

November 8
John 11

Hello everyone and welcome to another installment of Project 44. My name is Lisa Ashton and today we are covering one of my favorite stories in the Bible from John 11– when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead!

You know why it is one of my favorites? Because I see Jesus display amazing power and yet be very human all in the same story. I find myself identifying with Mary and Martha and their confusion over Jesus' actions. It's also one of my favorites because some of the quotes of Jesus throughout the story stir my faith. Quotes like: "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it." Or "I am the resurrection and the life." or "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"

Well there are a ton of observations we could talk about today regarding this story but I want to focus on two themes.

- 1) – Jesus' desire for the people to believe in him
- 2) - Jesus' perspective on life and death.

First, the matter of belief. From the very beginning of the story we hear Jesus expressing a bigger purpose for the sickness and death of Lazarus. He says in verse 4 Lazarus' sickness was for the glory of God and he said in verse 14 he wanted his disciples to believe. In fact, I believe his delay to coming to Lazarus was to underscore his desire to see people know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus had the power to overcome death. In Jewish culture it was believed that after 3 days the soul of a dead person had officially departed. So by Lazarus being in the tomb for 4 days, no one could argue his official death. I, also think his delay was to set him up to have important conversations with his followers before he performed a miracle. Take his conversation with Martha. Notice that he engages her at a level where he gets to the heart of his identity! He says, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She responds in a brilliant confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of God who has come in to the world." Can you believe that? Martha, a woman, who hasn't had nearly the amount of time with Jesus as other followers and yet she is on to him. She KNOWS and BELIEVES who he is. Wow.

This story also points to Jesus wanting people to believe him because it foreshadows his own death and resurrection. Think about it. Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem where He will be arrested and crucified and then will rise from the dead. When His own resurrection occurs, there will certainly be a massive attempt on the part of His enemies to dissuade people from believing it has really happened. They will call it a hoax. They will talk about mass hysteria. They will say dead men don't rise. And to counter those "reasonable" arguments, quietly living just a few miles away in the village of Bethany, there will be a man named Lazarus, who was dead and buried for four days and who the whole village saw walk out of his tomb alive at the voice of Jesus who cried, "Lazarus,

come forth." That is a pretty powerful corrective to all the rational arguments against the resurrection of Christ. Hundreds of people lived in Bethany -- just over the hill from Jerusalem, who had seen death overcome through the same man, Jesus. It's beautiful isn't it? Jesus wants to help people believe in his resurrecting power not only now, but in the future when he rises from the dead!

The other theme, perhaps the main theme in this passage that I wanted to comment on is **Jesus' perspective on life and death.**

He very plainly proclaims to Martha, "I am resurrection and the life." Notice he does not say he has the *power* to resurrect or the *ability* to give life (which would all be true), no he says he IS the resurrection and the life. Meaning, in Jesus is essentially eternal life and victory over the grave. Its not just a gift Jesus can give those to appeal to him, no, it is a part of what anyone receives when they are living in Jesus NOW. It is power and victory NOW over death. Jesus is saying eternal life starts NOW for those who believe in him and it is not something we have to wait for until we die a physical death. His dialogue with Martha is setting himself up to display his authority over death in Lazarus, his impending death, and the death of anyone in the future who claims faith in his name (that includes us!)

We receive a further insight into Jesus' perspective on death when we read that he was "deeply moved" or "deeply troubled" by what he was seeing and experiencing. At first glance, and what I have always thought from this passage, was Jesus was sad and grieving over his friend and the effect it had on Lazarus family. However, after reading more about this story from a few commentaries and talking to Tim Perry, one of CCC's resident theologians, I learned something fascinating. The definition of the Greek word *embrimaomai* (pronounced em-brē-mä'-o-mī) for "deeply moved" was one that implied anger, outrage and fury. So when Jesus approached the tomb of Lazarus he wasn't grieving uncontrollably, no he had inexpressible anger!!

Why was he angry? Again, what I found in commentaries is that Jesus was angry to see what death was doing to the human race! Because of sin, death entered the world and was destroying life that was meant to be found in him. The object of his wrath that day was death. And it is because of death that Jesus had come to Earth so that he could display his power and victory over what stole our souls from him. As he looked at Mary, Martha, and the mourners of the town, he saw the defeated spirits they had and the hopelessness and loss they expressed. In Jewish time it wasn't abnormal to have professional wailers and flute players who were hired to mourn with family and friends. Seeing all this commotion upset him to the core of his being. For death, his greatest enemy, had once again hurt his precious creation and he was ready to do something about it.

When I think about Jesus being angry it makes me picture him as a mighty warrior who is ready to have this face off. Like he's saying, "Death, don't you dare mess with me, I'll conquer you." He approaches the grave with authority and power and he was ready to show the people in Bethany the Glory of God!

Well I wish we had more time to talk about the other great aspects of this story today but I think you have enough to chew on.

When I think about how I can apply these themes to my life a few thoughts come to mind:

- Jesus always wants to take me to deeper places of belief in Him. In fact, he will use circumstances in my life to dialogue, like he did with Martha, my faith in who he really is.
- This story reminds me that God is most concerned about His glory being known on Earth, he wants to manifest himself in and through all situations...whether good or bad....easy or difficult.
- And then lastly, I am reminded that when it comes to life in Jesus, death does NOT have the final word. And dealing with physical death does not have to wreck my world. Yes, grieving the loss of someone is needed and good to do, but dealing with death doesn't have to defeat me. How beautiful that Jesus enters into that pain with us and that He can and does weep with us. But how AWSOME that Jesus hasn't left us in our grief to deal with death but that he came 2000 years ago to do something about it. He IS the resurrection and the life! My eternal life in Jesus is NOW, its here, and is the same for anyone who professes trust in him.

Well I hope you have enjoyed our time together today and I pray that you are experiencing true life in Jesus, NOW. Til next time this is Lisa Ashton, see ya everybody.