

# **Jesus' Response to Grief & Death**

JOHN 11: 1-6, 17-46

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# Outline of Message

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- **Jesus** hears a desperate plea and **demonstrates His love by a deliberate delay** (vv. 1-6)
- **Jesus comforts two grieving sisters by directing attention to Himself**
  - a. Martha: confronts her with the truth (vv. 25-26)
  - b. Mary: comforts her by his tears (vv. 33-35)
- **Jesus displays God's glory by calling Lazarus out of his grave** (vv. 38-44)

## Background to this story ...

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- 7<sup>th</sup> and final sign of John's gospel
- "Eye witness" account
- Jesus revealed magnificently as the perfect God-Man
- Purpose of John's gospel:

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20: 30-31)

## **A desperate plea from a family Jesus loves**

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Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

<sup>4</sup> When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son 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 sick, he stayed where he was two more days, ... (John 11: 1-6)

## A deliberate delay because of love

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## The effects of this delay

<sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, ... <sup>17</sup> On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. (John 11: 5-6; 17)

- “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ”
- Has Jesus arrived too late? Has a desperate situation turned into a hopeless one?

## **Delay ≠ God doesn't love us**

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When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” (John 11: 4)

“The purpose of his illness is not death,  
but for the glory of God.  
I, the Son of God, will receive glory from this situation.”  
(John 11:4; TLB)

# Easter reminds us that ...

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- God is never too late.

He is never too early.

He is always right on time!

But ... His timing can be very different from ours!

God is always on time for His purposes in my life.

# Jesus comforts two grieving sisters

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- Martha and Mary
- we meet them in Luke 10: 38-42, in John 11, and briefly again in John 12: 1-11

As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.

(Luke 10: 38; NLT)

# Martha and Mary: very different (cf. Luke 10 38-42)

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When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, ...

“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” (v. 21)

but Mary stayed at home. (11: 20)

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” (v. 32)

## **Both spoke the same words to Jesus ... but notice how Jesus responded to each of them**

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<sup>21</sup> “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

<sup>24</sup> Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” (John 11: 21-24)

# Jesus and Martha

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<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

<sup>27</sup> “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

(John 11: 25-27)

# Jesus' response to Martha

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- See Jesus pushing against Martha's despair?
- A most vigorous "theological" discussion about the resurrection
- Jesus confronts Martha with the truth about Himself
- See Jesus pointing Martha to Himself?

## **Mary said the same words ... but notice how Jesus responded**

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<sup>32</sup> When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “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 along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.  
(John 11: 32-33)

## Notice how Jesus responded to Mary

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<sup>32</sup> When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “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 along with her also weeping, he was **deeply moved** in spirit **and troubled**.  
(John 11: 32-33)

[ <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, **a deep anger welled up within him**, and he was **deeply troubled**. (11: 33; NLT) ]

# Jesus and Mary (and the crowd)

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<sup>34</sup> “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept.

<sup>36</sup> Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

(John 11: 34-36)

# Jesus was upset / outraged because He was ...

- agitated by the presence of sickness and death, and the havoc they wrought in human life ?
- agitated by the unbelief of the Jews, and perhaps the sisters ?
- agitated at the ravages of death, which had entered the world because of sin ?
- agitated by the hypocritical and sentimental lamentations of the Jews mingled with the heartfelt lamentations of Mary ?
- angry because He was face to face with the realm of Satan, represented by death ?

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- Cause of Jesus' agitation most likely a combination of factors
  - If John had thought it important, he could have included a parenthetical explanation (e.g., John 11: 2 & 13)
  - In the midst of Mary and mourners, Jesus struggled with and expressed His emotions

# Jesus' response to Mary

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- no discussion; “speechless”
- joined Mary in her grief
- Finally Jesus asked: “Where have you laid Lazarus?”

# Jesus' response to ...

Martha	Mary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ pushed against Martha's despair</li><li>○ had a vigorous discussion about the resurrection</li><li>○ taught her truths about the resurrection</li><li>○ confronted her with the truth about Himself: <i>I am the resurrection and the life</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ comforted Mary with silent presence and tears</li><li>○ no discussion</li><li>○ (seeing Mary weep and the crowd wailing with her), a deep anger welled up within him and he was deeply troubled</li><li>○ wept with Mary</li><li>○ went to Lazarus' grave and resurrected him</li></ul>

## Let's pause and reflect ...

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- Why did Jesus weep (v. 35) if he was going to raise Lazarus shortly?
- If you had been there and saw Jesus weeping, how would you have felt?
- Amidst our tragedy and grief, how does this story bring us comfort and hope as we see our Lord Jesus weeping with Mary, as “a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief” ?

## Jesus calls Lazarus out of his grave

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<sup>38</sup> Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. <sup>39</sup> “Roll the stone aside,” Jesus told them.

But Martha, the dead man’s sister, protested, “Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible.”

<sup>40</sup> Jesus responded, “Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s glory if you believe?” (John 11: 38-40; NLT)

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<sup>41</sup> So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me. <sup>42</sup> 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.” <sup>43</sup> Then Jesus shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” <sup>44</sup> And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, “Unwrap him and let him go!” (John 11: 41-44; NLT)

# **Jesus told Martha He is the resurrection & the life He demonstrated this truth to Mary (and the crowd)**

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<sup>45</sup> Many of the people who were with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw this happen. (John 11: 45; NLT)

# How did our Lord Jesus respond to grief?

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- differently for each sister
- differently and in the way most needed for each of us

# **How did our Lord Jesus respond to Lazarus' death ?**

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- He woke him up from his sleep!
- Lazarus' resurrection is a “preview” and “demonstration” of Jesus' own resurrection
- Also a “preview” and “demonstration” of ours

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. (Jn 5: 28-29)

# Discussion questions

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- **What's the difference between Lazarus' resurrection and Jesus'?**
- Hint #1: Jesus is the “firstborn from the dead” (Rev. 1: 5), but not Lazarus.
- Hint #2: What will eventually happen to Lazarus after his resurrection?
- **Scripture describes death as “sleep” for those who believe in God. Why?**
- Hint: Are we afraid of sleep? What happens after we sleep?

**Jesus asked Martha this question.  
He is asking us the same question right now.**

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“Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s glory if  
you believe?”

(John 11: 40; NLT)