

We do not like disasters. I think this is safe to say.

Whether an accident, a diagnosis, a death, a storm, loss of a job, the end of a relationship...

I usually feel that it is not well with my soul. We are upset, devastated, even wallowing in ruin.

If we could only see disasters from God's perspective.

The greatest disaster is, of course, death. It seems so final. But, in Jesus death is transformed into life.

Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

Now we get to see God incarnate as He works amid the heartbreak of His closest friends.

I. Jesus intentionally sets up situations for the glory of God.

John 11:1-6

We learn something about Jesus in the first three verses of John 11.

Jesus had best friends. He had people who He particularly cared about.

Of course there were His 12 disciples. These men were the focus of much of His ministry and teaching.

There were the three disciples who were closest to Him, Peter, James, and John.

But, here in John 11 we learn that He was also close to this man named Lazarus.

In fact, Mary and Martha, also close friends of Jesus, refer to Lazarus as, "he whom you love."

Consider what we learn from John, the author, in verse 5. Jesus loved these three people.

Jesus, the Messiah, God come into our world in the flesh as a human being, had both family and friends.

Of course He did. That is part of what it means to be human.

And Mary and Martha have a plan that involves Jesus. They send for Him. He comes and heals Lazarus.

It's a good plan. It's a great plan. But it isn't Jesus' plan.

Jesus does something that confuses us. It confuses His disciples. It disappoints Mary and Martha.

He stays where He is and does not go right away to be with Lazarus, or help him. (vs. 6)

But we need not be confused because Jesus tells us in verse 4 what His purpose is in the entire situation.

This sickness is "for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified in it."

What does this mean? The glory of God? The Son glorified?

In Exodus 33 Moses is at a low point.

God has rescued Israel from slavery, given them His law, and Moses is supposed to lead them.

But they are not following.

Moses is speaking with God, pleading for the people, pleading for God's presence, wanting reassurance.

It is in this moment that Moses makes a fascinating request of God. **Exodus 33:18**

And God grants him his request, as much as is safe for Moses.

God shows him just a little bit of His glory. **Exodus 34:5-7**

Like Moses, every person who has spiritual sensitivity, who wants to know God...

When we are in a situation that is difficult, in our suffering, when things have not gone our way...

We especially then want to see God's glory, to be reassured about who He is, what sort of God He is...

Sometimes life is really hard, and messy, and very un-glorious...

We want to see that God is bigger than our struggles, that he is better than we are...

We want to see the glory of God.

Jesus came so that we could see the Glory of God.

John Owen wrote, "The glory of God arises from His holy nature and from the excellent things He does."

But our best opportunity to see this glory by looking at Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6

Hebrews 1:1-3

John 1:14, 18

It is in Christ that we see the glory of God... the marvelous God who He is.

In this passage we will see that Jesus is intentionally setting up a situation designed to show us the glory of God.

Does He do this? Why not? He is the sovereign Lord over all things.

And it is in this passage that Jesus Christ explicitly tells us that He is showing us the glory of God. **John 11:4**

So, what do we see?

II. Jesus does things in His way so that we learn to trust Him.

John 11:7-16

We can see that Jesus is up to something. He has a purpose for all that He does.

And we can very quickly see that His purposes are not so easy to understand. His disciples don't understand.

vs. 6 He delays.

vs. 7 He decides to go to Judea (an extremely dangerous place for Him). The disciples do not think it wise.

In verse 8 they point out that the Jews want to kill Him.

In verse 12 they explain to Jesus that Lazarus will likely recover, if he is sleeping.

In verse 16 Thomas responds to what Jesus is doing with dark sarcasm.

He doesn't think Jesus has a good plan. Can you relate?

vs. 11 Jesus knows what He will do when He gets there. And His disciples are part of the plan... vss. 13-15

It is always amazing how the purposes of God intertwine and never by accident.

1. Jesus is planning to minister to Lazarus and show him His love.

2. He is going to minister to Mary and Martha and illustrate for them that He is the resurrection and the life.

3. He is going to present a sign to the Jews so that many of them will believe.

4. He is going to strengthen the faith of His disciples, because they are having a difficult time believing.

All at the same time as part of the same project... and not one of these people know, yet, what Jesus is up to.

Yet in order for all of this to happen, Lazarus has to die.

Dear friends, do you want to see the glory of God? This is how He works in our lives.

We look at our situation, how God is working... "I don't agree. I would do it differently. Lord, why so hard?"

Job wondered about these same questions... so did Paul. **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

And, if you wonder at times why the way He works must be so hard...

consider that He took the hardest way Himself... it was the way to the cross, for your good and God's glory.

It is in the midst of all of this that Jesus responds to the fear and doubts of His disciples in verses 9-10.

What in the world can He mean? I am sure that the disciples, at the time, were befuddled.

His meaning, I think, is rather simple.

Walk in the light and not in the darkness.

Walk according to what God says and what God is doing rather according to the fear of the world.

Jesus is telling us to stick with Him and ignore the worries that come from a dark world.

Even though we might have no idea what he's doing.

Not long ago I was visiting with a woman who was having a tough time forgiving someone.

"But he will just keep thinking that what he did was ok."

Years ago, I was urging a man to love his wife and stop being so selfish.

"But she is just going to walk all over me."

I was urging a former leader of a Christian school to stop trying to make trouble for his successor.

"But he's doing it all wrong and will destroy the school."

Nope, our job is to stay in our lane, and obey Jesus Christ, not to try to run the world.

I have a personal motto, "Run the world, ruin the world. It's God's job to run it."

Jesus' disciples are learning, Jesus has a plan, they need to come along, participate, obey, watch and learn.

So, off they go, to Bethany, where Lazarus lives... or lived.

III. Martha trusts Jesus.

John 11:17-22

So they arrive in Bethany and Lazarus is dead, for four days!

At this point, if you or I were one of the disciples, we would be upset at Jesus.

1. He let Lazarus die. That was mean and uncaring.

2. We arrived too late to do anything in a place that was terribly dangerous. It's a bad plan.

vs. 20 Martha is the more active, confident, and confrontational of the two sisters.

vs. 21 Martha knows that Jesus has the power to cure.

"If You had been here, my brother would not have died." She knows that Jesus could have cured him.

This is not a rebuke from Martha. These are words of grief, and faith.

vs. 22 This is quite a statement.

In Rabbinic tradition the soul hovers over the body for three days, then leaves.

After four days the decomposition would be obvious.

But, says Martha, “even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give you.”

She is sure that Jesus could ask the Father and God the Father would raise Lazarus from the dead.

Martha has a childlike, simple faith. She is an example to us all in this respect.

She just trusts Jesus, not knowing what He might do, but she is hopeful, even in her tears.

This is, I think, a model for us in our praying, in how we relate to God.

IV. Do you trust Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life?

John 11:23-27

Now the conversation takes a meaningful turn. This is why Jesus came to Bethany.

vss. 23-24 Jesus declares to Martha, “Your brother will rise again.”

This statement by Jesus is a masterpiece of planned ambiguity... it is true in two different ways.

Martha understands one. She has been listening. There is coming a resurrection “on the last day.”

The other meaning Jesus is prepared to demonstrate. This is the lesson that is about to happen.

This lesson is that Jesus is the source of resurrection life in Himself.

Both are Jesus’ accomplishment. Both illustrate His power.

vs. 25a This is the fifth of seven “I am” sayings (metaphors) by Jesus recorded in John’s Gospel.

Jesus is identifying Himself as God who spoke to Moses in Exodus 3.

“I Am the resurrection and the life” = He knows of the resurrection. He has the power over life and death.

He Himself will rise from the dead and He will raise those who trust Him to eternal life.

More than that, He IS the resurrection. He IS the life. Real life is found only in Jesus Christ.

vs. 25b “He who believes in Me will live even if he dies” = Jesus gives life even where there is death.

He gives life to those who trust in Him. Death cannot stop Him.

John 5:21, 24-29 Jesus holds life in His hand. His voice gives life.

Trust is the key that unlocks the door to eternal life in Jesus. Belief. But it is not the same as agreement.

Belief, trust, involves commitment.

I recall some years ago a plane crash in Washington, DC.

People in the river. Helicopter. Cable. Rescuer. People had to grab on and trust the man.

vs. 26 “Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.” = this life is life eternal.

It is NOT merely resuscitation.

If you want to “never die” you must believe in Him, and you must have life.

“lives” = present active verb, it happens now. This life begins now, before you “will never die.”

Ever since the beginning of history men and women have been trying to live forever.

And they have been thinking about how; and those people have been dying.

Pharaohs loaded their tombs with supplies for the afterlife; explorers sought the fountain of youth.

Today we are looking to science to find ways to extend our lives.

There is talk of growing organs and other efforts.

I read an article a year ago that suggested that we are on the cusp of extending life indefinitely.

Pardon me if I don’t believe them.

Moreover, the quality of life they promise, with their medications and surgeries, I do not want.

And I think everyone suspects that the effort is finally futile.

Why is it that we as a race desire eternal life, and yet find it so elusive?

Well, maybe the desire is both natural and good, placed within us by God.

But we are looking to fulfill it in the wrong way.

Only God gives life.

Only God can give life everlasting.

And so, Jesus, is telling Martha that He is God who has the power to give life everlasting. He follows the lesson with a simple but essential question (vs. 26b), “Do you believe this?”

It is not enough to know all this stuff.

You have to believe... grab onto the one who offers salvation and life.

Can you answer as Martha does in vs. 27?

Do you know what she is saying?

This is one of the first confessions of faith in Jesus the Messiah in the Bible.

It is clear, succinct, and deeply rooted in Scriptural truth.

Her confession is threefold:

1. “I believe that You are the Christ.” = Jesus is the Messiah, God’s Savior King.
Jesus is the one who fulfills 2000 years of Hebrew prophesy.
He has come to His people to do all that God said was needed to save them.
2. “I believe that You are the Son of God.” = Thus, Jesus is the exact representation of God.
Jesus, as the Son of the Father, shows us what God is really like.
Jesus speaks God’s words and carries out God’s mission of love for us.
3. “I believe that You are He who comes into the world.” = Jesus is the incarnate God.
Jesus is God who humbles Himself and enters our world as one of us.
The Creator becomes a creature so that He can relate to us and die for us.

Do you believe in Jesus? Is He your Messiah, Son of God, come to save you?