

That You May Believe in the Resurrection and Life

John 11

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, September 2, 2018

Well, before we get started in our sermon time this morning, I just want to mention a few things going on in the life of our church. Kory already alluded to a couple of these, but one of them is that we have Family Camp coming up. So, here in a couple of weeks on September 14th through the 16th, we'll be heading to Dogwood Valley Camp in Hope for our annual Family Camp. There's a lot that's going to be going on. We've had some interest in some more baptisms after last week, so we'll have some baptisms as part of that service. So, if you're interested in being baptized, see us for that.

Also, Carl Hargrove from Grace Advance will be joining us. Some of you remember this because you were here when our church first started, but Carl was very instrumental in the beginning of Grace Fellowship Church. He was one of the first people to visit us from Los Angeles. And he was so impressed with what he saw here that he told me (this is one of the reasons I came here by the way) ... he told me that if he wasn't happy with his current job, he would have candidated for this one. And I said, "Boy, that's a great endorsement for this church." And I told him I'm glad he didn't do that because I really like you guys a lot. You guys would have taken him and I never would have come here. So, it's always a joy to have him come, such a blessing.

He'll be preaching on the subject of prayer and evangelism. So, we talked about evangelism last week and how it's one of the key features of our church, but prayer is as well. And Carl will be preaching on both topics there. I don't think any of us would say we are where we need to be in our prayer lives, amen? What anybody say ... you know, we all need to grow in that. And so, Carl's going to come and talk about that. His wife, Joanna, will be joining him. They're going to do a Q&A time together on Saturday morning and a devotion time for the ladies Saturday afternoon. But the schedule's in your bulletin. If you can't make it to everything at the camp, please try to make it to one of those events. It's open for anyone to come to.

Also, in relation to that, if you noticed in your email this week, on Saturday afternoon at Family Camp, we're going to be having a special meeting with all the children's workers to talk about the new child protection policy we're installing as a church.

A little background about that, when I was at the Grace Advance Academy last summer, they told us in a church plant, you can mess up with some things, but you can't mess up with your kids. Kids have to be safe. They have to be protected. And one of the ways we're going to protect our children here is a new policy we're putting in place. It's very extensive, it's very thorough because we tried to cover this from every angle. And we're going to introduce it Saturday afternoon at 3:30 at Family Camp. If you can't make it to that meeting, there'll be one the following Sunday on September 23rd after the morning service. But if you're working with the kids in any capacity, Sunday school teacher, Sunday school helper, or a hall monitor, please be at one of those meetings.

One more announcement, our care and discipleship groups are starting up next week. So, that's an exciting time of home Bible studies we have for fellowship and encouragement. The leaders are also in your bulletins. Please get plugged into one of those.

With that said, this morning I want to begin our sermon time by inviting you to turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of John, if you're not already there. If you would turn with me to the Gospel of John. As you're doing that, if you're with us for the first time today, we're in the middle of a series on the Gospel of John, where we're looking at this book one chapter at a time.

I've told you before, there's several ways to do expository preaching. There's several ways to study the Bible. One is by verse by verse teaching. And you can go through the Bible one verse at a time and look at it that way. If you remember when I first came to GFC, that's what we did in the book of first Peter. And we started in first Peter chapter 1:1, and we didn't stop until we got to first Peter 5:14. We looked at every single verse under the microscope, because that's one way to study the Scriptures; verse by verse. You can also do it with a theme. You can study the Bible with a topic or a theme. And I don't mean a topic that's not in the Bible, I'm talking about one that's in the Bible like the church. Also, when I first came to the GFC, we did a series on the church, if you remember. And we looked at passages like Matthew 16, which says, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church," and we talked about what that means. Then we went to Ephesians 4 which says, "He gave some as apostles, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints," and we talked about what that means because that's another way to study the Bible with a topic or a theme.

That leads to what we're doing now in the Gospel of John. You can also study the Bible with a survey or an overview. You can study it by looking at large sections at a time. I don't think I have to tell you that the Bible is a big book, isn't it? And if you've read it from cover to cover, you'll know it takes quite a while to do that. I looked it up once and there are 31,000 verses in the Bible. And if you study them one at a time, it'll take 80 years to finish. Which means that if we started right now, we would finish in 2098. Now, I hate to tell you this, but I'm 37-years-old right now, I'm not going to make it to 2098. I don't think some of you are going to make it to 2098, right? So, sometimes, to compensate for that, you speed up a little bit. You cover large sections at a time, and that's what we're doing here in the Gospel of John. So, you can see the big picture of the book.

And the big picture of John is found at the very end of the book. I just want to read this to you. John 20:30-31 tells you the big picture of this book. And John writes, he says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name." John says, that's why he wrote. That's why he put this book in the Bible, so that you may believe. To help you believe, John writes about several events in the life of Christ.

And one of those that we're going to look at this morning is the raising of a dead man to life. It might be the most interesting miracle Jesus ever did. And it's found in John chapter 11. If you want to look over in John chapter 11, which Kory just read to us, that's our passage for today.

I've told you before that John likes to write by giving you a story, then an explanation. That's his style. That's the way he wrote things. And the story we'll get to in a moment, but if you want to look at John chapter 11:25-26, this is the explanation for the event. Verse 25, Jesus said to her, He said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" That's the point of this chapter. That's the idea here. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He's the One who raises the dead. Do you believe this? To get you thinking about that a little bit (because we don't think about death that much, I don't think in our culture), sociologists have determined that about 151,000 people die every day somewhere in the world; 151,000. Which comes to about 6,000 per hour and 100 per minute. Which means that every second on the globe, someone dies, someone dies, someone dies, someone dies. Pretty sobering to think about it, isn't it? I mean, by the time we finish our service today, more than 6,000 people will have died and entered the gates of eternity somewhere. They will have met their maker.

I also found that the average lifespan of a person is 67 years on the planet. And the countries where people live the longest are Japan, Spain and Switzerland. Sorry Canada, we didn't make it on the list. And the countries where people live the shortest are Chad, Zimbabwe and Swaziland. But at the end of the day, it doesn't really matter because no matter where you live, the result is the same. No matter how long your lifespan is, you will die. There is no way to stop it, there's no way to get away from that.

It was said that the French King Louis, the 14th ordered that the word "death" never be said in his presence, because he was terrified of it. But it didn't matter because the day came when he died. It was also said that the famous psychologist, Sigmund Freud, when he was dying, he kind of went insane and he kept saying, "*Das ist absurd! Das ist absurd!*" Which means "this is absurd" because he couldn't figure out what was happening to him. His psychology had no explanation for death, but it didn't matter because he died anyway. I mean, whether you understand it or not, it doesn't really matter. Whether you like it or not, it doesn't change the end result that death comes to all men. Benjamin Franklin said, "In this world, nothing is certain but death and taxes."

I need to point out that this is why Jesus came. This is the good news we have. This is the message of the Gospel of John. Jesus came to deliver you from death. In the words of John chapter 11, He came to be the resurrection and the life. We all have a disease called immortality, Jesus came to do something about it. You know, I don't know if you've been to a funeral lately, but the one thing you feel at a funeral is helpless, right? You feel powerless, because your loved one is gone. Their life has passed them by and you can't do anything about that. Jesus can. That's the idea here. He can bring you back from the dead.

We have several doctors in our congregation. I was just sharing with someone that our congregation is kind of like half contractors and half doctors. And the idea is that the contractors get them banged up and send them to the doctors. I think we got something going on here with that. And I've talked to several of our doctors who have told me that from time to time, they have to pronounce someone dead. They have to verify they're no longer with us. You can't stop that either, can you?

We found a cure for a lot of things, but we haven't found a cure for death. It doesn't exist, but Jesus has. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." That passage says that Jesus found a cure for death. He found a way to defeat it by paying the wages of it on our behalf, and giving us eternal life.

Second Timothy 1:10 says, that Jesus "abolished death and brought us life and immortality through the gospel." The word "abolish" there, it means He did away with it. He obliterated it completely. He closed the institution of death, because thanks to Jesus, a day is coming when we won't have to die anymore. Thanks to Jesus, a time is coming when death will be over, if we trust in Him. Romans 5:14 says if death reigned through Adam, how much more will life reign through Christ? First Corinthians 15:55 says that as a result of this, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" I love that passage because they say a bee can only sting you once, so can death.

That leads to our passage for this morning. Because that's what this passage is all about. Jesus raising a man from the dead. You know, a young lady was once sick and dying in the hospital (I want to tell you this), and a nurse said, "It's such a pity that her best days are behind her." And her mom said, "No, no, no, no. She's a Christian, which means her best days are yet to come." That's why Jesus came. He came to make sure your best days are yet to come. He came to bring you into heaven and defeat death on your behalf. And in this passage, it tells us how Jesus did that.

Just to give you some background for this, John chapter 11 is the last public miracle that Jesus ever did. It was the last time He performed a sign in Israel before His own resurrection. In fact, the next really public miracle He does, will be His resurrection. He did another miracle the night He was arrested by healing the high servant's ear that Peter cut off. Remember that story? But that was done in private. This is the last public one.

The Gospel of John is not balanced out chronologically. And what I mean is the first 10 or 11 chapters cover the first two years or more of His ministry. The last 10 chapters, starting in chapters 11 and 12, cover the last week or so. And so, this is the last thing He will do publicly, the last miracle He will do before He rises from the grave.

To give you a timeline for it, chapter 10:22 says that, "At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem." The Feast of Dedication is another term for *Hanukkah* - celebrated every year around Christmas. So, chapter 10 occurs around Christmas time. Chapter 12:1 mentions the Passover Feast, which was held every year around Easter. So, sometime between Christmas and Easter, sometime between those two events, those two feasts, this miracle takes place.

It might be important to remember there were other times when Jesus raised someone from the dead. This was not the only one. So, for instance, in Mark chapter 5, Jesus raises Jairus's daughter from the grave. She was the daughter of a synagogue official. Very interesting that Jesus would do a miracle like that for a synagogue official. And in Luke chapter 7, He raises a widow's son. He actually shows up at the funeral, sees what's taking place, He goes to the dead body and raises the young man to life.

But the thing about those two resurrections is that they happened immediately. What I mean, in both of those cases, He raised them up right away. They died, they were raised just like that. But in John chapter 11, it says, this man had been dead for four days. We'll read about that in just a moment. He had been dead and buried for the better part of a week when this happened.

The Jews buried their dead quickly because they lived in a desert and decay could set in fast. So, that if you died, you were buried the same day or the next day. They wouldn't wait. They didn't embalm like the Egyptians did. They didn't remove all the blood and bodily organs to preserve you. The Egyptians did that because they thought they needed this body in the afterlife. They did that and they covered their tombs with treasures, if you remember, because the Egyptians thought that's what you were taking to heaven. The Jews thought rightly so, that God was going to give you a new one. He was going to give you an upgrade, a resurrected body. So, they just wrapped the corpse with bandages and put spices around it, and that was it.

You could add to this that the Jews also had a tradition that said that a person's spirit hovered over their body for the first couple of days after death and then left. So, according to them, you weren't really, really dead until at least four days or so. You had to stay in the tomb for a little while to show you weren't coming back, which is why Jesus waited.

Let me mention one more thing that's kind of telling about this miracle. Jesus and the disciples knew the man who died. They were friends with him. They didn't know Jairus's daughter or the widow's son. There was no relationship there, but they knew this man. So, he's been dead four days, long enough for his spirit to leave, in Jewish tradition. By that time, his body is going to be an awful mess in the desert, and they knew him. That's the background of this miracle. That's what is taking place here.

What I want to do this morning is talk about this incredible miracle in several stages. So, if you're taking notes in John 11, with all that background behind it, I want to give you four stages to this miracle. Four stages to the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Verse 1 says that the man's name was Lazarus, which means "God is my helper". Kind of a neat name for this miracle. Because a few days after he dies, Jesus helps him by raising him from the dead.

By the way, I'm not going to get into this in the actual passage, but it's kind of interesting. Lazarus doesn't get a resurrected body here. Do you understand that? Which means he's going to have to die again. So, on one hand, it's kind of cool that he gets resurrected. On the other hand, he's probably thinking, "Oh man, I did it once ..." you know what I mean? "Leave me alone ..." you know? But it was a neat miracle all the same.

The point is He can do the same thing for us. He can resurrect us as well. How do you defeat death? This is how you do it; you trust in Jesus Christ. How do you come back to life? You trust in the One who is the resurrection and the life.

One author said, "Jesus did not come into the world to make bad people good, He came to make dead people live." That's right. John Stott said that we live and die because Christ lived and died. And we come back to life because He did. And right before He came back to life, Jesus raised Lazarus in four stages.

So, the first stage is this, is the purpose of the miracle. So, if you're taking those, Jesus begins by giving us the purpose of this miracle. He tells us why it happened. If you think about it, Jesus could have done any kind of miracle. He could have done anything he wanted to. He could have raised someone at any point in His ministry. He does it now. And the question is, why? Well, if you look in verses 1 through 4, He tells you why. It says,

1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. 3 So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, "Lord, behold he whom You love is sick." 4 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

Just a few comments on this, but the passage starts off with Lazarus becoming sick. It says, "Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany." We don't know much about Lazarus here other than his name. But it does tell us the town he was from.

Bethany was a little village on the road to Jerusalem. In fact, it was on the road that the Jews would pass by on their way to the Passover. So, if you were in Galilee in the north, you were going to Jerusalem in the south, you would pass by the village of Bethany. Which is why verse 19 later on says that a lot of Jews were at his funeral, because they would have been passing by his house on the way there. I've done some studies on this this week, and found out that the Arabs today call this village (the village is still there today), they call it the Village of Lazarus. So, in 2000 years of time, the most interesting thing that ever happened in this little place was this resurrection.

The passage says that Lazarus was sick. We don't know what he was sick from or how long he'd been sick, but in an age without modern medicine, sickness was a big deal. It could mean a lot of things. And so, his sisters, Mary and Martha sent word over to Jesus. Verse 2 says, "This was the Mary who anointed Jesus with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair." You read about that in chapter 12. So, if you want to learn about that, come back next week, we'll talk about that. But that was this Mary who did that. This was also the Mary and Martha who got into an argument because Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to His teaching, and Martha was doing all the housework. You remember that story? I'm sure none of you can relate to that event and the life of those two sisters. But that was this family.

Verse 3 also says that, "So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, 'Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.'" The word "love" here is very interesting because it's not the usual word for love, *agape* in the Bible. It's the word *phileo*, which means "friendly love" or "brotherly love". In other words, "Lord, the one You love like a brother is sick." Jesus loved Lazarus like a friend. It's interesting to think about Jesus, the Son of God was also a human being. Which means He had friendships. He had people He was close to, and we don't know a lot about the story here, but Lazarus was one of them. As a matter of fact, you're going to read next week in chapter 12, Jesus is getting ready to go to the cross. On the week before He dies, who does He have a meal with? Lazarus.

When it says that they sent word to Him, chapter 10:40 says that Jesus was beyond the Jordan in the place where John was first baptizing. That's a reference to the area around the Dead Sea, about 10 miles away from Bethany. So, it would have taken a day or so to get word to Him. And when He gets the word, Jesus tells the disciples in verse 4, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it." That's the purpose of the miracle. That's the whole point of this, is to bring glory to God. It will not end in death. Death would be involved. Lazarus would die here, but it wouldn't end there. It would end in the glory of God.

You know, it might help to mention that there's a lot of different reasons why people get sick in the Bible. A lot of different causes for that. We don't always know which one applies to our particular circumstance, but people will get sick because they're part of the fallen world, right? It's one very simple reason why people get sick. I think sometimes we're sick and we want to ask all these "why" questions in deep theology. Well, one plain reason why you get sick is because you live in a sick world, right? Go outside, somebody will cough on you. It's the natural order of things.

Another reason people get sick is because of the Lord's discipline. Hebrews 12 says, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord nor faint when you're reprov'd by Him, for those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines and He scourges every son whom He receives." Sickness can be part of that scourging process. It can be one of the ways the Lord disciplines us.

Another reason people get sick is because of the judgment of God. We're going to take the Lord's Supper here in a moment, but first Corinthians 11 talking about the Lord's Supper, says, "But let a man examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason, many among you are weak and sick."

So, you can get sick for all these different reasons. You don't always know which one it is. And here Jesus says, you can be sick for the glory of God. God can break you in sickness in order to mould you in glory or raise you in glory. He can bring you down in order to raise you up. Thomas Watson said, "Sometimes the only way God can make you look up, is by putting you flat on your back." That's what Jesus is saying here. This sickness was done for the glory of God.

We could look at it another way, Jesus is the one to turn to when this happens, when you're sick or dying, He's the one who can help you. The glory goes to Him. The credit goes to Him. I've counselled several people who were sick and dying, and I can assure you I've never read to them the words of Karl Marx and Frederick Nietzsche. I've never quoted to them a movie or a clip from a cartoon. I've never read to them a novel or something like that. I've quoted to them the words of Jesus. You give them the words of the Gospels because Jesus is the one who gets you through death. Jesus is the one who can help you through this kind of sickness.

Mary and Martha got that. They understood that. In fact, they'd probably seen Jesus heal people before. They might've even seen Him raise these other people from the dead. So when Lazarus gets sick, they sent word to the one person who could help them. And we need to do the same thing today. It was Charles Spurgeon who said, "I kissed the waves that slapped me against the

Rock of Ages.” You like that? I kiss anything that brings me closer to Christ, and that's what this miracle was done for - to bring these people closer to Christ.

You know, a man was once talking to a Brahmin priest and he asked him, he asked the priest, he said, “Could you say I'm the resurrection and the life?” And the priest said, “Yes, I could.” To which the man replied, “But could you prove it? Could you make anybody believe it?” And the man couldn't do that. You see, Jesus is going to prove that He's the resurrection and the life. He's going to get glory by this miracle.

Which leads to another stage of the miracle, and that is the setting of the miracle. We've talked about the purpose of the miracle, the purpose was to glorify God, to bring Him glory and honour and praise. Nothing can glorify God like a resurrection, and nothing can praise Him like that. But it leads to another stage of the miracle, and that is the setting of the miracle. You need to know the miracle was done in a setting of despair. I'll just go ahead and tell you that. It was done in a setting of unbelief. The disciples didn't believe Jesus could do a miracle here or it wasn't on their minds anyway. Maybe they believed that, but they weren't thinking about that. As matter of fact, they were thinking about something very different.

If you look in verses 5 through 8, it says,

5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when He heard that he was sick, He heard Lazarus was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was. 7 And then after this He said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.”

Judea is the province where Jerusalem was, the province where Bethany was. They were up North in Galilee. He said, “Let's go south to Judea.”

In verse 8, “The disciples said to Him, ‘Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are you going there again?’”

If you remember the background for this, the Jews had just tried to kill Jesus in Jerusalem. It's the last thing you read about in John chapter 10. He was there for the Feast of Booths in October, they tried to kill Him there. Then He came back for the Feast of Dedication, and they tried to kill Him there. It's not a very good track record for Jesus here. It's two stonings in three months. And somehow, He escaped it. Somehow, He got away, and now the disciples are saying, “Do you want to go back there again? Do you have a death wish?” Right? “Jesus, do you want to die?” Bethany was two miles from Jerusalem. There's no way He could have gone there without the Jews knowing about it. “The Jews” means the leaders of the Jews, the Pharisees.

They said, “What are you doing Jesus?” And in response to this, Jesus gives them a proverb in verses 9 through 10 to say, “You can't lengthen the days of your life. You can't lengthen the daytime, it's all been determined by God. It's all under His sovereignty.” And then He says that, “Lazarus is asleep, and I'm going to wake him up. I'm going to raise him from the dead.” And look at Thomas's response in verse 16.

Therefore, Thomas, who is called Didymus ... You guys remember this guy has a nickname, right? What's his nickname? Doubting Thomas. He's the rain cloud in the disciples. He's the Eeyore of the 12. Do you guys remember Eeyore? He always had a ... I got two little kids. So, I'm very familiar with Eeyore. Everywhere he goes, right? Gloom and doom.

“Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to His fellow disciples, ‘Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.’” Now, I think in the context of what's happening here, I don't think that would be said with a lot of optimism. I think it would be said like Eeyore. “Let us go, so that we may die with Him. Right? Let's just go and get it over with. All right. He's got a death wish. I don't want to be a coward.” I mean, it's admirable that they went. It's just not admirable how they went.

You see, the setting for this event is despair, it's hopelessness. The disciples don't want to go back to Jerusalem here. If you had witnessed your leader almost gets stoned two times in three months, you wouldn't want to go back either. I mean, they weren't expecting a resurrection, they were expecting of a death. They weren't expecting a miracle, they were expecting disaster. Jesus is about to raise a man from the dead, and all they can think about is their own death. It's pretty ironic actually. It's pretty sad.

They even say in verse 12, this shows you kind of where their hearts are at, verse 12, “The disciples then said to Him, ‘Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.’” In other words, “If he's sick, just give him some medicine,” right? “Just send him some Nyquil. He'll be fine. Leave him alone, let him rest. Let's just stay away from Judea. We don't want to go back.”

One commentator said it this way, he said, “A reckless readiness to die and make an end of all our troubles is not a sign of God's grace in our lives. It's a sign of weakness and despair.” That's the attitude of these guys here. This is weakness and despair.

You know, it's been said that some people can find a cow patty in every field. If you don't know what a cow patty is, just ask one of our farmers here, they'll tell you about it. They can find filth in every pasture. That's Thomas here. That's this attitude of the disciples. They're looking for cow patties. They can't see the light at the end of the tunnel, because all they see is a train coming at them. And I want to remind you, if you have that same mentality, Christians don't live that way. We're hopeful people. We have a positive outlook on life because we serve a God who raises the dead, amen? And if this life stinks, we have another one to look forward to. And if this life is hard, if the trip to Jerusalem is bad, there will be a trip to the eternal Jerusalem. God will take care of us. We have no reason to think like this.

It was said that when William Wilberforce was battling slavery in England, he was discouraged and ready to give up, until he opened his Bible up, and a note fell out from John Wesley. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, had written him a note just before he died. And the note said this. It said, “Unless the divine power has raised you up, I don't see how you can defeat slavery, which is the scandal of religion in England and in the world.” He said, “Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But, if God be for you, who can be against you?” He said, “If God be on your side, how can you lose? Are all of them together stronger than God?” It said, “Be not weary of well doing and go in the name

of God and the power of His might.” I think the disciples needed to hear that in John 11. Listen, if God's on your side, you're not going to lose. All of them are not stronger than God.

And that leads to the next stage of this miracle, which is really the most important one, and that's the miracle itself. Kind of set all this as a way of setting the stage for the miracle itself. We've looked at the purpose of the miracle - the purpose was to give glory to God. And we've looked at the setting for it. It's done in a very gloomy setting. You know, they're going to Jerusalem with a storm cloud over them. But now, let's look at the miracle itself. Let's see what happens when they get to Bethany.

If you skip down a little bit and look in verse 17, just a little bit down there. It begins to tell you what happens when they arrive. It says, “So when Jesus came, He found that he had already ... Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.” Now that number “four days”, that means one day for the message to get to Jesus, two days for the wait. Verse six says, they waited two days before they left, and then one day to go back to Bethany; four days.

Apparently, Lazarus died shortly after the message went out. He was in bad shape when they sent it, and he died that day. And it goes on to say,

17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. 20 Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed in the house. 21 Martha then 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 of God, God will give you.”

That's quite a statement, isn't it? Would you say that if your brother was dead?

23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” 24 Martha said to Him, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” 25 And Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”

Just a few comments on this. Verse 19 says, “Many Jews came to console Mary and Martha concerning Lazarus.” Again, because the Passover was near, there was a lot of people coming to and from down the road by Bethany. So, there was a large crowd here. And in the midst of that, Martha tells you what she thinks about the resurrection. She says in verse 24, “I know that Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” She said that because the Jews believed in the resurrection of the dead.

Job 19:25-26 ... Job ... some think it's the oldest book in the Bible. And in the oldest book in the Bible, it tells you this about the resurrection. Job says, “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God because He will raise me up.” Job said, “In my flesh, I will see God.” And the only way to do that is to be resurrected. Job says, “With these eyes, resurrected eyes, I will see my Redeemer.” Daniel 12:2 says, “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the

ground will awake to everlasting life, and they will shine brightly like the brightness of heaven and like the stars forever and ever.”

We could look at other passages, but this is what Martha refers to here. But what Jesus goes on to say is stunning. Jesus says, “I am the one who will do that. You believe in a resurrection? That’s correct Martha. You believe in Judgment Day? Those who believe in God will be raised to life.” And He says, “I am the resurrection and the life.” In other words, “I’m the one who will call you out of the grave.”

I’ve told you this before, but there’s seven “I am” statements in the Gospel of John. Do you remember that? Seven statements where Jesus says, “I am something.” So, He says, “I am the bread of life” in John 6 and “I am the Light of the world” in John 8. We’ve looked at those chapters. He says, “I am the good shepherd and I am the door of the sheep” in chapter 10. He says, “I am the way, the truth and the life” in chapter 14 and “I am the vine” in chapter 15. But here He says something that I think is the most startling. He says, “I am the resurrection and the life. I am the one who has triumphed over death. I’ll save your brother Martha, even now. I’ll bring him back from the grave.” And then He says, “Do you believe that?” Which is the question we all have to answer.

She says in verse 27, before He raises Lazarus, before He does this miracle, Martha says, “Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.” And if you look on down in verse 38, here’s what Jesus does next. He interacts with the crowd of people. He weeps over Lazarus’s death. If you want to find the shortest verse in the Bible, John 11:35 is the shortest verse in the Bible. Memorize that and impress your friends. It says, “Jesus wept.” You can all memorize at least that verse of the Bible, right? We can all do that.

Then he says in verse 38, He says, “Remove the stone.” Jewish tombs were typically nothing more than caves cut into the side of a hill. With a large stone placed across the front to keep robbers and wild animals out. And here, Jesus tells them to remove the stone. Then He says in verse 40, it says,

40 Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” 41 So they removed the stone. And then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard me. 42 I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around, I said it, so that they may believe that You sent me.” 43 And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.”

He cried that out with a loud voice because possibly He was a ways away from the tomb. Some of your translations say, “Lazarus, come out.” Or in the Greek, it actually says, “Lazarus, here, outside.” Which just sounds kind of strange, but the idea is that Lazarus was probably raised as Jesus prayed. But since he was covered in bandages - verse 44 says he had one bandage across his face. He couldn’t see, he didn’t know where he was. So, Jesus says, “Lazarus, here, outside.”

We don’t have this issue today because our dead are buried in coffins, but the Jews put them in tombs. And to keep their body from being exposed, they wrapped them in bandages. They covered them in this kind of thin linen strips of cloth. So, that if you had to go into the tomb for

some reason, you wouldn't see a decaying corpse in there. And so, when Lazarus came back to life, he found himself covered up and unable to see and he didn't know where he was. And so, Jesus said to him, "Lazarus, here, outside."

Now, I don't know about you, but I can imagine several people fainted when they saw him come out. Some might have runaway. I think I would have run away. I had two cemeteries bordering my house growing up in Tennessee. They had one for the unknown confederate dead, all confederate soldiers. They didn't know who they were. They buried them in the tomb or the graves beside my house. And behind my house there were a bunch of graves from the 17, 1800s. If I saw anybody come out of those things, I would have just fallen apart. I mean every day, you know, there was my house, grave, tennis courts. I was obsessed with tennis. So, walk by the grave, tennis, come back by the grave, you know. If I ever saw a confederate soldier standing there, I would have just passed out.

Verse 44 says, "The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. And Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'" I would be interested to see who was the first person to go touch him. It is kind of an understatement here. It was probably even more interesting then ... Not a lot of details here in this verse as to what actually happened., but D. A Carson (it's kind of a lengthy quote), but he kind of describes it this way. He says,

Many commentators suppose that the grave clothes bound Lazarus so tightly that he could not emerge from the tomb. And they speak of a miracle within a miracle, and the fact that he made it out at all. John does not really think in those terms and in any case, the grave clothes were not so restrictive. The corpse was customarily laid on a sheet of linen wide enough to envelop the body completely and more than twice the length of the corpse. And the body was so placed on the sheet that the feet were at one end, and then the sheet was drawn over the head and back down to the feet. It was wrapped over twice and the feet were bound at the ankles and the arms were tied to the body with linens strips.

So, you had strips tying you up. You also had a longer sheet wrapping around you.

The face was bound by another cloth, often called a sweat-cloth as it was worn around the neck in that culture.

A person so bound could hop and shuffle, but scarcely walk. Therefore, when Jesus commanded Lazarus to come forth and the dead man came out, Jesus promptly gave the order to take off the grave clothes and let him go.

In other words, it wasn't really a dignified coming out of the tomb, he just kind of shuffled and hopped, but that's how he did it.

The point in the whole passage is this, if Jesus could do this for Lazarus, He could do this for us. The point is that if He could do it for a man in the first century, He could do it for the people in the 21st. This was a foretaste of what was to come. This was a prelude of our own resurrection. It

was actually a prelude also of Jesus' resurrection. The next time you see a tomb in the Gospel of John, it will be Jesus' tomb. The next time you see a stone in this book, it's going to be the stone that was rolled away on Easter Sunday.

But this is what you can look forward to if you trust in Christ. This is what you can expect. Not only is He the bread of life and the way, the truth, and the life and the good shepherd and all those things, He's also the resurrection and the life. He will call you out of the tomb. In John 5:25, it says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live."

You know, we could look at it this way, nobody would deny that Lazarus was dead here. I mean nobody would deny that a miracle took place. In fact, he was dead so long in verse 39 that Mary said, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench." I like the King James, translation: "Lord, by this time he stinketh." So powerful. He stinketh. "I'm not going to go into the tomb with a guy who stinketh. I mean, let's just stay away from that." The point is that if He can bring a man who's that dead back to life, He can bring you and me back to life.

Which leads to one more stage to this miracle. And that's this, we've talked about the purpose of the miracle - purpose was to glorify God. The setting of it, setting of despair. We talked about the miracle itself: Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He brought the dead man back to life. It leads to one more stage, and that's this, is the response to the miracle. Jesus' miracles were always done to evoke a response in people. They were done to make you wake up and pay attention. I mean as His last public miracle, Jesus wanted to get your attention here. He wanted to do something you couldn't forget and He succeeded in that. Because if you look in verse 45, it says, "Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done."

If you look in verse 54, this sums up what happened as a result of that. It says, "Therefore ..." in verse 54, "Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with His disciples." I mean, how did the people respond to Jesus? What did they do with this miracle? Well, the same thing they always did, some believed and some didn't, right? I mean, that's the same thing you read all throughout the Gospel of John. No matter what it was, you see it happening over and over and over again. He turns water into wine, some believe and some didn't. He feeds 5,000 people with a lunch of a little boy, some believe, and some didn't.

In fact, the people who rejected Him here, do it so violently that they try to kill Him again. If you look in verse 50, the High Priest was so angry at this that he said, "It's better for one man to die than for the whole nation to perish." It's kind of an interesting thing to say. Jesus just raised a man back to life and these guys are so consumed in their sin and their anger, that they're going to think about killing Jesus. I mean, come on. You're going to kill Him, He's just going to rise up again, right? Chapter 12, they talk about killing Lazarus. Why would you ...?

But it leads to the question, and this is the real crux of this chapter, and every chapter in the Gospel of John: which one of these or you? Do you believe in Jesus or do you reject Him? Do

you believe He's the resurrection and the life or do you deny it like these men did here? Do you need more proof?

I've talked to people who've said, "I'll believe in Jesus when I see a miracle. I'll believe when I see someone raised from the dead." Can I just tell you this? No, you won't. No, you won't. And I know that because these men saw that here and they didn't believe. These guys saw Lazarus raised from the dead, and the only thing they could think about, is killing Lazarus. You need to believe now. You need to trust in Christ now. So, the question is, do you believe now? Do you trust in Him?

Let me ask it this way, how are you going to defeat death if you don't trust in Christ? I mean, how are you going to come back to life? 151,000 people die every day, 6,000 per hour. Every second someone dies, someone dies, someone dies. And someday it's going to be you. And how are you going to survive that without Christ? What are you going to do? You need to trust in Him now before it's too late. You know, one pastor was talking about this on a mission trip, and he was explaining to some people, he said, if you go to Buddhist's grave, it is occupied. If you go to Mohammed's grave, it is occupied. If you go to Confucius' grave, it is occupied. But if you go to Jesus' grave, it's empty because He defeated death. And He can defeat it for you as well. Will you trust in Him today?

It was said that when A. W. Pink died, the theologian, his wife said he packed his bags as if he was going on a trip. And he put his house in order and then he just said, "Goodbye," and that was it. He just went onto another world. He did that because he knew that Jesus would bring him back to life. Do you know that today? Do you have that sort of confidence? You can if you trust in Jesus. And let me pray now that you would, if you haven't yet.

Heavenly Father, we thank you Lord for this story in the Gospel of John. There may be no story that's more important for us as people living in a fallen world. We do so many things to forget about death today. Lord, but what we can't forget about it, it's always there. Live long enough and we will all one day die. But that's why Christ has come.

Lord, I pray for any who are here this morning who don't know this Son of God, who don't know this resurrection and this life, Lord, that you would open their hearts to how glorious the good news that we have is, the glorious work of Christ. And not only bringing Lazarus back from the dead, but bringing anyone back from the dead who trusts in Him.

Father, for those here who do believe, I pray that You would bless them and encourage them. Give them renewed confidence that they're following the right God and the right Messiah.

Lord, thank you for what Your Son has done. Thank you that what He has done not just applies to this life, but in the life to come. Lord, maybe we rest in that, may we hope in that. And we pray this. And may You be glorified as we take Your Lord's Supper. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.