last day, when He shall come with a shout and the dead in Christ shall first rise to join with those alive
 - (B) but He is the resurrection today, when through faith those who are dead in trespasses and sin are made alive in Him (Ephesians 2:1ff)
 - c. He is the life
 - (A) He is the creator, giver and sustainer of physical life
 - (B) He is the creator, giver and sustainer of spiritual life

- d. this verse can only be understood by realising that it is spiritual life and death that really matters, and that physical life and death is but a reflection of that reality
- e. and it is simple faith, believing in Jesus Christ, that transports one from the mere picture into the reality

5. 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.”

- a. in some ways this confession goes far beyond Peter’s, although the words are almost the same
 - (A) for Peter said his as he accompanied Jesus the Teacher
 - (B) but Martha speaks from the place of grief and heartache
- b. though she does not yet, it would seem, have the insight to apply that faith to the current situation, yet it is sufficient to give her confidence that she can entrust herself to Jesus

E. Jesus Meets Mary 11:28-32

1. 11:28-30 – 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.” 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.

- a. Mary is still sitting in the house – perhaps, as it were, almost obliged to be there because of the visiting mourners
 - (A) so Martha quietly tells Mary that Jesus is present & asking for her
 - (B) the Master, an old English word for teacher is waiting
 - (C) there is no repose in Mary now – up she gets in a flash and goes out to meet Jesus
- b. Jesus, meanwhile, is still where Martha left Him, and awaits her coming

2. 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.

- a. the mourners are mainly concerned with the visible showing of grief
- b. the word for weep sometimes implied wailing or howling
- c. so up they are to accompany her to the cemetery

3. 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.”

- a. Mary is mainly concerned with seeing her Lord Jesus
- b. and at His feet she falls in worship and prayer

- c. her words are the same as Martha's – had they been saying this to each other while they waited His arrival?
- d. but now she asks nothing further from Him

F. The Resurrection of Lazarus 11:33-44

1. 11:33-34 – 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."

a. the statement, "He was deeply moved" has in it a sense of indignation

- (A) it may have been that He perceived in the weeping of the crowd an echo of the unbelieving heart as of a heathen people
- (B) in Deuteronomy 14, Israel was forbidden to grieve for the dead in the same fashion as the surrounding nations
- (C) but in any event, their grief troubled Him
- (D) "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted." (Isaiah 53:4)

b. His question now moves the sisters and crowd towards the tomb

2. 11:35 – Jesus wept

- a. Jesus burst out into tears
- b. this was not vocal, as the crowd, but from within His heart
- c. the Son of God is absolutely Divine, and truly human

3. 11:36-37 – 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?"

- a. Jesus has visibly shown His love for His friend
- b. the crowd, having seen His miracles, think in the same terms as Martha and Mary: if Jesus had been here, Lazarus would not have died
- c. but they are to see something even greater

4. 11:38-40 – 38 Jesus therefore again being deeply moved within, *came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 Jesus *said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, *said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus *said to her, "Did I not say to you,

if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

- a. to men was left the task of removing the stone – Jesus’ miraculous powers were not needed for that task
- b. to Martha was left the questions concerning the decomposition already of Lazarus’ body – the power of Jesus who is the resurrection is not limited by the fact that our bodies will turn back to dust when we die
- c. but for Jesus His purpose in being there is to bring faith to people, and glory to God

5. 11:41-42 – 41 And so they removed the stone. And Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me. 42 And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me."

- a. Jesus’ prayer respecting Lazarus has long been prayed and long been answered – Jesus’ every word and every act is to fulfil God’s purpose
- b. even His prayer, aloud before all the people is part of that purpose
- c. that they may join in the faith of Peter & Martha & others – that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) the Son of God

6. 11:43-44 – 43 And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." 44 He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus *said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

- a. no loud voice was needed to awake Lazarus – Jesus could have softly whispered, or merely beckoned
- b. but for the sake of the crowd, so that every one of them could hear, and know that it is this Jesus, He shouted the words:
- c. Lazarus! Hither! Out!
- d. then again, it was to people that the care of the resurrected Lazarus was given ... let them free him from the grave-clothes

G. The People Respond John 11:45-46

1. 11:45-46 – 45 Many therefore of the Jews, who had come to Mary and beheld what He had done, believed in Him. 46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them the things which Jesus had done.

- a. in some, God’s purpose was achieved: they believed
- b. others were only bent on making trouble
- c. how have you responded?

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AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NLT	New Living Translation © 1996 Tyndale Charitable Trust
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 National Council of Churches of Christ
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- NICNT – *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*
The Gospel according to John, by Leon Morris
- NTC – *New Testament Commentary*, by William Hendriksen; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1954
- RWP – *Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament*, by Dr. A. T. Robertson