

Because He Loves Us

John 11

One of the most important things we have learned about reading the Bible chronologically is that the stories God has chosen to place in the Bible do at least two things:

- 1 – They tell the story
- 2 – They remind us of or point to the larger story

That is particularly true of the resurrection of Lazarus.

Picture: I want to set this story in the context of another story that just took place in Nice, France. Three people worshipping in the church of Notre Dame in that city were attacked and killed by a Muslim terrorist shouting, “Allahu Akbar,” “God is great.”

First: The Context. 1-2

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill.

There are 7 sign miracles in John that he uses to prove that Jesus is God’s Son.

1. Changing water into wine at Cana in John 2:1-11 - "the first of the signs"
2. Healing the royal official's son in Capernaum in John 4:46-54
3. Healing the paralytic at Bethesda in John 5:1-15
4. Feeding the 5000 in John 6:5-14
5. Jesus walking on water in John 6:16-24
6. Healing the man blind from birth in John 9:1-7
7. The raising of Lazarus in John 11:1-45

They begin and end with a family –

- John 2 – Turning water into wine at the wedding
- John 11 – Raising Lazarus at a funeral

These are life’s happiest and saddest hours. But this is exactly what Jesus has come to do.

This is a special family in the life of Jesus. There are at least six Mary’s in the NT so John’s identification of this Mary is helpful.

- Mary, mother of Jesus;
- Mary Magdalene;

- Mary of Bethany;
- Mary mother of James the younger;
- Mary mother of John Mark;
- Mary of Rome.

Bethany is a small village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. If you stand there and look toward the Dome of the Rock, it is behind you, on the other side of the mountain. Jesus frequented this home and it was a home-away-from-home for him.

Second: The Story

1. Lazarus is ill 3

So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."

2. Jesus did not immediately go to Lazarus. 6

So, when he heard that Lazarus^[a] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

3. Jesus waited until Lazarus died to go to Bethany. 11-14

After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." ¹² The disciples 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 meant taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died,

4. Jesus waited until the family and the Jews had given up all hope. 17 & 38-39

Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days

38-39 - Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days."

Four days implies that all human hope was gone. Lazarus was decaying in the tomb.

5. When Jesus arrived, the Lazarus's sisters and friends were in mourning. 19

and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.

6. Martha expressed concern but also faith in Jesus. 20-22

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

7. Jesus told Martha that He is the resurrection

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. ^[d] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

8. Mary expressed concerns 32

Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

9. Jesus resurrected Lazarus. 43b-44

...he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." ⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Third: The Reason for it All

V 4 - But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

V 40 - Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"

Fourth: Oh, How He Loves You and Me

In the midst of Lazarus's death, did people question Jesus's love? Absolutely.

- Martha — v 20–21: "So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'"
- Mary — v 32: "Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'"
- The mourners — v 37 - some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?'"

But the text tells us Jesus had chosen to love Lazarus and his sisters by not coming immediately.

V 5-6 - *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.*

“So” = “therefore, accordingly, consequently, these things being so”

Jesus delayed his trip to Bethany **because** he loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

From Christ’s perspective, and in hindsight, we all agree, there was something greater, more meaningful, more life-changing, beyond Lazarus’s death that the family and the onlooking Jews could only experience if he waited until Lazarus died.

We see the extent of Jesus’s love in v 35 – “Jesus wept.”

“Wept” = dakruo. OH (only here). He burst into tears. It’s not the same word used of Mary weeping (31) or of the Jews crying (33).

Christ is indeed *“a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”* (Is 53:3b).

*He wept because he was God. He could see what they could not see.
He could see Lazarus in paradise, surrounded by the saints of God.
The angelic hosts were standing by. He had entered into rest beyond
the reach of earthly woes. He was with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
the spirits of just made perfect. He was in a land where time stands
still, where all were eagerly waiting for the earth-shaking tread of the
triumphant Son of god. Why, Lazarus had barely been introduced.
Eager questioners had perhaps only begun to ask him what he knew
about Jesus. And Jesus was going to call him back to a world of sin,
anguish and pain.*

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John Phillips

Jesus wept for every reason imaginable. He wept because Lazarus was sick and had died. He wept because Lazarus’s sisters were mourning. He wept because no one could see what He could see. He wept because they doubted him. He wept because he was going to raise Lazarus only to die again.

But now his absence is being used to question his love. If you had come right away, nobody would be crying.

Why did Jesus wait for Lazarus to die before he went to Bethany? And why did he want this family and the Jews to see his glory?

Conclusion:

1. Jesus does not only love us in this life by sparing us suffering and death. He loves us by showing us his glory and giving himself for us.

This miracle is one-more-nail in Jesus' tomb

44-50 & 57 - Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, ⁴⁶ but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." ⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."... Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

He has suffered *before* us and *for* us.

2. If the measure of God's love for us is health and wealth, then God didn't love the disciples, Jesus or the apostle Paul.

3. Because he loved Lazarus and Mary and Martha, he stayed two days longer and let them walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and then went and showed them his glory in Lazarus's resurrection

4 – Jesus believes, and calls us to believe, that there is something more significant, rewarding and real beyond this life, than this life.

Bottom line: We suffer now *because* Jesus loves us.

Community Group:

1 – How are you doing?

2 – Where are you succeeding?

3 – Where are you struggling?

4 – How are you growing spiritually?

5 – What is your greatest spiritual blessing?

6 – What is your greatest spiritual discouragement?

7 – In verses 4 and 40, what reasons did Jesus give for waiting to go to Bethany until Lazarus died.

8 – What verses in John 11 tell us that Jesus loved this family?

9 – What verses tell us that the people questioned Jesus's love?

10 – What text tells us that Jesus waited because he loved Lazarus and his family?

11 – How have you seen people react to God about hardship, sorrow or death?

12 – What are the possible reasons why Jesus wept at Lazarus's tomb?

13 – What principles about Jesus' love for us could be drawn from this text?