

We live in a “show me” culture, a “prove it” society. People want to see things before they believe them.

When people think of God, His commands, His actions, His promises...

they often will respond, “prove it first...” But God doesn’t do that. He doesn’t need to do that.

We hear, “Seeing is believing.”

But Jesus says (vs. 40) “If you believe, then you will see.” Believing is seeing.

But in this case, those who did believe, Martha and Mary, saw something fantastic. They saw the Glory of God.

Jesus has the power over death.

John tells us in John 1:4 that in Jesus, the Word of God, is life itself.

In John 3 Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again, that trusting Jesus is the way to eternal life.

In John 4, Jesus claims to be the one who gives living water, “springing up to eternal life.”

Jesus heals the sick, the lame, the blind, and He is the Good Shepherd of the sheep... us.

Now Jesus has arrived in Bethany where His friend Lazarus is *dead*, the sisters, Martha and Mary, are grieving.

The Lord of Life comes face to face with death. What will happen?

I. Jesus seeks out those He loves.

John 11:28-29

It is worth pausing to consider the very personal aspect of these two verses.

Jesus is calling for Mary. Martha goes to tell her.

And Mary instantly comes to find Jesus.

Jesus knows that Mary is going to be consumed with grief, and so He calls for her by name.

He does this with us as well.

It is the typical way that Jesus works. He finds us at our lowest, seeks us out, and calls us by name.

And then, Jesus does in our lives what we cannot believe until He does it.

II. Jesus feels our pain and grief.

John 11:30-37

vs. 31 The Jews are following Mary around “consoling her.”

vs. 32 Mary speaks to Jesus the same words that Martha has said in vs. 21.

But Mary is far more outwardly emotional, consumed by her grief.

I love the contrast between these two sisters, because nearly all of us can relate to one of them.

Martha: practical, controlled, hardworking, sometimes judgmental.

Jesus responds to her with truth, instruction, and an invitation.

Mary: relational, emotional, consumed by how she feels.

Jesus responds to her with empathy, compassion, and action.

Let us look closely at the compassion of the Savior. vs. 33-35 And let us ask some questions.

Why was Mary weeping?

Well, obviously, she was crushed, disappointed, bereft...

Why were the Jews weeping?

Jewish funeral custom dictated that even a poor family was expected to hire at least two flute players.

and a professional wailing woman. Lazarus was not poor.

Many of these there would have been weeping for effect.

Why did Jesus weep? In order to answer this, we need to tackle another question.

What does it mean that Jesus was “deeply moved in His spirit and troubled?”

Literally, He “troubled (or agitated) himself.” = the opposite of peacefulness.

Also vs. 38, “deeply moved within.” = a different, more severe word.

Greek word here translated “deeply moved” = snorting of horses, anger, outrage, emotional indignation.

“in spirit” as vs. 38 “within” = the anger and outrage were contained.

It is an inward reaction of Jesus. He is not happy, but rather sad, grieved, angry, outraged.

Then we read in verse 35, “Jesus wept.”

I recall back in my Middle School confirmation days, this was the most popular verse.

We were told to memorize one verse from the Bible.

One student discovered that this one is the shortest, and it is.

You ought to commit John 11:35 to memory. But not because it is the shortest.

It is a reminder of something especially important about Jesus.

Why? What made Jesus upset?

It was not because He did not want to raise Lazarus.

It was not because He doubted whether He could. (vs. 4, 11)

He knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead.

Was He angry at the hypocrisy of much of the grief? He doesn't say so.

Was He angry at the grief that had degenerated into despair?

Was He upset about what anyone there was doing? I do not think so.

Clearly, the people there do not understand why Jesus is weeping.

Jesus was not upset about the behavior of those present. He clearly had compassion for Mary.

Jesus was not upset because He couldn't do anything. He had planned for this situation.

Jesus was not upset because of their disbelief. Mary and Martha believed.

The others? Some will. Some will not. But Jesus' emotions and tears precede all that.

I think that Jesus was upset because He stood in the presence of the horrible effect of the curse of sin and death.

He hated the curse of sin and death, and still does. God did not make us to die, but rather to live forever.

You may have heard people say that death is a natural part of life. Is death natural?

I do not think it is. God did not create human beings to die. His original design did not include death.

If you have ever sat by the side of a loved one dying, you know that something is wrong.

The parting is painful. The process is often horrible.

And for the one who is dying, it is a step into the dark unknown. Honestly, it is terrifying.

If it were not for Jesus.

In Genesis 3 the death of human beings is clearly a result of sin and the curse of God upon sinners.

In the Old Testament, death is called "bitter." It is our "doom." Death is feared. It is often a final punishment.

Death casts a "shadow" over our lives. (Psalm 23:4, 44:19, 107:10)

Death is filled with "terrors." (Psalm 55:4)

Jesus loves Lazarus, the people there see that.

Some even think that Jesus should have been able to do something to help him. (vs. 37)

They are exactly right.

But Jesus' solution for the curse of death is not to keep it from happening.

It is to defeat death when it seems all is lost. This is God's way.

Even in the Old Testament, there are clear indications that this is so.

(Job 19:25-26, Psalm 16:10, Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:1-3)

III. Jesus raises the dead so that you will believe and live forever. John 11:38-44

Now Jesus gets to the tomb. We know that Mary, Martha, the disciples, and many others are there with Him.

Something amazing is going to happen. We, the reader, know that this must be.

We do not know what those there were expecting.

We do know that Martha still thought that Lazarus was dead, and that was that. (vs. 39)

Jesus then speaks a command.

The Bible is full of commands from the Lord... each one carries a promise. Obey it and see the glory of God.

In this moment, in front of the tomb, Jesus speaks three commands:

A. "Remove the Stone."

This command was given to those present. So, Martha raises an obvious objection. (vs. 39)

It is at this point that Jesus says this amazing statement,

"Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" (vs. 40)

Jesus reminds her of His purpose there and their previous conversation. John 11:23-27

However, we do not read that Jesus actually said just this to her.

This is a sort of summary of His entire interaction with His disciples and Martha.

Notice in His rhetorical question that the believing precedes the seeing the glory of God.

People often think that once they see God do something amazing, then they will believe.

I am often amazed at what people can see God do, and they just continue in their disbelief.

Martha is going to see the glory of God because she believes.

So, what will she do? I imagine that all there are looking at her. She is the one in charge.

The removal of the stone is, for Martha, the critical act of faith.

Won't she (and Jesus) feel stupid if nothing happens but a stench?

Is there an act of faith that you need to do in response to the Lord's command?

You might think, "Lord, what You ask of me is beyond reasonable expectation."

When you trust Jesus, you must lay aside your desires and ability to control the situation.

You must simply do what Jesus says, even though you cannot see how it will work out.

Trusting Jesus means that you agree and act as though He knows what He's doing.

Then Jesus prays. He prays a prayer of thanksgiving. (vss. 41-41)

John tells us why Jesus prays this prayer to the Father aloud. It is so that we would believe.

Moreover, in His prayer is evidence of His constant communication and reliance on His Father.

That Jesus, in His incarnate deity, never did anything without relying upon His Father.

He raised the dead in the same way that his followers would, Peter then Paul, by praying.

We, the readers, now know that Lazarus has been raised.

The miracle had already happened.

But no one there knew it.

B. "Lazarus Come forth."

And, obviously, Lazarus hears the voice of Jesus. How? He's alive. And, only Jesus can do that.

That is the point. **John 11:25-26**

Lazarus is instantly an example, a metaphor for the life-giving power of Jesus.

Is there someone you want to become a Christian?

To have spiritual life forever? How will it happen?

You can bring them to church. Witness to them. Love them.

These are all good things, but if Jesus doesn't give them spiritual life, they will stay dead.

After all what can you do with a dead guy to make him live?

Reason with him? Take him out to eat? Scare the hell out of him?

No, Jesus has to make him live.

What about you? Do you have the life of Jesus in your heart?

Are you walking with Jesus in newness of life?

If not, this morning, do you hear His voice? Obey it.

Up until now you may have been living in sin, living for yourself, thinking little about God.

Heed the call of Jesus to come out of the grave.

And Lazarus came out, but he looked a mess. I think of this as a picture of the newly saved person.

C. "Unbind him and Let Him Go."

When the Jews buried a man, they wrapped his body in a large linen cloth...

and they bound the feet, hands and head in strips of cloth.

So, Jesus gives the command. See it is not enough that we be raised to new life in Christ.

Jesus is not done with us yet. He wants you and I to get rid of the death-clothes that we wore.

Heb. 12:1-2 What is it that you are dragging around in life from your deadness?

Habits? Laziness? Sins? Relationships?

So, sinner, today is the day. It is time for you to believe.

Get rid of the sin and rebellion that stands like a hard stone between you and life in Jesus.

And "Come forth!" in obedience.

And throw off all the grave clothes that bind you and go free!

How about you? Do you know that Jesus is seeking you out so that you will trust Him as Savior and Lord.

If you believe in Him and trust Him, you will see Him do amazing things in your life.

He will take you from spiritual deadness to being alive to God forever.

Is it finally time for you to begin trusting Jesus? 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, "Now is the day of salvation."

I invite you to come down in front, during or after this last hymn, and let me pray with you.