

## *Invitation to Resurrection*

The Raising of Lazarus

### Greatest Hits Series – Part 9

John 11:1-44

March 8-9, 2025

#### Introduction

- Being in Kidsway last weekend
- Year of Invitation – Greatest Hits Series = some of Jesus' greatest invitations to us. *Welcome the new folks.*
- Examples and stories of how I planned things, and God made them turn out better.
  - *My list of what I wanted in a wife at 16.*
  - *Band versus pastor at 21.*
  - *Wanting to stay here eternally instead of dying and going to heaven.*

*God's plans are better than we can IMAGINE.*

- Last Week – Pastor Rodney taught on God being our *Good Shepherd* and how we are *utterly lost without Him*. While He seeks to provide us an *abundant life*, the enemy only comes to *steal, kill and destroy*. Can we appreciate Pastor Rodney. He's been crushing it from the pulpit.
- Context – *Jesus has been in the South* for a number of the last messages we've been taught here at Bridgeway. He was doing a lot of *teaching in the Temple* and getting in trouble A LOT. As a matter of fact, one of the last times He was there they announced *publicly that they were going to stone Him*. It was tense. After completing that portion of His teaching He then left Jerusalem and went to a small area that had been made famous for being the location where John the Baptist did his baptism ministry. Jesus was familiar with it. It was on the other side of the Jordan River and became kind of a retreat for Him and His guys throughout His earthly ministry. The awkwardness is that it TOO is called BETHANY (a.k.a. Bethabara – "Bethany beyond the Jordan") and the next story is going to take place in the OTHER BETHANY (near Jerusalem), and they aren't super far away from each other. Again, I'm irritated that everyone has the same name (Mary, Mary, Mary, John, John, Judas, Judas, Simon, Simon, Simon) but that towns were named the same in different locations (Caesarea, Caesarea, Bethany, Bethany, etc.). Yet here we are. So, Jesus is with some of His guys (and it seems a fresh crew – unclear if it's old JTB disciples or just random folks) getting away from the tension of Jerusalem for a bit. But it's during this respite that He receives an urgent letter...

#### Lesson

- Only the Good Die Young
  - Lazarus dies and notice goes out to Jesus
    - *John 11:1-3 – "Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> It was Mary who anointed the Lord with*

*ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."*

- Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus – John has a familiar phrase when he adds in new characters to his gospel. He's already done it twice. It's the phrase, 'there was a certain man.' I wonder John suffered from my same malady which is adding in unnecessary words and talking beyond the point of benefit. So, he uses it here. It was not just any guy it was one of Jesus' best friends! We learn that later. But there was a man, we are being introduced to, named Lazarus who was VERY sick. This is not a cold or the flu, this is legit.
- of Bethany, the village of Mary – I'm always fascinated by how things are named because it usually tells a story from the past. Bethany is an odd one to figure out because no one can agree on what it means because it seems to come from root words that either mean, 'house of figs' or 'house of misery/affliction.' That's a HUGE difference. If your name is Bethany, I'm so sorry about that. It's possible your parents don't like you. Anyway, this Bethany town is right next to Jerusalem on the lower eastern slope of the Mt. of Olives which is across the small valley from the capital city (parts of the Mt. of Olives was actually considered within Jerusalem limits). A special group of people to Jesus lived in this town. It was three siblings: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. How Jesus met them and how much they saw each other is not clear but the Bible is very clear about their closeness in relationship. Their house was kind of like Jesus' home away from home in the South. Those of us who know the Bible well have stories pop up about each of these characters in our minds.
- and her sister Martha. – Martha and Mary tend to be connected quite a bit in stories. We know from one biblical account that Martha seems to be the older sister who is very practical, while Mary is the younger sister who is more interested in relationships and experiences. Both of these women are extraordinary and should be honored. We will see in a moment the power of Martha's faith and theology. She gets a bit of a bad rep due to the story where Jesus corrects her over-practicality.
- It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. – Mary is mentioned again as if everyone knew the story of her breaking an expensive bottle of perfume and pouring it on Jesus in honor. the oddity is that this story of Mary anointing Jesus hasn't been told by John yet. **It's the next story to come.** So, why is he mentioning it here as if his readers knew it, if he hasn't told it yet? The answer is that **it was so famous** and John was writing last (compared to the other 3 synoptic gospels). He is assuming that everyone knows Mary and her extravagant act of love story. It is also interesting to realize that in John's gospel this story **follows the resurrection of her brother which means she is particularly thankful to the Lord Jesus in the moment when she anoints him expensively.**

- Was Mary a Prostitute?<sup>1</sup> – No. Why would I ask the question? Because there are a number of stories (two to be exact) about a woman anointing Jesus with expensive perfume and one of them is clearly a prostitute. And we also know that Mary did that. So is this two different accounts? Or one and the same? It's two different accounts. One was in the North (Galilee region at a Pharisees house) and another one in the South (Mary in Bethany).
- So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill – It was the sisters together that wrote Jesus a letter. There was no specific mail-service like the USPS back then so it would need to be sent through a carrier and therefore you would only pay for something like that if it was super important. And it was. **Their brother was dying.** Notice the intensity of their words and perhaps unintended manipulation phrase of 'the ONE YOU LOVE is ill.' This means, **if you really cared you would come right now. If you really cared you would do something.** Of course they are panicking because it looks like Lazarus isn't going to make it and they can't bear that.
- A Troubling Road to Glory
  - Jesus announces a plan in Lazarus' death
    - *John 11:4-6 – "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." <sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was."*
    - But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death – It's important to note that Jesus got a letter, which He likely read aloud to the group, but then responded AUDIBLY. He wasn't replying in a letter to the ladies that it would not lead to death immediately although there is evidence that his response was captured and sent back to the ladies since Martha refers to it later.<sup>2</sup> He was using this as **a teaching moment.** He says

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<sup>1</sup> "There are two such stories in the canonical Gospel tradition, one in Luke 7:36–50 and one in Mark 14:3–9 (paralleled in Mt 26:6–13). In each of these, the woman who anoints Jesus is anonymous, but the second is located specifically in Bethany, and, perhaps more significantly, is said to be a story destined to be told and retold (see Mk 14:9 and Mt 26:13). Readers acquainted with the telling of that story in some form—not necessarily Mark's version, or Matthew's—would be able to appreciate the Gospel writer's comment that the woman who anointed Jesus at Bethany was in fact none other than Mary, sister to Martha, probably familiar as well from another story now found in Luke, and that the "sick man" here at Bethany was in fact their brother. A small world indeed! Still, there are discrepancies. The anonymous woman in Mark and Matthew anoints Jesus' head, not his feet, with perfume (see Mk 14:3 and Mt 26:7), and consequently nothing is said about her "wiping his feet with her hair." Those very details, however, are present in Luke's story (set not in Bethany of Judea, but in Galilee, in the house of a Pharisee named Simon) about a prostitute who abruptly brought in "an alabaster jar of perfume," stood behind Jesus weeping and "began to wet his feet with her tears, ... wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them" (see Lk 7:37–38, NIV). The story to which John's Gospel refers (for the full story, see 12:1–8) preserves the setting of Mark's account, yet with a number of details preserved not in Mark or Matthew, but in Luke's story about the prostitute. This suggests that John's Gospel is drawing not on any one Gospel's account, but on one of the many retellings to which Jesus refers in Mark 14:9 and Matthew 26:13. He offers no hint that the woman who anointed Jesus was "a woman who had lived a sinful life" (Lk 7:37, NIV), and he differs from both other accounts in giving her a name and placing her in a family that Jesus knew well (Lk 10:38–42) and "loved" (see vv. 3, 5). The point of the notice is simply to inform the reader who Lazarus was and why his sickness matters."

NICNT Commentary

<sup>2</sup> "More likely, his words represent an answer to the message he has just received, an answer sent back by messenger to the two sisters in Bethany. This too is unverified for the moment, but appears to be verified later on, when Jesus reminds Martha, "Did I not tell you that if you

to His team there in Bethany beyond the River, this sickness won't kill our friend. **What's fascinating and most telling about this statement that we need to contemplate, is that it actually did: Lazarus died.**

- The Power of Jesus Perspective – So, how can Jesus say that this illness does not lead to death. We know that it did. **Lazarus really died.** You can't be resurrected unless you die. So, he did die. **What did Jesus mean and what does that mean for us?** Actually its very powerful. Jesus knows something down the road that the rest of the folks don't. **he knows the actual end of the story. He is not distracted by the stops along the way.** He speaks to what really matters and what's ultimately true. Even in English translation it comes through that Jesus says, 'this illness does not END in death.' **Yes, death will be a part of it, but it's not the final statement and reality.** Not only will Lazarus be raised from the dead physically, but **his eternal reality is secured as well and has ETERNAL LIFE.** Death has no place in this man's life in any way that truly matters. Any death for him is merely inconvenient and a bother, but it's not meaningful. And that is the true state of all true believers.
- The Power of Sidetracks – **what's more impactful, a carefree life living in the abundance of God or a healing that demonstrates that God is right next to you, sees you, touched you, loves you? What we want is smooth sailing for the most part, but we want the benefit of depth. Depth is created in the drama and difficulty.**
- It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." – Jesus is moving on and prophesying about incredible things. He says that **this illness is an opportunity.** This terrible illness, this breakdown of humanity, this consequence of sin, can be turned around and **used for the glory of God. What starts as evil and bad can be transformed in the hands of God.** And that's what the verse **Romans 8:28** is all about (*"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."*). But there's more. Jesus goes on to say that this experience, this perceived difficulty and distress, this terrible situation, will be used not just for regular good stuff, but for eternal good stuff. This situation will be used to glorify the Son of God. **The very reason that we are on this planet is to glorify God. And what is glorifying? It's highlighting the amazing elements of something. It's drawing attention to. It's shifting the focus onto the extraordinary.** When it's done about God, it's the very essence of our purpose. **This terrible situation with Lazarus will be used for the highest honor and highest purpose.** I can't imagine that the original audience could even fathom what Jesus was saying and how important this is.

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believe you will see the glory of God?" (v. 40). The only place he could have "told" her such a thing was here, with the assurance that her brother's sickness was not "toward death, but for the glory of God." NICNT Commentary

- Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. – I love this line. **It's just after terrible news, but just before the worst of the news and LONG before the miracle. It says that Jesus loved this family.** Why is that so important? Because of the way that **we so quickly and wrongly assess the love of God based on our circumstances. We immediately determine whether God loves us by how things interact with us in the world. This is entirely incorrect.** It's too limited of a view. It's like a child determining the love of the parents by getting a shot at the doctor that's going to save their life. The discomfort of the shot is nothing in comparison to the love that motivated the greater good. God is that way with us all the time. **He is doing eternal things for us that matter far more than anything happening on earth.** Does our experience matter here? Of course. It's all we know so far. But in the grand scheme of things it doesn't. Eternal life in heaven makes a vapor of a 90 year life pale in comparison. It's temporary discomfort and pain in light of eternity of peace, joy, freedom, and absence of hurt. **The love of God must be firmly held in our minds despite the shifting circumstances of our current reality.**
- So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was – And this is great...**right after noting that Jesus really and deeply loved Lazarus and the ladies, it says that He ignored their plea.** Wow! A simple read of that seems to be contradictory. **How can you love someone and let things get worse?** How can you love someone and ignore their cries? I guess it depends on your perspective and whether or not it's ignoring anything or letting anything get worse. It certainly seemed rude and callous to the original group that was experiencing it, but was it actually? No. It's going to result in greater things for these 3, but they can't see it now.
- Never Stop Neverstopping
  - Jesus tells the team they are going South
    - *John 11:7-10 – "Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go [back] to [the region of] Judea again." <sup>8</sup> The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the [Jewish leaders] were just now seeking 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 anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." "*
    - Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." – After this = 2 days later, Jesus is ready to go. Jesus and his team are 'beyond the Jordan' which means they are on the Eastern side of the Jordan River from Jerusalem. The river is a pretty clear delineation line for property boundaries. This means they are outside of the region of Judea, where Jerusalem and the other Bethany is. Jesus is saying, 'guys, we need to load up and head BACK to the region of Judea and go to the other Bethany.'

- The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, - The response begins with an honoring title. Rabbi means religious teacher and it’s a title of honor. It means, or should mean, the one that knows better and should be followed regardless. It doesn’t always mean that in followers hearts but it probably should. Anyway, they knew who was in charge and it was Jesus. **They knew that He knew what He was doing. But they couldn’t help trying to bring clarity to some problems with his plan.**
- the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” – The Jewish leaders had just threatened to stone Jesus publicly in Judea. Why in the world are we going back there? It’s not safe. The guys are kind of concerned. Did Jesus forget what just happened? Did He not pick up on how tense the temple sessions were? Does He not care about their wellbeing by asking them to go with Him? Oddly enough, those are all questions that we ask in one form or another when God seems to be leading in a way that we don’t agree with. But **God DOES know what He’s doing.** The only reason you know any information about it at all is because He’s already there and revealing it backward. **We aren’t telling God anything He doesn’t know. And yes, He cares about our wellbeing but as long as He’s right there He is controlling the outcome and it’s not actually danger at all.** It would have been helpful perhaps for Jesus to rebuke them by recounting publicly and aloud how many times the Jewish leaders tried to take Him out and it didn’t work. But at this point Jesus just goes quiet and demands that they trust Him. But **He does say one cryptic thing...**
- 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. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him. – This is one of the times when, if I was an original disciple, would have just lowered my head and said, **‘I have no idea what’s going on.’** I don’t think I would have asked for any clarification because I don’t even know where to start. Jesus is being cryptic and honestly it’s not worth trying to unravel at this point. Maybe some of the other dudes got it and I’m the only ignorant one but it’s not worth it to me. I’m just moving on. So, what was Jesus actually saying? He’s saying there are safe times to travel and not safe times. I’m with you. I’m the light. So when I’m with you, it’s ALWAYS safe to travel anywhere. It’s actually super encouraging once you understand but dang it was odd and mysterious and probably left most of the original crew confused.
  - **When we say amen to things we don’t understand** – I want to take this moment to call out something that cracks me up. It’s the amen to something that you have no idea what the pastor just said. Now, Bridgeway is a pretty mellow amening crowd and we need to grow in that area. But I’ve been to a number of mega-amen churches where I’m watching congregants amen to something I KNOW they don’t understand a word of. What the heck? I love the encouragement to

the pastor but I'm gonna call you out for looking like you know something you don't know. I swear I've heard people amen to something pastor said that he said wrong and didn't even know what was going on himself. It just makes me laugh.

- A Deathly Dangerous Trip

- Jesus announces Lazarus' death and they head out

- John 11:11-16 – *“After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.”<sup>12</sup> The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.”<sup>13</sup> Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep.<sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died,<sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”<sup>16</sup> So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”*

- After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” – Here goes Jesus again with the mysterious comments. ‘Lazarus has fallen asleep and I need to go wake him up.’ What the heck? If he’s asleep then he’ll certainly be up by the time we get there. What are you trying to say? And just when the modern day reader is feeling ignorant and saying, ‘wow these people all talk a different language’ we find out that nope, only Jesus is talking like this and **the other folks are pretty lost too.**
- The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” – the disciples call Him out on it. They take Him at face value and point out that a sick guy needs his rest so we shouldn’t wake him up needlessly. Rest is good. So, obviously they don’t have a clue what Jesus is saying.
- Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. – Jesus of course, we know now, was saying that Lazarus had finally succumbed to his sickness and died. They honestly thought Jesus was talking about sleep,.
- Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, - and here’s the **funny line** to me, **Jesus had to be super blunt**: No guys, he’s dead. Wow, you really aren’t tracking with Me, huh? Sheesh! He’s DEAD! Is that clear enough for ya?
- and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. – Jesus goes on to say that **this is a good thing for them** (that Lazarus is dead). He says, ‘I’m glad I waited because **it’s going to increase your faith in Me.**’ I’m quite certain none of them knew what He was talking about. There is no indication in the gospel of John that they had ever seen Him raise someone from the dead. There had been some radical healings for sure and some intense miracles, so they could have imagined that something supernatural would occur, but as far as John’s gospel is concerned breaking death wasn’t on the table.

- But let us go to him.” – Jesus says plainly, ‘he’s dead but we’ve got to go to him anyway.’
- So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him. – This is one of the most forgotten passages in my opinion because everyone knows Thomas as ‘**doubting Thomas**’ due to his struggle with the resurrection of Christ later on. But no one seems to remember **how hardcore and faith-filled this man is** with this statement. The disciples know they are walking into danger. They don’t fully understand Jesus’ statement about how He brings safety wherever He goes, unless He decides otherwise. They are assuming that they are walking into a death trap. And yet, Thomas leads the charge on saying, ‘**then let’s go die!**’ It’s almost like a King Leonidas statement rallying his troops in the movie 300 (although I’m not recommending that movie because well, it’s, um...). Notice that Thomas was a Twin. The Greek version of that is Didymus. John mentions that he’s a twin three times. It doesn’t say who his twin was or if the twin was also an apostle.
- Firm Faith
  - Martha processes the death with Jesus
    - *John 11:17-22 – “Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. <sup>20</sup> So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”*
    - Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. – Jesus and the team finally arrive in Bethany and by this time Lazarus had been dead and in the rock tomb for 4 days. This is significant but I’ll address this when Martha highlights the fact in a moment below.
    - Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, - Bethany was super close to Jerusalem, just on the other side of a small valley. You can see the two cities from each other.
    - and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. – The term ‘Jews’ keeps being used without comment by John and it’s being used in two different ways. Usually it means “Jewish leaders”, but this time it seems to mean, ‘random Jewish people.’ (Although it’s possible some Jewish religious leaders came from the nearby Jerusalem to be a part of the proceedings because we see in a moment that there are challenges to Jesus. Maybe it comes from this group). Context will need to tell you which one he means. So some folks from Jerusalem had come to console Mary and Martha on the death of their brother. **Mourning was communal (and still is) in the Middle East.**

Even if you didn't know the deceased intimately or personally, you would help the family mourn by mourning along with them. **You enter into their experience and weep with them. It's creating an atmosphere of sadness so that all of it can get out. It's actually really healthy in my opinion.** We don't have any of that in the modern Western world.

- So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. – The ladies heard that Jesus was walking into town and Martha (the ever vigilant and likely older sister) heads out to meet Him upon His arrival. Mary, for an unexplained reason, remained in her home. I don't 'know if she was staying with the guests, or if she was waiting her turn, or if she was just too sad to bother getting up at this point. It's not clear.
- Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. – And this is where it hits. **Someone that Jesus loves deeply challenges Him on his care toward them. To hear someone else do it sounds awkward, but we do it all the time.** The moment something goes terrible in our lives we question God's care over us. And so she blurts out what everyone must have been thinking: **'If you had been here (when I asked you to be), then Lazarus could have been healed and wouldn't have had to die.'** In other words, **'this is partially your fault.** What good is it to know a miracle worker and healer who doesn't heal those that you love?' There is some truth to what she was saying (from her perspective) but there also seems to be some blame. It's very human and very much like how we all would have likely asked.
  - If you had been here... - I want to highlight that **Jesus is challenged with this statement 3x's.** Once by Martha, once by Mary, and once by onlookers. Although it seems they are all putting some sort of blame for Him not being there, it does betray their faith and Jesus' reputation. **Why would they assume His presence would have made a difference?** Because they BELIEVED that He could do miracles. They believed that it was a natural extension of Him. It also assumed his reputation that He healed people out of love. **Even if he COULD, why would they assume that He WOULD? Because that's the kind of guy they knew Him to be.** He seemed to care about the suffering of the people around Him. He wasn't callous. He wasn't irritated. He wasn't jaded. **He responded to pain. How beautiful is that?**
- But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you. – And here's the kicker. **You want to talk about faith? Martha is about to blow everyone away in comparison with her faith.** Listen to her conversation with Jesus closely. Right after venting her frustration and disappointment **she shifts into another mode a mode of stunning faith.** The first thing is: Even now in the face of death, with impossible circumstances, I believe that you are who you say you are and can do the impossible. I believe in my core that nothing is done until you say it's done. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God the Father and you

are connected to such a degree that He responds to you. If you say the word you can shift this whole situation around." Compare that to the response of the disciples and apostles. They were bold and courageous, but they hadn't been talking about His ability to do the impossible at this point. They even questioned His ability to remain safe.

- A Glorious Proclamation

- Jesus talks resurrection with Martha

- John 11:23-27 – *"Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup> She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."*

- Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." – Jesus encourages Martha by responding to her faith-filled statement by saying, 'Your brother will rise again.' 'Your brother will live again. He won't stay dead.' It initially sounds like something a comforter and consoler would say to her talking about a hope of paradise/heaven. But Jesus means something else. **Unfortunately to Martha it sounds like a pre-written Hallmark card that didn't carry too much emotional weight.**

- Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." – Here comes Martha's second bomb. She says confidently, **'I KNOW...that resurrection is real and that when all things are said and done by our Great God, He will rise again to the presence of the Lord.'** What's so amazing about this is that the Jews at this time didn't have a very robust understanding of heaven. They were still under the impression that they would die and go into a shadowy existence in the grave (Sheol) that was separated between the good (paradise) side and the bad (Hades) side. They knew good guys were cared for but there was no understanding of how God's presence works and eternal destiny. So, **where in the world did she get this information about resurrection to life and the 'last day?'** Probably from Jesus. He would be the only one talking about that and helping people understand the mysterious Old Testament prophecies about stuff like this that no one fully understood. In other words, she was listening to Jesus and taking it as fact. She was confident in His ability to save and the heart of God to rescue His people. **She was all in!**

- Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. – **Jesus uses this opportunity to talk to her about an even deeper truth (building upon her faith with greater revelation). He says, 'I AM'.** (I know I'm not supposed to make too much of a passage and hear it say something beyond what it says, but a lot of scholars believe this to be an I AM statement on

purpose. I AM statements speak to Jesus' identity as the great I AM and a connection to Yahweh (Moses' burning bush reference). But instead of stopping there He reveals why being I AM matters, and says, "I am the resurrection and the life. I am the source of raising to life. I am the one who had control over death and life. I determine who lives and who dies. I am the King of this world and reality.' But he's not done...

- Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, - He goes on to say, *whoever has faith in me (believes and lives as if it's fact) as their savior and King, even though they physically die in this world, will ultimately live.*
- and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. – And *everyone who abides (lives in ME) and lives in that continual trust of me as the Messiah, will NEVER truly die. Earthly death is merely a portal for My people. It's a transference from here to there.*
- Do you believe this?" – *Jesus JUST revealed this to Martha.* It was like he downloaded an advanced theology book to her about His nature. *She had like one second to process it, but notice that her heart was already there.* No matter what He was about to say she was going to affirm. Her heart couldn't have more faith.
- She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world – And this bomb drops.<sup>3</sup> She says IMMEDIATELY, Yes Lord. If we could only memorize those two words, 'yes, Lord.' It means whatever you say Lord. I agree with you master. You are the boss of me and your words will be obeyed regardless of cost. And she restates the theology statement: 'I believe deeply that you are the Messiah, the One you say you are and the One we have been waiting for. You are the Son of God, connected to the Father who has come from heaven down into our world to save us. You are God incarnate. You are everything we need and everything we desire. Yes, I believe you 100%.' Can you imagine *faith like this in the moment of desperation about her brother? She didn't let her circumstance dictate her theology. Do we?*
- Tears of Heaven
  - Jesus talks with Mary and weeps at the tomb
    - *John 11:28-37 – "When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." <sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup> Now when Mary came to where Jesus*

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<sup>3</sup> "Martha understands this, and answers accordingly: "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world" (v. 27, italics added). Both the emphatic pronouns and the perfect tense of the verb "believe" recall the confession of Peter on behalf of the Twelve (6:69), implying a settled conviction. Moreover, the content of the two confessions ("the Holy One of God" in the first instance, and "the Christ, the Son of God" here) can probably be assumed to be more or less equivalent." NICNT

*was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" <sup>37</sup> But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"*

- When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." – Martha heads back home and tells Mary that Jesus wants to see her. She has to say it privately since **a negative to communal mourning is looky-loos** and gossipers. Everyone is in everyone else's business. If something important was going on they would want to be a part just out of curiosity. So Martha is quiet about it to minimize unnecessary drama.
- And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. – Notice the response in Mary who loved Jesus so much. She rose quickly and immediately went. She was enamored by Jesus in all the right ways and rightfully so. He was her hero and close friend. He was the ultimate soother. She wanted to see Him immediately.
- Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. – For whatever reason, maybe talking with others, Jesus hadn't gone to the house or the tomb. He was still outside where Martha had met Him waiting. Mary comes out to Him.
- When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. – Sure enough the looky-loos saw that Mary was going somewhere with intentionality so they went along with her. **They thought maybe they were on, when it came to their job of mourning.** Their role was to help her process and mourn and it seemed like it was game time again (mourning was a process not a one time occurrence).
- Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, - **Mary knows Jesus in a beautiful way. She knows who He is theoretically but also knows who He is personally. Notice the posture:** she fell down at his feet in humility and dependence. She isn't in a blame place. She is in a loss state.
- saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." – Again Jesus hears the perspective of how He should have been there and fixed it before it went this far. Although Mary didn't seem to have blame **she certainly had disappointment and sadness that Jesus wasn't there.** They even sent Him a notice to come, and He took His time. She didn't understand but now all those questions were overshadowed by her sorrow.

- What should we pray for? – In their limited perspective Mary and Martha could only imagine one thing that would make things right again: Healing. They could only see healing of Lazarus, their precious brother, as what could fix the pain they were experiencing. They even suggested to Jesus what the solution should have been if He had been listening. And isn't this the same tone of our prayers today? We tell God what the solution should be. We advise Him from our perspective and leave little room for God to come up with a better solution. Maybe our prayers should be more in line with Martha's who said, 'I'm super sad and disappointed, but nothing is over until you say it's over, so I trust you even now.' Maybe our prayers should be bigger and bolder.
- 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.<sup>4</sup> – This is a fascinating passage to me. The way that it naturally reads is: Jesus

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<sup>4</sup> "Jesus' reaction is surprising, for "as soon as he saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying," he "got angry"<sup>47</sup> in the spirit and shook himself" (v. 33). The language of the verse raises all kinds of questions. We have just learned that Mary fell at Jesus' feet, but we have not been told up to now that she was "crying" (Martha had not cried as far as we know), nor is it at all clear why her crying and that of "the Jews" would have made Jesus "angry"—to the point that he "shook" with anger. Two verses later we will learn that Jesus himself "wept," and that this was viewed as a sign of his great love for Lazarus (vv. 35–36). Why then should the "crying" over Lazarus have made him angry? Most English translations simply dodge the problem by concealing the reference to anger. Jesus was not angry, they imply, just "deeply moved in spirit and troubled" (RSV, NIV, TNIV), or "deeply disturbed in spirit and deeply moved" (NRSV).<sup>51</sup> But most commentators acknowledge that Jesus is indeed said to have been "angry," both here and in verse 38. The meaning of the verb is scarcely open to question.<sup>53</sup> The mistake of many translators is to ask prematurely the question, "Why would Jesus be angry?" instead of, "What does the verb actually mean?" Still, once the meaning is established, the question, "Why was Jesus angry?" will not go away, and the answers are varied. To some, he was angry at the hypocrisy of "the Jews," or their unbelief—and possibly Mary's unbelief as well. Why were they "crying"? Did they not understand what he was about to do? To still others, he was angry in the face of death, viewed as evidence of the presence of Satan and Satan's dominion, perhaps in anticipation of his own impending encounter with death in the garden of Gethsemane.<sup>55</sup> None of these answers is entirely satisfactory. Nothing in the text suggests that the crying of "the Jews" (much less of Mary) was in any way hypocritical. Nor are "the Jews" as a group guilty of unbelief, for after the miracle we learn that "many" of them "believed" in Jesus (even though some did not, vv. 45–46). As for the personification of death or the presence of Satan, it is not yet an issue in the Gospel—if it ever is. No sooner do we hear of "the ruler of this world" than we learn that he has been "thrown out" (12:31; see also 14:30; 16:11). Satan will carry out his futile work through Judas Iscariot (13:2), but he has not yet entered Judas (see 13:27), and in any case we have no evidence that Judas is even present until his cameo appearance in the next chapter (12:4). Yet without question Jesus' anger is provoked by the sight of Mary "crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying" (v. 33a). Mary, as we have seen, "fell at his feet" (v. 32), and the picture of her "crying" there vaguely recalls a scene in Luke in which a woman "stood behind him at his feet crying, and began to wipe his feet with the tears" (Lk 7:38). Within John's Gospel, it anticipates—for a second time (see 11:2)—the scene a chapter later in which Mary "anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair" (12:3). It is a tender and emotional moment, even though Mary merely repeats what Martha had said earlier. Her comment, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (v. 32b), should have introduced an exchange between her and Jesus, as it had done earlier between Jesus and Martha, but it does not. The presence of these "Jews" (see vv. 19, 31) comes as an intrusion, an invasion of privacy ending the encounter, and this could be the reason for Jesus' anger. The Gospel writer may have provided a clue earlier, in the notice that when Martha first summoned Mary, she spoke to her "privately"<sup>58</sup> (v. 28), out of earshot of these "Jews." Jesus' opportunity to do the same is now spoiled by their presence. We can only guess what he might have said to her. Would it have been simply a replay of verses 23–27, or something quite different? Instead, the miracle story runs its course, and Mary disappears (for the time being) from the narrative. The notion that privacy was the issue has not been explored in the commentaries, but there are hints outside of John's Gospel that this might be the case. For example, the only two occurrences in the synoptic Gospels of the verb "to be angry" occur in connection with the so-called "secrecy phenomena": after Jesus cleansed the leper in Mark, he "sternly warned him" and sent him away, saying, 'See that you say nothing to anyone' " (Mk 1:43–44), and when he opened the eyes of two blind men in Matthew, he "sternly warned them, 'See that you let know no one know' " (Mt 9:30, italics added). Both of these orders were disobeyed (Mk 1:45; Mt 9:31), but along with other data (particularly in Mark) they testify to Jesus' characteristic desire for privacy in his so-called "public" ministry. This desire is not confined to texts involving the so-called "messianic secret." Jesus seems to have valued his privacy in a variety of situations and probably for a variety of reasons.<sup>62</sup> In the one Markan narrative in which Jesus raises someone from the dead (the raising of Jairus's daughter, Mk 5:35–43), Jesus first separated himself from the "large crowd" hemming him in (see 5:24, 31), and "allowed no one to follow along with him except Peter and James and John" (5:37). Then, outside Jairus's house, "he saw a commotion, and much crying and wailing" (v. 38). "Why the commotion and crying?" he asked, "The child is not dead, but sleeps" (v. 39). Finally, when "they laughed at him" for this, Jesus "put them all outside," taking with him only "the child's father and mother, and those who were with him [that is, Peter, James and John], and went in where the child was" (v. 40). Then the miracle followed, in relative privacy (vv. 41–43). Jesus seems to have wished for just such intimacy here—with a family he knew far better—and because it was not to be, he "got angry in the spirit and shook himself." NICNT Commentary

saw Mary's broken heart, He looked around and saw the deep sorrow of the community, and it really affected Him. He started to be 'greatly troubled'. Eventually we see that He will weep over it and along with them. But as much as we believe in Jesus' humanity (along with deity) it seems so strange that Jesus was this moved to tears when He knew that he intended to raise Lazarus from the dead in about five minutes from then. This has always bothered me. On one hand I feel like we can go down the road of Jesus always accommodating Himself to be in our little limited perspective world to cry with us in kindness (because from God's big picture perspective there is little to cry or be concerned about). On the other hand there are some scholars who talk about **Jesus being frustrated and angry about all of it**, which I don't know what to do with. They are clear that the term means that Jesus was very angry. I'm not a Greek scholar and can't read the nuance of the comments John is using. But what **I don't want to do is preach something about this passage that isn't true**. I don't want to set a theological truth on the table that doesn't belong. And I am admittedly confused by this part of the story. The NICNT commentary suggests that Jesus was mad at the weeping group invading the private space of the family, but I'm not sure I see value in that.

- And he said, "Where have you laid him?" – Jesus has a job to do and is going to do it despite anything going on around Him. He wants to know where the tomb of His friend is. Shouldn't Jesus know all things since He earlier commented that he knew mysteriously that Lazarus had died when no one told Him? It seems that the Father only downloaded necessary items to Jesus and the rest was left to human limitation.
- They said to him, "Lord, come and see." – they took him to the specific tomb of Lazarus.
- Jesus wept<sup>5</sup> – And here we are again with **the mysterious reaction. A moment ago Jesus was angry when people cried and now He's crying**. What is happening? This is the 'shortest verse in the Bible' and one that

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<sup>5</sup> "That the presence of the Jewish mourners is the reason for Jesus' anger is evident from what happens next. Instead of going immediately to the tomb, "Jesus wept" (v. 35). The word "wept," found only here in the New Testament, is distinct from the "crying" of Mary and "the Jews" (v. 33), and is aorist rather than present. Jesus did not join in their continual "crying" but simply "shed tears" of his own. The response to Jesus' tears comes not from Mary or Martha, but from "the Jews," underscoring the intrusive nature of their presence and again spoiling the intimacy of the moment. Worse, they are divided among themselves, anticipating a more serious split after the miracle is over (see vv. 45–46). Their first reaction was "See how he loved him" (v. 36), confirming what the sisters had said (v. 3) and what the narrator has already told the readers (v. 5). But then "some of them" added a sour note: "Could not this man who opened the eyes of the blind man have made it so that this man would not die?" (v. 37). The comment recalls that of Martha (v. 21), and Mary (v. 32), but with a note of skepticism not present before, as if calling into question the thought that Jesus loved Lazarus. If he had the power to prevent his friend's death, what he must have lacked was the willingness to do so. At the same time, the comment links these "Jews" from Jerusalem to those in the preceding chapter who knew about the healing of the man born blind, and were finally driven to acknowledge that Jesus had performed that miracle (see 10:21). Despite the acknowledgment, and despite their sympathy for Mary and Martha, they are now reverting to character." NICNT Commentary

every child gets to memorize to say that they memorized a verse, but it's fascinating that **no one knows why He was crying. It's actually a mystery verse.** We know that other people were confused too and guessed.

- So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" – some of the people around Jesus saw Him crying and they saw it as a sign of compassion and love for His friend Lazarus being dead. That seems to suggest that **Jesus looked sad in His crying and not angry. But again we are faced with the reason for Him crying when in a minute or so from now He's going to have that same guy get out of the tomb and they can go hang out again.**
  - But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying? – Others around there **added some doubt** about the nature of Jesus in their guesses. Although they don't disagree that He seems sad about Lazarus' death, they bring **doubt on His actual concern over His friend since He didn't use His miracle power to heal him and let him die.** Since Jesus had demonstrated the ability to heal, the question turned to motive to heal. And they shed doubt on Jesus' nature.
- A Shocking Discovery
    - Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead
      - John 11:38-44 – *"Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." <sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." <sup>43</sup> When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." <sup>44</sup> The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."*
      - Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb<sup>6</sup> – As if we could just move on from the mystery and frustration, here it is again. We see the word, **'deeply angry' used of Jesus after He finishes crying. He was angry, then started crying and now He's back to being angry again. His emotions seem to be all over the place. What do we do with this?** All the guesses about why He's mad (intrusion of privacy, the result of sin killing good people, the possible mixed motives of the Jewish observers, etc.) are all

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<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the second mention of Jesus' anger comes as no surprise: "So Jesus, again angry within himself, comes to<sup>69</sup> the tomb" (v. 38a). "Within himself" corresponds to "in the spirit" in the previous instance (v. 33). "Again" is more like "still," for Jesus' anger (v. 33) is not likely to have subsided even in his grief. The cause of his anger is much the same as before—probably the intrusive responses of third parties (vv. 36–37), preempting any reaction from his loved ones." NICNT Commentary

simply that...guesses. No one knows. But John recorded this for a reason and we are supposed to understand it. Unfortunately I don't. I wish I did. My best guess is that Jesus was frustrated by resistance – whether human or spiritual - and yet at the same time understood the hurting hearts and joined with them despite knowing He was going to fix it). I do think that verses 45-57 give an indicator of His anger (this shifting His ministry openness even more), but I can't quite put my finger on it. It doesn't seem sufficient for Jesus to get this mad at how people were going to tell on him and rise up more resistance. That was going to happen anyway. But maybe it ticked Him off.

- It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. – Ironically Lazarus' tomb was seemingly identical to the tomb that Jesus was going to be laid in. It's a rock tomb that creates a cave (hewn into the rock face) and it was fancy enough to have a **locking door mechanism** so that people could visit and come and go. Usually a locking door meant that it was a family tomb where multiple bodies would be laid.
- Jesus said, "Take away the stone." – Jesus instructed those standing around to open the door and roll back the stone. It would have taken a couple of guys to do it because it was heavy for security reasons.
- Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor,<sup>7</sup> for he has been dead four days." – **Martha the ever-practical one thinking through logistics**, reminds Jesus of the immediate problem of decay and odor. He's been dead for four days and that's going to mean that it's going to be rancid. Did Jesus really want to release that smell and was He thinking of going down inside the tomb? He maybe should wait for the decay process to calm down before going in. She seems to be concerned for His well-being but also the honor of her brother.

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<sup>7</sup> "It stinks" implies that there had been no embalming of the body, and although there are hints of embalming (v. 44), there is no mention of spices, or anything remotely comparable to the enormous quantity of myrrh and aloes used to embalm the body of Jesus (see 19:39–40). The purpose of Martha's blunt objection is to not to single her out for lack of faith, but to allow her to give voice to what everyone on the scene except Jesus must have been thinking, and to elicit from Jesus for the reader's benefit his starkly contrasting response (v. 40)." NICNT Commentary

- What's with the 'four days' references?<sup>8</sup> – this is the second time that we have been notified of the time that Lazarus had been in the tomb: Four days. What's with that? Does it mean something? There are guesses because John meant something by it. Many scholars highlight that it was a Jewish belief that the soul hung round the body for 3 days but when it saw decay happening it moved on. This is not a fact, only a superstition. So does that play here? I believe it does but not because Jesus was working with that reality, only that others believed it. To me it was a demonstration to everyone watching that Lazarus was dead-dead. Of course he had already been dead, but some people would say upon resurrection at an earlier time that maybe Jesus did a lesser miracle by calling the soul back into the body. I think it was about working with common understanding to demonstrate a spiritual truth.
- Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" – Jesus reiterates their earlier conversation about belief/trust and glorification. Although He wouldn't have assumed that she knew He meant literal physical resurrection in the moment, He does return her mind into something bigger going on and to trust Him.
- So they took away the stone. – they did as ordered and rolled back the rock into it's upper locking position to allow entrance.
- And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. – Jesus begins to pray to the Father. The first thing is thanks that there is a continual connection between them. Notice that He 'lifted His eyes' as in looking up. It's funny that modern American Christians tend to be taught to bow our heads and close our eyes when we pray but the Jews stood, raised their heads and looked up to acknowledge that heaven is 'up/out' and God is higher and apart.
- I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." – I love this phrase because what Jesus is saying is, 'Father, we talk all the time and it's weird to talk to you out loud as if we weren't just talking but people are listening, and I have to include them into the conversation.' It's how I

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<sup>8</sup> "Why the mention of "four days," not once but twice? Commentators often cite a Jewish tradition that "For three days [after death] the soul hovers over the body, intending to reenter it, but as soon as it sees its appearance change, it departs." The tradition is late, and not widely attested, but in the earlier oral law, if a body was to be identified, it had to be done within three days of death, on the theory that otherwise the changes produced by decay would preclude certainty.<sup>6</sup> It is doubtful that such traditions shed much light on the present passage, or would even have been familiar to readers of John's Gospel. If the intent of the reference was to certify that Lazarus was truly dead, the detail of "four days" seems both confusing and unnecessary. Confusing because a Christian reader might be prompted to ask, "Was Jesus *not* truly dead because he was raised within three days?" And unnecessary because the reality of Lazarus's death is nowhere an issue within the story. Not only has Jesus pronounced him dead, and that "plainly" (v. 14), but he is, after all, "already in the tomb," a detail well beyond what is told either in Mark's story of Jairus's daughter (Mk 5:21–43) or Luke's account of the raising of the widow's son at Nain (Lk 7:11–17). One may assume that he would have been just as dead after two days, or one, as after four." NICNT Commentary

feel every time I pray aloud and lead in prayer in a group. I feel odd talking partly to God and partly to the people around me to include them. But this was, again, a teaching moment. Jesus could demonstrate how close He and the Father are by highlighting it **BEFORE the resurrection of Lazarus as proof**. This became an evidence of Him being the Messiah moment.

- When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." – Jesus shouted to the tomb: "Lazarus come out here!" **It's a command. The old joke** is that Jesus specified which dead guy was supposed to get up (Lazarus) so that others didn't accidentally come out too. Notice that the dead responded to the Lord of the living. **There was no resistance 'I'm tired. I'm staying here...'**
- The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. – Lazarus comes out looking like **a mummy** and restricted but **when Jesus makes someone alive, He makes sure that the rest of the wrappings need to go too**. This is an obvious allusion to how **we are saved and yet we still need help getting rid of the junk from our past life in the world**. I think it's beautiful that community is **highlighted to help**.
- Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go. – **And Jesus' command is to the community for their part in this miracle. HELP Him be free everyone**. Don't leave him bound.

### Conclusion

- Do you want to rise again?
- If you've been raised, do you want to be freer?