

Introduction

Recap the Story

- TO start with, let's realize that the chapter begins with some curious actions taken by Jesus
 - He hears that Lazarus is sick, his sisters sent word to Jesus making him aware of what's going on.
 - They send a message, "the one who you love is sick."
- Now, we'd probably like it if Jesus went, post haste to heal Lazarus.
 - Instead, Jesus says this, ""This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.""
 - Jesus stays where he is for two whole days
- When it comes time to go, some of his disciples worry.
 - You see, the last time Jesus was in Judea, the leaders were plotting to arrest Jesus for healing on the Sabbath,
 - Remember, when Jesus healed the man born blind, he did so on the Sabbath, a second jab to the rules, so to speak.
 - So the leaders and rulers were out to get Him.
- Jesus tells the disciples what has happened and what he's going to do.
 - "Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."
- When Jesus and the apostles get to Bethany, Lazarus has already been dead four long days
 - This amount of time is important
 - Jews at the time believed the stayed around the body for three days but after that, the spirit left and was gone forever.
 - For Lazarus to be dead four days would have meant that he was "dead-dead" to the other people.
 - Jesus was about to reverse what people that was completely irreversible.
 - This allows Jesus to talk to Martha extensively about what's happened
 - Martha is understandably mad.
 - She says that if Jesus had come sooner, Lazarus would not have died.
 - Jesus assures her that Lazarus will rise from the dead.
 - Martha tells him that she knows he won't be dead forever as the Jews had a belief in life after death in a grand resurrection, much like we believe
 - She knows he'll live again but she wants to be with him here.
 - That's when Jesus says, "Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"
- Eventually, Jesus and Mary are together and she reiterates what her sister said, that if Jesus had been there, Lazarus would not have died.
 - He sees Mary weeping and asks, where have they laid Lazarus

- They tell him.
- Jesus weeps,
 - Shortest verse in the whole Bible.
 - Tells us something BIG about our God, doesn't it?
- This is the shortest verse in the Bible, but one of the most profound.
- Jesus *knows* He's about to raise Lazarus — so why weep?
 - **Possible reasons:**
 1. **Empathy:** He truly feels the grief of His friends (Hebrews 4:15).
 2. **Anger at Death:** The Greek word in v.33 translated “deeply moved” (*embrimaomai*) can imply *outrage*. Jesus is **indignant** at death and its effects.
 3. **Grief over unbelief:** Some scholars (e.g., Leon Morris) suggest Jesus weeps over the sorrow of a world that has lost hope.
- **Pastoral Insight:** God is not emotionally distant. He enters into our grief before He lifts us out of it.

John 11:38-44 – “Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

Introduction

- I'll never forget the day as long as I live
- I was working at River Hills Community Church.
 - I was working with someone trying to get them into an alcohol rehab center when the phone rang
 - The phone call was from a former member, letting me know that her husband was on the way to the hospital
 - Now this was a really close former member, someone with whom I'd bonded in my first pastorate
- I agreed to meet her at the hospital but, on the way there, I got the call
 - Her husband had died.
 - It was a massive heart-attack. The man left the world unexpectedly at 76.
- I remember getting to the hospital and seeing the new widow, with tears in her eyes.
 - I remember thinking, “Come Lord Jesus, let's take this death thing away now by bringing in the kingdom.”

- READ – “We live in a world that is intimately acquainted with death. Whether it's the loss of a loved one, the fading of dreams, the slow erosion of hope, or even the death of joy through chronic suffering, we all stand at tombs more often than we'd like to admit.
- John 11 is not just about Lazarus—it's about every tomb we face and about the One who refuses to let death have the final word.
- This text is the climax of Jesus' public miracles in the Gospel of John.
 - o It is the seventh sign—the final one before Jesus begins His journey to the cross.
 - o And this miracle isn't done in a corner.
 - o It is seen, talked about, and it results in both belief and opposition.
 - The raising of Lazarus sets the stage for Jesus' own death. It is a miracle that costs Him everything.

Begins with Death

- This is the toughest part
- Sometimes, our lives detour into difficult times
 - o The death of a loved one can bring us into a dark season, to be sure
 - o So can other things, if we're honest, car wrecks, a bad diagnosis, chronic pain, each of these have the capacity to bring us to our knees
 - o We may well wonder why God has it in for us, if we're honest
 - Sometimes, when we're struggling, we lose hope
- Generally, when we meet prisoners in Karios, most of them are existing without much hope
 - o Many have release dates far in the future.
 - o Their present reality is prison and it will be for a great many. Years to come
 - I met one guy a few walks back.
 - I wish you could have seen his eyes at the beginning of the weekend
 - They were, not dead, but close
- But I want us to notice Jesus' response to the sorrow, it is personal and embodied, he weeps
 - o Verse 35 says, “Jesus wept.”
 - o The Son of God, knowing that He will raise Lazarus in just moments, still takes the time to enter into the pain of the moment.
 - He allows Himself to feel. To mourn. To stand in solidarity with Mary and Martha and all who grieve.
 - This validates our grief.
 - God does not rebuke our sorrow; He shares it.
 - Psalm 56:8 says God keeps track of our tears in a bottle.
- JESUS' anger is directed at death itself
 - o Jesus is not angry at the family.
 - He is angry at death, the great enemy.
 - 1 Corinthians 15:26 calls death "the last enemy to be destroyed."

- Jesus' groaning here echoes the language of righteous fury.
 - He is standing at the gates of death like a warrior entering a final battle.
 - Hebrews 2:14–15 says Jesus came to destroy the one who has the power of death, and to free those who all their lives were held in slavery by fear of death.
 - ¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.
- Application
 - Jesus doesn't avoid your grief; he meets you in it
 - He does not rush to fix what you feel. He pauses, joins, and embodies your sorrow.
 - When you feel that no one understands your pain, remember that the Lord of life once stood outside a tomb and wept.

Jesus Speaks Life into Death

- It isn't the case that we're left to manage our lives on our own
 - In fact, far from it, Jesus is with us by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - He is closer to us than our next breath
 - And HE loves us
- Jesus calls out, "take away the stone!"
 - There is a point in our grief and our suffering where God in Christ will make His appearance by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Notice that Martha makes one last objection,
 - He'd been dead four days, what Jesus is suggesting is impossible
 - But that's where we remember the Scriptures which remind us several times that what is impossible for us, is very possible for God.
- How many of us are like Martha,
 - We believe but only sort of
 - I was talking with someone the other day about partial belief
 - Martha only has partial belief here, her faith isn't complete
 - Now to be fair to her, she doesn't know the whole story at the time, how Jesus is going to be resurrected, Himself but his will conquer death forever
 - Lazarus will die again after this healing
 - As such, the weight of this passage doesn't fall on the final resurrection which will occur on the Last Day but rather deals more with New LIFE
 - Lazarus will live again just like many people who were once dead resume their lives through Jesus Christ and live wonderfully
- My friend Tracy comes to mind
 - I met Tracy at my last church, she was the mother of two young sons and was living quite happily.

- Unfortunately, she is an addict and she resumed using drugs at some point,.
- Life spiraled out of control and she lost custody of her two boys due to her addiction.
- Then, during her active addiction, she got pregnant
- It was the pregnancy that she credits with waking her up
 - Then, she got visited by the Holy Spirit and was able to turn her life around again.
 - Now, she's regained custody of her boys and is living quite happily up North
 - She's even started a successful business
- Tracy credits Jesus with the turnaround as it was going back to church and AA that helped her shake her addiction

John's Gospel

- This is the seventh sign, the final one in the book of signs which takes up chapters 1-12 according to scholars.
- I am the resurrection and the life points us to the fact that there are two types of life being discussed here.
 - One, is our life after death, our resurrection
 - The other is the abundant life here and now that God wills for us through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.