

## Sunday Morning Message

August 28, 2022

*The Raising of Lazarus*

*The Gospel According to John*

Text – John 11

Congregational Reading – John 11:38 - 44

### Introduction

In these text verses we see the core verses of the account of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This is a very famous passage and is significant because it takes place shortly before the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, this event serves as a precursor or a forerunner of the resurrection of Christ. Christ here will once again demonstrate his power over death. In a very short time, Christ will die Himself, but this event (and others like it) reminds and instruct the disciples of the power of God. When Christ goes in the tomb Himself, these disciples will no doubt recall this event, along with Christ's instructions regarding His own resurrection.

Before His final trip to Jerusalem, He pulls the disciples aside and tells them what awaits Him there:

*"And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again."* - (Matthew 20:17 - 19)

### Transition

Let's go back to the beginning of the chapter and examine the events that led up to this miraculous resurrection of Lazarus from the dead.

#### I. The Dispatch that Announces Lazarus' Disorder (vs. 1 – 5)

This event takes place in the town of Bethany near the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Another event. Involving this family from Bethany that Jesus was very close friends with takes place in Luke 10:38 – 42.

Chronologically, however the supper event in the home of Lazarus and his sisters takes place earlier.

*"38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. 40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. 41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: 42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42)*

*"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)" (John 11:1 - 2)*

Notice that this event referred to parenthetically here by John, is an event that takes place after the raising of Lazarus from the dead. We must remember that John is the last of the gospel writers to write, and so he is writing all of this from hindsight. The event that John refers to here will be discussed in chapter 12.

*"Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." - (John 11:3)*

Notice here the reference to "he whom thou lovest". The sisters declare here the love of Christ for Lazarus. Later, John will declare Jesus' love for the whole family (v. 5). And even later, the Jews will testify because of the compassion of Christ, that He loved them (v. 36). Jesus loves His children. He loves you.

*"When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." - (John 11:4)*

This is the first indication that Christ is doing something different with this event. We are going to see here that Jesus delays His arrival to Bethany so that Lazarus will die, so that He can demonstrate the power of His resurrection.

*"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." - (John 11:5)*

## **II. The Delay That Allowed Lazarus to Die (vs. 6 – 17)**

Jesus did not come when he first heard of His friend's sickness. He could have healed Him. There isn't another case in the gospels where Jesus refused to heal somebody that needed it. The real interesting thing about this case is that Jesus knew these people on a personal level – they were friends. Yet Jesus doesn't come to heal him.

Could it be that sometimes it is not God's will to heal. And, furthermore, could it be that God chooses to use special people like this family to endure trials and even death so that the power of God could be manifest through them.

*"When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?"* (John 11:6 - 8)

"sought to stone thee" – see John 10:31 – the last time He was in Jerusalem, they took up stones to stone Him (after He said, "I and my Father are one.")

*"Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."* (John 11:9 - 10)

Jesus is basically saying here that He will not die until He chooses to. He will die when His work is finished.

*"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."* - (John 9:4)

*"These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep."* (John 11:11 - 13)

The term "sleep" is often used in the Scripture for those who are in the grave.

*"Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already."* (John 11:14 - 17)

Jesus wanted to be sure that there would be no doubt in anyone's mind about whether this was a genuine resurrection. He was in the grave four days.

### III. The Despair That Awaited Him Because of Doubt (vs. 18 - 32)

*"Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off."* (John 11:18)

15 furlongs is approximately two miles. The Greek word is σταδίων (from στάδιον – stadion), which represented the length of a stadium (approximately 600 feet).

*"19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. 20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. 21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. 23 Jesus saith unto her, **Thy brother shall rise again.** 24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. 25 **Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.***

***Believest thou this?*** (John 11:19 – 26)

Let's pause here for a second and ask the question. Do you believe that? Do you believe that physical death is the end, or do you believe that after you die, Jesus will take you to be with Him in Heaven, and eventually, He will resurrect your and glorify your physical body?

*"8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:8)*

*"1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:1 - 6)*

*"13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 18)*

*"51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:51 - 58)*

Friends, Lazarus' soul was in Heaven where he would await the resurrection of his body. I am not so sure that he would have wanted to come back.

*27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. 28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. 29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. 30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. 31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. 32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." (John 11:27 - 32)*

#### **IV. The Depth of the Lord's Affection Because of Their Distress (vs. 33 – 37)**

*"33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, 34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35 Jesus wept." (John 11:33 - 35)*

John 11:35 is the shortest verse in the Bible, but it is not a small truth.

#### **Interesting – What Caused Jesus to Weep**

- 1. The Suffering of the Saints (John 11)**
- 2. The Sheep Without a Shepherd (Matthew 9:35 – 36)**

*"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his*

*disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." - (Matthew 9:36 - 38)*

### **3. The Sin That Was Upon His Shoulders (Mark 12:32 – 36)**

*"And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." - (Mark 14:32 - 36)*

*"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." - (Luke 22:44)*

Your sin and my sin caused that great sorrow.

*"36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! 37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" (John 11:36 - 37)*

### **V. The Deliverance of Lazarus from Physical Death (vs. 38 – 44)**

*"38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. 39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. 40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? 41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. 43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. 44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." (John 11:38 - 44)*

We read these verses earlier. You will notice that Jesus called Lazarus by name. You have probably heard this before, but it has often been said that if Jesus had not specifically called Lazarus and had just said, "come forth," that every grave in the world would have opened.

Another thing that I would like to suggest to you from this section of the story. We see here an illusion, a picture of the resurrected life. When Lazarus first comes out of the tomb, he still has the attachments of the graveclothes, a reminder of his death. They probably still stunk because they were previously attached to his dead body. The picture here is of the Christian who gets saved. He passes from death unto life, but he still has the attachments of death on his life. It is through the sanctification process that Jesus removes those graveclothes from us.

Notice one more practical thing from this passage. When Jesus prays, He is speaking to His Father, but He says some things for the benefit of the people listening. When we pray corporately, we are speaking to God, but we also want to be clear to the people who are joining us in prayer.

#### **VI. The Determination of His Adversaries to Put Christ to Death (vs. 45 – 54)**

*"45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. 46 But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. 47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. 48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. 49 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, 50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. 51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; 52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. 53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. 54 Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples." (John 11:45 - 54)*

We see here a legitimate prophecy, though the high priest was definitely not trying to fulfill the will of God. However, what he said was true. Jesus would in fact die for the nation.

#### **Conclusion**

- 1 Unless the Lord comes back by way of the Rapture of the Church, every one of us is going to die physically. Death is part of life.
- 2 Physical death however is not the end of life.

Illustration – Sarah’s mom Carol physically died recently, but her soul did not die. She was ushered immediately into the presence of the Lord.

- 3 God will raise us from the dead. (1 Corinthians 15:12 – 20)

*"12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." (1 Corinthians 15:12 - 20)*

Jesus proved His power over death and the grave by raisin Lazarus, and He proved it again when He rose permanently from the tomb.