

The Blessedness of Lazarus' Death

John 11:25-26; Psalm 39:4

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There is a need that all of us share in common—we all need life! This is never more fully realized than when we helplessly sit next to the bed of a dying loved one. In fact, we are all hastening to our inevitable appointment with death. Someone may say, “That is sure a very grim view of life.” Grim as it may seem, it is the truth and a very sobering truth at that. Ignoring this truth will not make it go away. It may be just as sobering for one to hear from the doctor that he has cancer, but unless one knows he has cancer, he will not seek the help he so desperately needs. In the same way, it is profitable for each of us to consider our own death and the death of our loved ones (Psalm 39:4; Psalm 90:12). When we contemplate our death, we will also contemplate what is truly important in life. For what is most important at death ought to be what is most important to us in life. At death, the perishable things of this life lose their glitter and charm, and that which is most important is that which will last for all eternity: eternal life or eternal suffering (Mark 8:36).

Only Jesus Christ rose from the grave never to die again. Only Jesus has conquered death. Only His tomb is empty. He came to give eternal life to a perishing world. He is the Resurrection and the Life and all who come to Him and embrace Him alone for their eternal salvation shall receive the free gift of eternal life as we shall see in our text today: (1) The Lord's Response to the Death of Lazarus (John 11:1-37); (2) The Lord Raises Lazarus from the Dead (John 11:38-44); (3) The Response of the People to this Miracle (John 11:45-47).

I. The Lord's Response to the Death of Lazarus (John 11:1-37).

A. Note the Lord's response to the illness of Lazarus (John 11:1-6).

1. Here we learn that Jesus receives an urgent message from His beloved followers, Martha and Mary of Bethany, to the effect that their brother, Lazarus, whom Jesus loves, is very sick. These sisters were already concerned that their brother might be near death and thus the reason for the call to come immediately. Rather than setting out for Bethany to heal Lazarus, Jesus delays two more days (John 11:5-6).

2. One may be tempted to respond, “Now that is sure a strange way for the Lord to show His love for Lazarus—waiting two days so that he grows closer to death.”

a. God often delays healing you or delivering you from your trials, tribulations, and sorrows in order to glorify Himself in demonstrating the greatness of His power at your weakest point so that there is no question who is to receive all praise and glory for your deliverance (John 11:4; John 9:1-3).

b. God's delays do not reveal His lack of love, His unfaithfulness, or His lack of power. To the contrary God's delays reveal His wisdom and purpose to glorify Himself and to teach us to trust Him as we wait. He is in control. He works by His schedule, not ours. Delays only mean that God is up to something good, great, and glorious.

B. While the Lord delays, Lazarus dies (John 11:11-15).

1. Do you see the purpose of the Lord? He delayed in order that “ye might believe.” The apostles (just like you and me) needed to be strengthened in trusting Christ. We always need to grow in our dependence upon the Lord no matter how long we have been a Christian.

2. Although this affliction and death itself befell Lazarus, the Lord declares that it happened not to build the faith of Lazarus, but rather to build the faith of His apostles. How many of your trials does the Lord intend to use in building your faith? All of them!

C. Now as Jesus arrives in Bethany, Martha runs to meet Him filled with grief and sorrow (John 11:20-21). There is faith in Martha's statement, "I know you could have healed him, Lord, if only you had been here before he died." Yet she misunderstands the power of Christ.

1. Could Jesus not have healed Lazarus from a distance when He first heard of his illness as He did with the centurion's servant in Matthew 8:13? Of course He could. The Lord who spoke into existence all things could have merely spoken the word that Lazarus be healed.

2. Martha evidences a weakness of faith like that manifested by Thomas (a seeing-is-believing faith). How many have said, "If only God would perform this miracle, I would trust Him." "If only Jesus were here in the flesh, I would be able to cling to His promises." And yet so many times in Scripture, God reveals that seeing is not believing (after all of the miracles, the Jews still cried, "Crucify Him", John 20:29). It's not more miracles that we need, but a growing faith to trust Him and His promises.

D. Martha evidences her faith in Christ's power to raise her brother from the dead now that He was in Bethany (John 11:22). Jesus declares that Lazarus will bodily rise again (John 11:23) to which Martha confesses her faith in the future resurrection of the dead on the last day at the second coming of Christ (John 11:24).

E. Jesus then declares Himself to be God in the flesh by calling Himself the Resurrection and the Life—He who has all authority over death (John 11:25-26). He does not say, "I **shall be** the Resurrection and the Life only on the last day." He uniquely claims for Himself that He is the very source of life; and, therefore, He can impart life to whomever He wills. "I **am** the Resurrection and the Life." And because He is life, death has no power over Him. He who is the source of life (the Creator) voluntarily laid down His human life and took it up again in order to conquer sin, the miseries of this life, death, and hell for all who come to Him in faith. If Christ was raised from the dead to show Himself the victor over sin, misery, death, and hell, what sin, what addiction, what enemy, what trial, what affliction, what temptation is there that He cannot overcome in your life or mine? Nothing is hopeless!

1. **Jesus is the Resurrection.** All those who die in him will be bodily raised from the dead with glorified bodies on the last day (John 11:25). Is your future resurrection a mere confession of your faith or is it a delight and joy to you that points to that time when all death, sin, temptation, misery, tears, and sorrow will be swallowed up in life?

2. **Jesus is the Life.** All those who are made alive by the Spirit and who embrace Christ by faith alone shall never suffer eternal death in hell for the gift of God is eternal life (John 11:26). Jesus asks Martha, "Believest thou this?" Dear ones, do you believe this? Your very hope of eternity rests upon who Jesus is. Is He the Resurrection and the Life? Or is He a liar? There are no other options. Martha rests in Christ here (John 11:27). Do you?

3. If Jesus is the Resurrection and Life, why do we still suffer physical death? Why are we not delivered from physical death?

a. The Lord uses the miseries of this life and death to sanctify us, to reveal how weak we are, and to cause us to yearn for heaven where there will be no more suffering and no more death.

b. Jesus suffered death and then was glorified, and so must we follow in His steps. Are we better than our Lord?

c. Many hypocrites would sign up to be a Christian if they could escape death (just as they flock to see "miracles"). Jesus does not remove death, but gives grace to overcome it.

d. Many have been led to Christ by the way Christians have faced death in peace like sleep because of the hope before them?

e. To remind us that this life is quickly passing away. Lay up your treasures in

heaven. Redeem the time for our death is coming.

F. Martha then leaves and calls Mary to come to Christ as He would see her as well (John 11:28-29). Mary repeats what Martha had said (John 11:32). The Lord doesn't correct her for her error implied in her statement for He sees how she is overcome with sorrow and grief. Instead we read, "He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled" (John 11:33) and again "Jesus wept" (John 11:35).

1. Dear ones, look upon the deep sympathy of Jesus who grieves with His bereaved disciples as our great high priest. His heart was breaking with theirs.

2. Are your hearts breaking over the suffering, afflictions, and trials of one another? You may not be able to raise the dead as did Jesus, but do you help to comfort those whose hearts are breaking over the suffering and afflictions God has brought into their lives? The Lord does not want you to remain in that mournful condition. He has turned your mourning into rejoicing, for He is the Resurrection and the Life.

II. The Lord Raises Lazarus from the Dead (John 11:38-44).

A. When Jesus commands that the stone to the tomb of Lazarus be removed, Martha reminds Him that Lazarus has now been dead for 4 days and by now the corpse of Lazarus had begun to stink from decay (John 11:39). Again the Lord invites a weak, struggling, doubting Martha to look to Him as the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:40). Jesus, the Resurrection and Life, prays to His Father, and then authoritatively rebukes death and denies death its victim by calling forth with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). What a spectacle to behold as Lazarus appeared at the mouth of the tomb bound in strips of cloth (like a mummy) and Jesus commanded that he be loosed (John 11:44).

B. Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, could have raised all of the dead in that countryside so that the whole city was filled with those raised from the dead. But He didn't. He raised only Lazarus from the dead. Why only one? Jesus wanted to graphically portray for us our own spiritual resurrection from the grave of our trespasses and sins.

1. Just as Lazarus was completely impotent and unable to bring about his own resurrection from the dead, so likewise were we (Ephesians 2:1). We were dead spiritually. We were alive to sin, but dead to God and righteousness. But Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, called out to the dead and said, "Greg Price, come forth." And I came to life in Christ. He loved me before I could love Him. He gave me life while I was dead to Him.

2. The question that keeps coming back to me is, "Why me?"—especially when there are so many that He has not raised from the dead, but could have raised. Perhaps Lazarus asked the same question. It was not due to my love for Him, but His love to me. I was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Where is boasting? Where is pride? It is buried in the amazing grace of Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life.

III. The Response of the People to This Miracle (John 11:45-47).

A. People will have different responses to Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life. Some will see Him with the eye of faith and will embrace Him as the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:45). Others will see Him or hear of Him and will still not believe in Him (John 11:46-47).

B. To receive Jesus by faith is to receive eternal life in heaven. To refuse Him is to receive eternal death in hell. Why will any of you refuse such a loving, wise, and mighty Savior? If Jesus is truly the Resurrection and the Life, there is resurrection life for your marriage, for you in overcoming that besetting sin, for you in patiently waiting on Him when there is a delay, and for you in persevering in all afflictions God

brings into your life. The question is not whether Christ is the Resurrection and the Life. That is true whether you believe it or not. The real question is whether Christ is YOUR Resurrection and Life. Do you trust Him? Are you living each day looking to Christ as your Resurrection and Life?

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