

Giving Up On Lent – Week 2
03.08.2020
Healing - Lazarus
Dr. Craig Finnestad

This morning I'm going to tell you the story of a man named Lazarus.

He lived in Bethany.

[Insert map](#)

- It is basically a suburb of Jerusalem.
- A bedroom community.
- The housing is more affordable.
- The way of life is more simple.
- Less wars in Bethany than Jerusalem too.
- And the big city is just a miles away.

His name in Hebrew means, God is my help. Not many people had the name before him and there haven't been many since.

He probably had a number of siblings. We know two of them: Martha and Mary.

The same Mary who took some Chanel #5 poured it on Jesus' feet and then massaged them with her hair.

The same Martha who got upset because she cleaned the house and prepared a feast of lamb and couscous for Jesus while Mary was just sitting around gabbing with Jesus.

Lazarus was a buddy of Jesus too. The narrator doesn't give a lot of details, but you get the sense that Lazarus clung to Jesus when Jesus was around.

John doesn't try to hide that fact that these were Jesus' best friends.

- Jesus would drop in on them whenever he was in the neighborhood.
- When he made his entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, it was from Bethany that he took off.
- It was also to Bethany that he went back to take it easy for a few days before his final arrest.

One day Lazarus got sick. We don't know the disease. John is not much of a detail person and by the end of the story it doesn't matter anyway.

Martha and Mary are a bit concerned. They sent a message to Jesus: **Lord, your dear friend is very sick. -John 11:3**

It's interesting. They didn't ask Jesus to pay a visit. They didn't have to. They knew he would show up. That is what friends do. They drop things and take care of each other.

How the messenger tracked down Jesus we don't know. GPS tracking systems weren't invented until a few years later. But they found Jesus.

Jesus didn't seem overly concerned. Lazarus was young and healthy. And Jesus was kind of busy trying to save the world. **Although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, he stayed where he was for the next two days. -John 11:5-6**

Then after 48 hours, Jesus knew something had happened to Lazarus and that he needed to get to Bethany. **He told the disciples: Let's go back to Judea. -John 11:7**

They weren't too keen on the idea. They were just with Jesus in that neck of the woods and bunch of the Jewish thugs started throwing rocks at them and tried to take them all out of commission. Or at least scare them enough to leave and not return.

Jesus started talking in a way that didn't make any sense to the disciples.

There are twelve hours of daylight every day. During the day people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. But at night there is danger of stumbling because they have no light. Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up. -John 11:9-11

They didn't have a clue what Jesus was talking about. They let Jesus know that Lazarus will feel better when he wakes up from his nap and that they need to visit Bethany about as bad as they need a hole in their canteen.

You see, the disease took a turn.

- Breathing became labored for Lazarus.
- He struggled to stay awake.
- His jaw tightened up.
- The eyes became yellow.

Jesus told the objecting disciples: **Lazarus is dead. And for your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there, for now you will really believe. Come, let's go see him. -John 11:14-15**

The disciples thought they were going to Bethany to die. Thomas said to the other eleven: **Let's go, too—and die with Jesus. –John 11:16** Little did they know they were going to see quite the opposite.

Jesus finally got to Bethany. The first thing they told him was **that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. –John 11:17** This was nothing new to Jesus, but the messengers didn't know that.

A visitation was going on. The death was unexpected. Mary and Martha were at the beginning of their grief. It's a tough spot. Some of you have been there before.

Many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss. –John 11:19

Martha heard Jesus was in town. She hustled to go meet him. Mary stayed back. Don't know why. Maybe she felt she had to stay with the guests. Maybe seeing Jesus would have been too big of a trigger for her and she wasn't quite emotionally ready.

Martha said to Jesus, **Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. –John 11:22**

Then Jesus starts talking in riddles to Martha. He told her that her **brother will rise again. –John 11:23**

Martha agreed. She knew the drill. Yeah, you are right Jesus. **He will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day. –John 11:24**

Then Jesus told Martha one of the great truths of our faith: **I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. –John 11:25-26**

You can take a photo of that one and put it on your refrigerator. Or your mirror. Or as the screensaver on your cell phone.

Then he asked Martha: **Do you believe this? –John 11:26**

Confession has two meanings in the Bible. One confession is admitting guilt. Confessing your sins. It makes you feel better. Coming clean with God and others.

The other confession is a statement of belief.

- We don't find many confessions of belief in the Gospels.
- But when we do amazing things happen.

Peter made a confession:

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. –Matthew 16:16

Peter's confession led to God's power. Jesus told Peter after his confession:

Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. –Matthew 16:17-18

The confession Martha speaks is also statement of belief.

I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God. –John 11:27

In the Gospels and in life, great things happen after a confession. Great things were about to happen.

Mary got word that Jesus wanted to see her. She left her guests and rushed to see Jesus.

The guests—they assumed she was going to Lazarus's grave to weep. So they followed her there. –John 11:31

An out of breath Mary finally got to Jesus.

She didn't say "Hello".

No "How's it going?"

Not even a "Good to see you."

She looked at Jesus and said: Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. –John 11:32

Most of us would probably throw up our hands in frustration and tell people this death wasn't our fault.

- But not Jesus.
- He saw their pain.
- The people being comforted was more important than Jesus being right.
- Mary and Martha were distraught.
- Their friends were heartbroken.
- He was filled with pain of his own and carried the sadness of the people he loved.

- Jesus remembered the laughs and the smiles.
- Jesus recalled the stories and the memories.
- Jesus saw the promising future vanish right before his eyes.

- Those eyes. The loving eyes of Jesus.

- They were filled with tears.

John gives a glimpse into the character of God:

Then Jesus wept. –John 11:35

Jesus wept painting

His heart was broken.

His was full of compassion.

When the people he loves hurts—He hurts.

- John has given us glimpses of Jesus' divinity.
- It is here John gives us insight into Jesus' humanity.

Today's reader learns about God's compassion from these three short words: Then Jesus wept. Those who were there saw it too:

The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much he loved him!" –John 11:36

Then for the third time in the afternoon, Jesus took some heat for being absent. One of the people in the crowd said, This man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying? -John 11:37

Jesus didn't need to respond directly. He had something else up his sleeve.

- He arrived at the tomb.
- He could have done the work himself. He is a servant and would usually do such things.
- But he asked somebody else to it.
- Roll the stone aside. –John 11:39
- Martha wasn't too keen on the idea. Can't blame her.
- Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible. –John 11:39

After some convincing, they rolled the stone away from the entrance to the tomb.

The Jesus prayed.

This is how VanGogh saw it.

Insert VanGogh painting

Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me." -John 11:41-42

It was a prayer of faith.

It was a prayer of boldness.

It was a prayer of humility.

Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" -John 11:43

Martha had confessed Jesus was God.

Jesus had prayed on her behalf.

Then the amazing happened.

- Jesus had turned water into wine.
- Jesus turned a sinner into a saint.
- And now Jesus raised a man from the dead.

Lazarus got up.

I don't know if he felt like a

- Hungover man who was woken up by the brightness of the midday sun or a
- Person emerging from a coma or a
- Man waking up from a deep afternoon nap.

But Lazarus limped out of the tomb and all the people who witnessed it will never forget that God can do anything and anything means everything.