

Who Would Have Thought? – John 11:28-44

John 11:28-44. We’ve been studying chapter 11 for two weeks now, and this is the pinnacle: the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Which, if it weren’t so familiar to us, we’d be stunned. It’s a stunning miracle! A stunning *sign* as John calls it. (12:18) In fact, it’s the 7th and final sign that he records in his account of Christ’s life. No doubt intending to convey a perfect set.

And who would have thought? Who would have thought that Jesus would have such power and authority? Over death! And who would have thought, in the midst of it all, that he was capable of such tenderness? Such empathy. Such feeling! Those things are as stunning as the miracle.

And I hope they stun you. I hope they open your eyes to the Savior he is, the Savior we have, and I hope you treasure him all the more.

Intro
V28 – *When she had said this* [referring to Martha’s confession of belief], *she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”* [He evidently wanted to see *her* as well. Without the distraction of his entrance or the curiosity of the crowd. So Martha told her privately.] [29] *And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him.* (ESV)

[30] *Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.* [31] *When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out* [quickly, once again], *they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.*

[32] *Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”* Let’s stop there.

It’s hard to get around the fact that her statement there in v32, is an accusation of negligence. Just like Martha said in v21. A gut-level expression of disappointment and anger because she felt let down. Abandoned. Not that it was true, but it’s how she felt.

And the stunning part is that he had ears for it. He *listened* to what she said. He *cared* how she felt. So much so, that knowing her thoughts ahead of time, he *still* came to her. Still called for her. Even at her worst.

Thank God for that. Thank God that in spite of our worst moments and worst thoughts . . . **We have a Savior who comes to us and cares for us (v28-32)**
Still. He came to us in creation, he came to us at Christmas, he came to us at conversion, and he comes to us now. Via his Spirit. Long after our salvation. We have a Savior who comes to us and cares for us. Comes to us *because* he cares for us.

And the stunning part is, he often does so despite how we *feel*. Like he did with Mary. He cares for us despite what we say and think. Regardless of how wrong we are, or off we are, or angry we are. He comes, he calls, and he cares.

I’ll never forget a special chapel service one evening as a freshman in college. One of the students had just committed suicide that morning by standing in front of a train, and it

rocked our world. So the chaplain put out a call and gathered whoever wanted to come. A time of open prayer. Seeking the Lord. Weeping together. Comforting one another.

But about halfway through, somebody stood up in the middle of the chapel, and with their fist shaking, yelled, “God, I’m so ticked at you I could scream! Where were you! Where were you!” And then sat down.

Was he right in what he said? And how he said it? Was he right in what he insinuated? That God was somehow at fault?

No. On all counts. No, no, and no. But he was heard. Jesus cared. Jesus met him. Because that’s the kind of Savior he is.

Regardless of how broken we are or off we are, Jesus comes to us and cares. Regardless of how disappointed or angry we are, Jesus calls and listens. Just like he did with Mary. He drew near then and he draws near now.

I don’t know what inspired that old hymn, “Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,” but I wonder if v28 had something to do with it. Where Martha relayed a message from Jesus, *saying in private* [softly], “*The Teacher is here and is calling for you.*” “Calling for you and for me. . . . Come home, come home. Ye who are weary, come home. Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling. Calling, ‘Oh, sinner, come home.’”

If that’s you . . .

- **Run to him**

That’s what Mary did. *When she heard it* [v29], *she rose quickly and went to him.* So quickly it was noticeable, v31. Run to him like that. Every single day. Every single morning. Every single minute. Because he’s here and he cares.

And when you do . . .

- **Worship him**

In spite of Mary’s rash words, she got this right. V32 – *she fell at his feet*. A posture of humility and worship. A posture of brokenness and neediness. For all that you might get wrong in responding to Jesus, never fail to worship him. Never fail to bow.

And third . . .

- **Talk with him**

Share your heart. Bare your soul. He knows it anyway. Instead of ignoring him, like you do when somebody comes to your *door*, talk with him. He stands and knocks. Comes and cares. In spite of what you’ve said or done.

The second truth, and oh how precious it is, comes from v33-37 – [33] *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.* [34] *And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”* [35] *Jesus wept.* [36] *So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”* [37] *But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”*

That’s the *third* time. They accused him of negligence. And while they were wrong about that, they were right about their assumption of healing. He totally could have kept Lazarus

from dying.

But of course he didn't, because as we saw back in v4-6, he *loved* them. Loved them so much he didn't want them to miss out. Miss out on God's glory. God's greatness. God's goodness.

The point being . . .

We have a Savior who loves us and feels for us (v33-37)

Someone who sympathizes and empathizes with us. Someone who knows how we feel, and feels for us. Actually *feels* what we feel, to the point of weeping sometimes. Who would have thought?

Far from a detached overlord, far from a self-absorbed narcissist, we have a Savior who actually loves us and feels for us. Which means we ought never to think, "nobody understands me or knows what I'm going through." Because he does. And feels it deeply.

V33 again. [33] *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.* Two expressions that convey a world of feeling.

The first, **deeply moved**, is one word in Greek. And it can convey a wide range of emotions and feelings. Sometimes it means mad and indignant, sometimes frustrated and stern, and sometimes affected and touched. All depending on the context.; how a word is used in the situation at hand.

Here, it seems to mean affected and touched. Shot through the heart. Struck to the core. Or as the ESV puts it, *deeply moved*. A perfect expression for the situation.

But I also think it's likely that Jesus was *indignant*. Another of its possible meanings. As in, moved almost to the point of *anger*; due to the grief and pain of those he loved. He hated to see them suffer. He hated to see them grieve.

So in addition to being deeply moved, he was probably indignant. That's the first expression that indicates his love and feelings for us.

The second is **greatly troubled**. And this one's a bit easier because it was also used to describe the waters of a sea in the midst of a storm. Have you ever seen those videos? Or been there? When the water is so turbulent and churning it's downright scary? Crashing and thrashing with no sign of reprieve? Tossing and turning from the ocean depths?

That was the heart of Jesus. A turbulent mix of powerful emotions. Love and loss. Disappointment in their distrust. Frustration at their accusation. Anticipation for what's to come. Yearning, that they would believe. He was *troubled* to the depths of his soul.

And with those two states of mind, those two conditions of his heart, he said in v34 – *"Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."*

And then, in one of the shortest sentences in all the Bible, with no warning or notice, John says – *Jesus wept*. (35) Just like that. As abrupt as you can get. As unexpected in the *literary* sense as it was in the *literal* sense. That he's **the God who weeps**. Don't miss it.

God the Son, God in the flesh, actually cried. The sovereign Savior shed tears.

Who would have thought? Who could imagine? That we have a Savior who feels so deeply, he weeps for us. And, one whose love is so evident, that even those who didn't yet *believe* in him saw it. And proclaimed it. [35] *Jesus wept*. [36] *So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"* Loved Lazarus.

Far from a disengaged and disinterested God, far from a detached and indifferent God, we have a Savior who loves us and feels for us. Deeply and greatly.

Which brings us to the third truth, found in the main event. The pinnacle of the passage. The ultimate reason it happened.

[38] *Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.* [39] *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."* Long enough for the decay to be noticeable even with all the spices and wrappings. To say that he was dead. Long dead. Completely dead.

[40] *Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"* His goodness and greatness on display? "Didn't I tell you that believing is seeing? Didn't I tell you that everyone who believes in me will live again, even though they die? (25) Didn't I say that this illness does not lead to death?" (4)

Decay doesn't matter in the face of God's power. Neither does odor. Or ashes to ashes and dust to dust. None of it matters. None of it separates us from the love of God in Christ. None of it prevents him from raising us. None of it keeps him from glorifying God. None of it stops him from doing his will.

[41] *So they took away the stone.* [They stepped out in faith and obedience.] *And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. Heard me say what?*

I think it's all the things he said leading up to this. That *"this illness does not lead to death,"* v4. That it's *for the glory of God*. And heard him say to Martha, *"Your brother will rise again,"* v23. And *"take away the stone,"* v39. In other words, Jesus is thankful that God has heard his testimony and petition all along. *Whatever* he asked. (22)

Then he says in v42 – *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.* This, *"I said this,"* not only referring to the *thanks* he just gave, in v41, but his promise in v40. That they would see the glory of God, they would see Lazarus rise from the dead, if they believe.

He said it, to remove all doubt as to who he is, and bring us to a point of belief.

And then the mic drop. The moment we've all been waiting for. V43 – *When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."* [And then, in another unexpected sentence; another unexpected moment,] [44] *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."*

Who would have thought?

We have a Savior who calls us and raises us (v38-44)

Us. This event is not just a record of what Jesus *did*, but a demonstration of his power and *promise* to do it. For *us*. Four quick parts here.

First, it's a **demonstration**. A demonstration of his promise to raise *all* of us. Like he said in John 5:28 – An hour is coming when all *who are in the tombs will hear* [my] *voice and come out*. Some to life and some to judgment. And here, he demonstrates it.

Second, it's an **indication**. An indication of what's to come. When Jesus returns. *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command . . . And the dead in Christ will rise first*. (1 Thess 4:16) This is an indication of that.

Third, it's a **confirmation**. A confirmation of his power and authority to make it happen. To actually *do* what he said. Do what he promised.

And fourth, it's a **presentation**. A presentation of our *salvation*. A picture. The whole thing. Think of it.

Just like Lazarus was *physically* dead . . .

1. We're dead. Before Christ, before we repent and believe, we're spiritually dead. Dead in our trespasses and sins the Bible says. (Eph 2:1)

2. Jesus calls. This entire event is a presentation and picture of the fact that Jesus calls us to life in salvation. Calls us by name. (John 10:3) Just like he called and awakened Lazarus.

3. We respond. We come out of our spiritual grave, just like Lazarus came out of his literal grave. Out of our spiritual death like he came out of his physical death. Out of darkness and into light. Out of sin and into righteousness.

4. Sin remains. Binding us, and blinding us, and entangling us, just like the grave wrappings of Lazarus bound and blinded and entangled him.

5. We need help. Just like Lazarus needed help. "*Unbind him,*" Jesus said. (44) Implying that he couldn't do it himself. And neither can we. We need *help* to work out our salvation. We need help in our new life.

6. We help others. That too is a part of our salvation. Like Jesus commanded those around Lazarus to help him. Saying, "*Let him go.*" Turn him loose. Help him.

It's a presentation of our salvation. We have a Savior who calls us out of death and raises us to life. Out of bondage and into freedom. Out of misery and into glory.

The question is, do you hear him? Is he calling *you*? "_____ come out!"

Is he calling? If so, don't delay. Get up out of your grave and walk in the light. Exchange your grave clothes for glory robes. Your bondage for freedom. Your darkness for light.

Summary

Because we have a Savior who can do it. Who can *give* you light. Who can give you freedom. And does. A Savior who comes to us and cares for us. Loves us and feels for us. Calls us and raises us.

Prayer – Father, thank you for Jesus. Thank you for a Savior who still stuns us. A Savior

who comes to us when we don't deserve it. A Savior who weeps when we can't imagine it. A Savior who calls when we don't expect it. Thank you. And give us ears to hear even more. Hearts to worship even more.

You Are Loved