

John 11:1–16

<sup>1</sup> Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

<sup>2</sup> It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.”

<sup>4</sup> When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

<sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

<sup>6</sup> So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.

<sup>7</sup> Then after this He said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.”

<sup>8</sup> The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?”

<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.

<sup>10</sup> But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”

<sup>11</sup> These things He said, and after that He said to them, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.”

<sup>12</sup> Then His disciples said, “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.”

<sup>13</sup> However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.

<sup>14</sup> Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.

<sup>15</sup> And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.”

<sup>16</sup> Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”

## ***“Why Jesus Waited”*** ***John 11:1-16***

INTRO:

In **John 11** we come upon one of the most moving and important scenes in John’s Gospel. In this narrative, John told us some very important truths about the nature of our Savior and how He touches our lives.

In this prologue to the story, John introduced the people we will meet and what the Lord was doing behind the scenes that frequently we cannot see. He does this by setting the physical scene in **verses 1-3**, and then he stepped back to show us something Mary, Martha, and Lazarus never saw in **verses 4-16**.

***I. The Setting of the Miracle v. 1-3.***

***II. What Mary, Martha and Lazarus Never Saw v.4-16***

***I. The Setting of the Miracle v. 1-3.***

***“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore, the sisters sent to Him, saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.’”***

A. John’s burden in this prologue to his account was to set the scene for the miracle. He did this by first introducing us to the main people involved in the sign.

***“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.”***

1. The location was Bethany, a mile and a half from Jerusalem. Remember the last time Jesus was in Jerusalem the Jews tried to kill Him. This fact was not lost on His disciples. (v. 8)

2. The people who will pass through this account are Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. John added a divine editorial comment to identify Mary. This is the Mary whose story you heard, but I will not tell it until **chapter 12**. Remember what Jesus said when Mary made her great sacrifice?

***“Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to (Mary).” Matthew 26:13***

3. The story of Lazarus is famous also, but like a good storyteller, John will not give it away. We only hear that Lazarus is sick.

B. Second, John tells us why the sisters expected the Lord Jesus to act.

***“So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.’”***

It seemed logical to them that the Lord Jesus would drop everything that He was doing and come. However, He did not come until later. While they could not comprehend why He did not come, something was going on behind the scenes they did not understand.

***II. What Mary, Martha and Lazarus Never Saw v.4-16***

A. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus may not have understood, but John under the direction of the Holy Spirit made sure we understand. God needed us to comprehend so we do not doubt when God tells us to wait for a while. John records three ways the Lord Jesus explained this to His disciples.

B. First, Jesus told them the ultimate result of this illness.

***“But when Jesus heard this, He said, ‘This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.’”***

We will return to this point.

C. Second, John explained our Lord’s motivation for waiting.

***“Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. [Therefore] when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.”***

It was precisely because He loved them that He waited.

D. Finally, we discover His methodology.

***“[Therefore] when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was. Then after this He said to the disciples, ‘Let us go to Judea again.’”***

His timing was not accidental. It was perfect. When Lazarus died they went to Bethany and not before.

E. A theology of suffering can be found in this text. In **verse 4**, we learn this life-threatening illness which Lazarus suffered was not news to our Lord Jesus Christ. Rather, He knew about it and He knew its purpose.

***“But when Jesus heard this, He said, ‘This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.’”***

God in His love allowed this to happen to Lazarus so that He might be glorified.

1. Did you know that the New Testament says much about the suffering we do as Christians and how we suffer? We usually like to avoid these thoughts and passages thinking what we don’t like and don’t know will not hurt us. Suffering and trouble push into our lives anyway. First, we must recognize God’s motive for our suffering is the glory of God. John says this both here in **John 11** and in the case of the man born blind in **John 9**.

***“As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”***

2. Second, we need to understand what God promises us in suffering. **1 Peter 5:10**

***“After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”***

This is a very precious verse. God is the God of grace. He has called us to eternal glory in Christ Jesus. But right now we might be called to suffer. This is what the Lord Jesus Himself will do for us. He will restore us. He will confirm our character. He will strengthen us. Finally, He will establish us so that we cannot be moved.

3. Finally, we need to learn how God is glorified in our suffering. **1 Peter 1:6-8**

***“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.”***

The description of suffering at the beginning of the verse is important.

**(1)** Suffering is always for *“a little while.”* This is because we measure it against eternity. Do you remember Paul’s description of his own suffering in **2 Corinthians 4:18**?

*“For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,”*

The only way Paul could describe his trials in these words was if he compared them to eternity.

**(2)** Suffering comes only *“if it is necessary.”* Peter asserted God never allows His children to suffer unless it is required in His eternal plan. This means, like Job, we may never understand it, but the judge of all the earth will always do right.

**(3)** God told us what our trials, properly endured, produce. **1 Peter 1:7**

*“The proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

If we handle our sufferings properly, the Lord Jesus will be glorified in our times of trial. Is this not what Jesus said in our text about Lazarus’ illness?

*“But when Jesus heard this, He said, ‘This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.’”*

**What does this say to you and me?**

First, everyone suffers. If you want your suffering to matter and if you want someone with you through the *“valley of the shadow of death,”* you must come to know the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior.

Second, if you know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, James has good advice for us.

*“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*

Notice James didn’t say “if,” he said *“when.”* We do not have much to say about when troubles come, but we can determine how we will respond to them and whether we will bring glory to God in them.

**When We See Christ (insert)**