



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

11 Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. **2** It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. **3** So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." **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."

5 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. **7** Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." **8** The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?"... **14** Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, **15** and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."...

17 Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. **18** Bethany was near Jerusalem, about three kilometers off,... **20** So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. **21** 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." **23** 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."

28 When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." **29** And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him.... **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." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴ And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

I. Resurrection – the climax of all the signs

- "The climax of the 'Gospel of Signs' (Jn. 1-12) is the resurrection of a single individual [Lazarus John 11]." [James D. G. Dunn, *Unity & Diversity in the NT*, p. 118]
- "John 11 can be seen as the climax of Jesus' public ministry, &... it basically sums up chapters 1-10." [Eve-Marie Becker, *John's Transformation...*, p.]
- "It is the most spectacular miracle in all four Gospels"— Edward Klink

A. Actual raising from the dead Jesus waited 4 days until Lazarus was really dead

1. A foreshadowing of Jesus' own resurrection – the ultimate sign
2. A sign of our future resurrection

B. Not reviving but resurrecting

- Jesus waited four days until there was no question that Lazarus was dead.
- "In John 11 the raising of the dead Lazarus reminds us of similar stories...in Mark 5:21, Luke 7:11-17 & Acts 9:36-42; 20:7-12. However, ...*John 11 by far exceeds the revivification stories told in the Synoptic Gospels & Acts. John...allude[s] to those stories by surpassing them...These texts only tell revivification stories, not resurrection stories...including Mark 5:35 [Jairus' daughter]. In contrast to all these stories, John 11 tells an actual resurrection narrative, since Lazarus was already dead in the tomb for 4 days (11:17, 39).*" [Eve-Marie Becker, *John's Transformation of Mark*, p.]
- "The first 'half' of John's Gospel climaxes with *the most dramatic miracle in all of Jesus' ministry*, excluding his own resurrection. [Jesus] has previously brought people back to life after their deaths, but never a person who had been dead 4 days & already entombed & presumably decaying (11:17). Given the *Jewish tradition that one's soul hovered near the body for up to 3 days after expiry*(e.g., *Rab. 100 (164a)*), *here is an individual who has truly 'given up the ghost'.*" [Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus & the Gospels*, 3rd Edition, p.]

II. The Narrative

A. The setting – Bethany and the family (also mentioned in Luke)

B. Jesus hears of his friend Lazarus' illness

1. Jesus has friends that he loves – 11:5

- “They were not only his disciples *but also his friends*. That Jesus, who in the 4th Gospel represents God & has few purely human traits, *should have personal friends may sound a bit too human*for...Jesus. But the author is also concerned to show that the one true God incarnate in Jesus has truly entered our human life, & *that means having friends* as well as disciples.” [M. Eugene Boring, Fred B. Craddock, *People's NT Commentary*, 323-4]
- Jesus enjoyed a close friendship with the household at Bethany, & particularly with Lazarus...[The Gk. verb *Phileo*has] a strong focus on friendship...[This] understanding [of] a purely human friendship is reinforced by Jesus' designation of Lazarus as 'our friend' (11:11)... [It's] not an exclusive relationship between Jesus & Lazarus, but...shared with the disciples...The whole group are friends of Lazarus.” [Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel*, 150-2]

2. Lazarus was the disciples' friend as well– 11:11

- “Friend: Gk.: Philos “Jesus qualifies Lazarus as a friend of himself & of his disciples... The term Philos ['friend'] was used as a designation for a Christian believer [e.g., 3 John 15] apart from the terms adelphos ['brother'] & agapetos ['beloved']. Members of the early Church were 'friends' of Jesus & 'friends' among themselves.” [Varghese Johns, *Imagery of Love in...John*, p. 241

C. He waits until Lazarus has died before he goes

D. The two sisters admonish/complain to Jesus

E. Jesus' declaration to Martha

1. I am the resurrection and the life – vv.25-26

- I am the Resurrection – “the one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live”
- I am the Life – “everyone who lives and believes in me will never die”

a. Physical vs. Spiritual life/death?

- “Jesus said ‘I am the resurrection & the life; he who believes in me will live (*spiritually*) even if he dies (*physically*) & everyone who lives [*physically*??] & believes in Me will never die (*spiritually*).” [Neil T. Anderson, *Becoming a Disciple-Making Church*, p.]

b. Eternal (resurrection) life that overcomes death

- “In 11:25-26 Jesus explains the meaning of ‘resurrection’ when he says, ‘The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live’ (11:25b). The point is *not* that even though one will experience physical death, one nevertheless maintains...spiritual life with God, but rather that the *one who experiences physical death will live again* [resurrection]. Death will be overcome through the resurrection to life. Jesus’ assertion that he is ‘life’ is explicated by... ‘Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.’ (11:26a) ... Some interpreters have understood ...[this as] immortality of the human spirit [or ‘soul’]. But [in John,] ... eternal life [is] fellowship with God...a participation in the life of the Father through the Son, [so it] seems rather to mean that *not even physical death can sever that fellowship*. Those who are presently alive in God will not experience death as a threat to that fellowship and participation in eternal life. For this reality...the Gospel uses the term ‘life’.” [Marianne Meye Thompson, *God of the Gospel of John*, pp. 84-5]

c. Death is not the final word

- d. Death does not sever our fellowship with God – (death does not separate us from the love of God – Rom. 8:37-39)

2. Belief in Jesus is necessary for a person to be resurrected to life

3. The time of resurrection is irrelevant

- a. Martha had the understanding of the end time resurrection

- b. Jesus said "I am the resurrection" not "I will resurrect in the future."
 - c. Jesus is outside the realm of time
 - d. It is not just a matter of time but it is linked to Jesus
4. Jesus is intrinsically involved with resurrection

F. Martha's response (11:24, 27)

1. Believing in the end-time resurrection – 11:24
2. Believing that Jesus is the Christ – 11:27 "*I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world.*"
3. This is what the writer is indicating what we the readers should believe. – 20:31 *But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
 - "Martha's confession of Jesus as Messiah & Son of God is *the same confession* the Evangelist wants the readers to make (20:31). Like Martha, people of later generations are called to believe Jesus without having seen a resurrection. In this episode Martha is called to believe *before* her brother [Lazarus] is raised from the dead, & readers are called to do something similar. They stand where Martha stands 'in the middle of the story,' with the words of Jesus and the invitation to believe, but not with visible proof that what Jesus says is true (11:25-26)." [Craig R. Koester, *Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 65]
4. She has entered through 'the gate' of Christ – 10:9 – saved
5. Not realizing Jesus' involvement with the future resurrection and what he has for us presently. – abundant life – John 10:10b

III. Questions

A. Why did Jesus delay going to Bethany? – why is this a question

- "After...a strategic insertion of the only specific reference to Jesus' love for the family ['Now Jesus loved Martha, her sister, & Lazarus (11:5)], the account states quite starkly: 'So when [Jesus] heard that [Lazarus] was sick, he stayed 2 more days in the place where he was' (11:6). Jesus' response to the news...seems quite out of character, & certainly not in accord with the love that's just been emphasized (11:3, 5)." [Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the 4th Gospel*, pp. 157-8]
 - From a human perspective seems Jesus is cruel and uncaring
 - Seems out of character for someone who loved this family
 - "On the level of human understanding...this *seems brutally cruel. From the human perspective* & that of objectifying language ... *Jesus let Lazarus die & let the sisters despair* in order to make his own point. It does not help... [that] he waited 'only' 2 days & Lazarus had been dead 4 days when Jesus arrived (11:17), so Jesus couldn't have gotten there in time anyway. Jesus can heal at a distance (4:48-54), & in any case to make excuses for Jesus... is to force the Jesus story into the human framework of understanding." [M. Eugene Boring, Fred B. Craddock, *People's NT Commentary*, p. 324]
1. Jesus always does things according to the Father not according to human need.
 - This is a principle that's displayed elsewhere. Not the 1st time he has done this.
 - Maybe we should also take time before we respond. We typically are quick to respond.

- “A particularly difficult verse for interpreters to untangle is 11:6. *Why did Jesus*, who could have healed Lazarus from a distance (as in 4:50), not only *fail to act from a distance*, but even [*fail*] *to come to the aid of his beloved friend* (11:3) while he was still alive? To some, this inactivity suggests that the Johannine Jesus has a heart of stone, & is so removed from...human agony as to be unsympathetic to the plight of Lazarus' sisters, much less the man {Lazarus} himself. (As indicated, for e.g., by Moloney's comment: 'The strangeness of Jesus' delay...to go to Bethany is a response to God's design, *not to human need*.' (John, p. 326)) Others, who recognize to an extent the aim of Jesus' delay as aiding the disciples' faith, lack...a category for this particular (in)action on Jesus' part...Even when readers appreciate that Jesus delays for the disciples' sake, they...fail to describe adequately what Jesus' motivations are.” [Jason S. Sturdevant, *Adaptable Jesus of the 4th Gospel*, p. 89]
 - “In the events of John 2:1-11 [Cana wedding]; 4:46-54 [Healing Official's son]; 7:2-24 [Attending Feast of Booths]; & 11:1-44 [Lazarus] [there's] *a pattern of [1.] suggestion (or request); [2.] [Jesus'] negative response; & [3.] positive response*...[Jesus] takes into account, but also transcends, mere human desires, emotions, & expectations...Jesus does not act on his own initiative, but always in concert with the Father's will...This *seems to be the case in the present instance*...The timetable that Jesus is following is...not that of his friends [Mary, Martha,] nor even his own, but his Father's... [This delay] is a clear example of the interplay...between the human affections of Jesus & his dependence on the Father's will.” [Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the 4th Gospel*, pp. 158-9]
 - “Jesus' delay & the consequent death of Lazarus, were not due to a lack of affection [concern] on his part. Yet it was not...affection alone which [was] the motivation for Jesus' courageous journey to Bethany...John wishes to underline the fact that *Jesus' movement* towards Jerusalem, & so to his death, *was entirely [divinely]-determined* (Barrett).” [S. Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions...*, p. 158]
2. To demonstrate his role over death and his identity
- “People were normally expected to... [respond] in friendship by dropping everything & going immediately when summoned. Jesus, however, did not act when he heard the news that Lazarus was seriously ill (11:6). Only after he heard the news that Lazarus was dead, he called his disciples to go with him to Lazarus' home. The reason for the delay [was]...his purpose to demonstrate his role over death & his identity. When Martha & Mary point out that Jesus arrives 'too late' in order to help (11:21, 32), Jesus does not show any regrets...that he did not arrive earlier.” [Riku P. Tuppurainen, *Prologue to Studies in the 4th Gospel*, p.]
 - Jesus' “delayed arrival... creates the situation, in which, according to human opinion, even Jesus could not do anything (11:12, 21, 32, 37). But, for Jesus, it was necessary to arrive “late” in order to reveal his role as the resurrection & the life... Thus a sharp contrast between death-sorrow & resurrection-life is created.” [Riku P. Tuppurainen, *Prologue to Studies in the 4th Gospel*, p.]
3. To increase the disciples' faith – 11:15 *'I'm glad for your sake that I wasn't there so that you may believe*.
- “To understand Jesus' actions as a failure to respond to human sufferings is to miss the point... Jesus hints at this point in 11:4 'This sickness will not end in death but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' ...The punch line of Jesus' tactic comes...in 11:15. When he finally hears that Lazarus has died, Jesus says to the disciples: *'I'm glad for your sake that I wasn't there so that you may believe*.' (11:15). Why has Jesus allowed Lazarus to die? So that the disciples' faith may increase, having seen the greatest e.g., of Jesus' authority over life & death prior to the crucifixion...It's not that Jesus' behavior... overlooks human need. Rather...Jesus acts in accordance with...humanity's greatest need...to recognize that in Jesus, salvation & eternal life have come, & to respond...with faith.” [Jason S. Sturdevant, *Adaptable Jesus...4th Gospel*, p. 90]
4. This account of Jesus' delay brings in the question of why has Jesus delayed his 2nd coming.
- Jesus' response to the sisters' complaint: “If you had been here, my brother would not have died' (11:21, 32)—can be seen not only as John's attempt to deal with Jesus' absence, but [also] as his reply to the famous early Christian debate about the delay of the Parousia [Christ's return/2nd coming] (e.g. 1 Thess. 4:13, [etc.]) ...[Concerning] the destiny of those Christ-believers who (will)

have died before Christ returns, John argues that the earthly Jesus... has already conquered death by raising Lazarus. In order to do this, Jesus must intentionally delay his arrival [at Bethany]. Otherwise, he could not have accomplished the [sign] of raising the dead... Speculations about time & the [2nd] coming, of the Parousia are useless. It is only by faith in Christ (11:25-26) that Christ-believers will fully participate in the [End-time] gift of eternal life." [Eve-Marie Becker, *John's Transformation of Mark*, p.]

B. Why two different responses to the sisters?

1. Declaring to Martha: I am the resurrection and the life
2. Proclaiming the truth and showing that he is God
3. No response to Mary except to weep
 - a. Weeping not for Lazarus
 - b. But entering into the sisters' sorrow
 - c. Possibly also due to the people's unbelief
4. Showing his humanity – he is also a man
 - "Martha comes to Jesus and says, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Just moments later, Mary comes out and says the same thing, verbatim. Two sisters, same situation, exactly the same words. But strikingly, Jesus' responses are sharply different. When Martha speaks he almost argues with her. ...The flow of her heart is toward despair, but Jesus is pushing against that flow. He's rebuking her doubt and giving her hope. Then he sees Mary, who says exactly the same thing, but this time his response is the complete opposite. He doesn't argue; in fact, he's practically speechless. And instead of pushing against the flow of her heart's sadness, he enters it. He stands alongside her in her grief. Now, these radically divergent responses by Jesus point not only to Jesus' profound relational wisdom, but to an even deeper truth about his character and his identity. Timothy Keller, *Encounters with Jesus*, p. 42-43
 - "This account shows us dramatically what the New Testament says elsewhere...that Jesus is both truly God and fully man. ...His encounters, first with Martha, and then Mary, show us he is both God and human. Timothy Keller, *Encounters with Jesus*, p. 44
 - "Despite his claim that he is the resurrection and the life – that he is God- he responds to Mary in this way because he is fully human as well. He is one with us. Timothy Keller, *Encounters with Jesus*, p. 50
 - Now, frankly, everybody needs a ministry of truth and a ministry of tears at different times. Sometimes you need more of the bracing truth; you need to be shaken by a loving friend who says, "Wake up and look around you." Other times you really just need somebody to weep with you. Sometimes to lay truth on people when they're grieved is absolutely wrong, but other times just to weep with them and not tell them the truth is equally wrong." Timothy Keller, *Encounters with Jesus*, p. 51
5. The apostle Paul echoes this sentiment
 - a. Weep with those who weep – Rom. 12:15
 - b. Comforting others with the comfort we receive – 2 Cor. 1:4

IV. Conclusion

A. Jesus is victorious over death because he is the resurrection and the life

- A theology of resurrection means saying with absolute honesty that death is real. Yet it also means believing that death is not final. Neither Jesus nor his followers are exempted from the experience of dying. For both, resurrection means undergoing death and then overcoming it

through the gift of life. By his resurrection Jesus laid down his whole life, not merely a part of his life. In death he gave himself completely, not partially, for the sake of others." (Craig Koester, p. 132)

B. Jesus' response to the sisters shows he is both God and man

C. Belief in Jesus is necessary to receive life and be resurrected to life; and believers' ultimate destiny is not death but life