

The Weekly Word

March 15-21, 2021

Hello Reading the Bible readers. This week we meditate upon John 11-12. May the Lord bless us as we sit with His word. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, March 15: John 11:17-37 NIV2011

¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

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

²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴ Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

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

²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." ²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

³² 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."

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then 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 have kept this man from dying?"

What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)

This section picks up the story of Lazarus' death. After waiting two days Jesus goes to see Martha and Mary. By the time Jesus arrives Lazarus has been dead 4 days. Martha learns that Jesus is coming and rushes to meet Him. Meeting Jesus, she cries out in agony, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." He will rise again says Jesus. Thinking Jesus means the resurrection of the dead Martha agrees. At this point Jesus gives one of His most recognized I AM statements.

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Martha responds with the strongest statement by a disciple yet, *"Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."*

After this Martha goes to get her sister Mary. Mary leaves in haste and the mourners, sensing urgency, go after her. When she comes to Jesus, *she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

Feeling the pain of Mary, Jesus asks where they laid him and then the shortest verse in the Bible carries the pathos of the moment, *Jesus wept.*

Seeing Jesus' love, people wonder why He, who could heal the blind, couldn't keep this from happening.

What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)

In the middle of this account filled with pathos comes one of Jesus' most profound I AM statements. *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

Believers will live even though we die... and we will never die...

I love the way Jesus concludes this with a question, *"Do you believe this?"*

This is the defining question... does a person believe that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life? Does a person believe as Mary stated it, that Jesus is *the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.* Do you believe???

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?

Am I living as one who believes that nothing, not even death, can separate me from God???

Tuesday, March 16: John 11:38-44 NIV2011

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)

Today we read the portion of Lazarus' story where he is brought back to life.

Jesus goes to Lazarus' tomb and orders it open. Martha tries to stop Jesus, since it has been 4 days and it will stink. Jesus persists saying, *"... you will see the glory of God."*

The stone is removed and Jesus calls in, *Lazarus, come out!* And the once dead man walks out of the tomb still wrapped in his grave clothes

What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)

Jesus has the power of life and death. He can change water into wine, heal people and even bring them back to life when they are dead.

As Jesus said previously, if you don't believe what He says about Himself at least believe His works. This is yet another example of Jesus being God in human flesh.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?

Trust Jesus... He will do what He says He will do!

I was talking with a friend about this passage this week and she made the comment, Jesus healed Lazarus. When he came out of the tomb he was still wearing his grave clothes... she went on to comment that Jesus raised Lazarus but Lazarus had to change out of his filthy grave clothes... when Jesus bring life to us literally or spiritually we have to do the work of changing our garments, stripping off the filth we were wearing and putting on new clothes befitting our new life in Christ (see also Ephesians 4:17-28).

Wednesday, March 17: John 11:45-57 NIV2011

⁴⁵ Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. ⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

"What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation."

⁴⁹ Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰ You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."

⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, ⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. ⁵³ So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea. Instead he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

⁵⁵ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. ⁵⁶ They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the festival at all?" ⁵⁷ But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)

John concludes the story of Lazarus with verse 45, *many... believed in him*. Over and over John shows how Jesus' actions lead people to faith, which after all is his goal in writing his gospel.

Some people go to the Pharisees to tell them what Jesus did and this leads to John recalling a conversation that the Pharisees have about Jesus. The Pharisees expressed growing concern that their 'tactics' in handling Jesus are not working and that people are continuing to believe in Jesus. If this continues, they are concerned that the Romans will clamp down on them and they'll lose their prestige and their land. The highlight of the Pharisees' conversation is a concluding word Caiaphas, the high priest, writes, *You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish*. Earlier that year Caiaphas had, *prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation,*⁵² *and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one*.

These two statements by Caiaphas serve John's narrative by underscoring prophetically who Jesus truly is. [WJG comment: these words by Caiaphas also seem to be a double entendre. For the Pharisees it is better that one man die, Jesus, than the nation be destroyed. But from John's perspective, and that of the gospel, it is a declaration that Jesus' impending death will be for the whole Jewish nation and all the 'children of God' to bring them together, i.e. bring them together through faith in Jesus.]

Because of this conversation the Pharisees begin to plot how they might kill Jesus. Sensing the pressure Jesus retreats to a quiet place where He stays with His disciples. The text implies that Jesus remains in that quiet place until the Passover.

What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)

Through the voice of Caiaphas John makes an incredible statement about Jesus, that His death will be for all Jews and for all the children of God. The latter phrase could indicate for all the Gentiles who will ultimately believe in Jesus; thus, we have a profound statement about the mission and ministry of Jesus, who will die for all who believe....

A powerful teaching, cleverly placed in the mouth of Caiaphas.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?

The text reminds me that God can use anyone for His purposes. For me this is a reminder that should I begin to get a bloated understanding of how important I am I only need to remember that God can use anyone. In this passage God used a high priest whose goal was to kill Jesus, to advance God's plan and give a prophetic word about the world-reaching impact of Jesus' death.

Thursday, March 18: 12:1-19 NIV2011

¹ Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” ⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷ “Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you, ^p but you will not always have me.”

⁹ Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

¹² The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. ¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

“Hosanna!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” ^u

“Blessed is the king of Israel!”

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:

¹⁵ “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;

see, your king is coming,

seated on a donkey’s colt.” ^w

¹⁶ At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

¹⁷ Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. ¹⁸ Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)

Due to the repeated references to Lazarus and his healing it is clear that this passage is connected to that dramatic miracle by Jesus.

The setting is 6 days before the Passover and Jesus visits with Lazarus, Martha and Mary at their home in Bethany. As the meal is being served Mary anoints Jesus’ feet with expensive perfume and dries it with her hair. Judas complains about this extravagant waste of money saying that the money should have been given to the poor. John adds a note that Judas said this because he was pilfering money out of the disciples’ money bag.

Jesus comes to Mary’s defense saying that the anointing was for His burial and that you will always have the poor among you. [Note how Jesus shifts the focus to His death.]

A crowd begins to form at Lazarus’ house because they heard Jesus had come back to Bethany and because they wanted to see the man who had been raised from the dead. The size of the crowd made the Pharisees again realized that Jesus was becoming a threat. They determined to kill both Jesus and Lazarus.

The next day the crowd heard that Jesus was heading into Jerusalem for the festival so they took palm branches and praised Jesus as He rode into the city saying:

“Hosanna!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” ^u

"Blessed is the king of Israel!"

Jesus riding on a colt was a prophetic act. Picture the scene, Jesus entering Jerusalem to the shouts and waves of the crowd even as He makes a prophetic statement.

John concludes this section noting that many in the crowd had been there when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. This caused the Pharisees to grow even more concerned as well it seemed like the whole town was going after Jesus.

What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)

Two linked events make up this section. In the first we have the anointing of Jesus by Mary. This raises the issue of Jesus' death and also is a challenge to believers everywhere that Jesus and devotion to Jesus can have a large cost.

The second section commonly called 'the triumphal entry into Jerusalem' is a prophetic statement about Jesus. Riding on the colt is the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy and the praise of the people mouth the truth about Jesus that He is coming in the name of the Lord and He is the King of Israel. The people at the time did not understand the fullness of this event. It's understanding is fully understood only after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?

I hear in my inner spirit God asking me, "Are you willing to give Me a costly gift, Bill?"

Friday, March 19: 12:20-36 NIV2011

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

³⁰ Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

³⁴ The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

³⁵ Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know

where they are going. ³⁶ Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.” When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)

This account opens with some Greeks who want to meet Jesus. His disciples, Phillip and Andrew, take their requests to Jesus. [Jesus never does entertain the request from the Greeks at the temple instead He begins a monologue about his hour having arrived.]

Referring to Himself as the ‘Son of Man’ Jesus goes on to say that His hour has come. He then talks about a kernel of wheat dying and the necessity of it dying if it is to produce new life. Jesus then shifts His focus to disciples, saying that hating one’s life in this world is the key to life eternal. That whoever wants to serve Jesus must follow Jesus and that the Father will honor those who serve Jesus.

Jesus then says His soul is troubled, the implication is He knows what is about to happen to Him. But He will not ask the Father to change the plan instead He understands that it is for this very reason that He has come. He finishes by saying, *Father glorify your name!*

At this point the Father speaks from heaven saying, *I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.* And people hear it. Jesus says, *Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.* He then explains that He must be lifted up in order to draw all people to Himself. This was a reference to the way He would die.

The people have questions about what Jesus is saying. They say that the law says the Messiah will live forever so how can He say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? [I find it interesting that Jesus did not say the ‘Son of Man’ would be lifted up, instead Jesus said, “I will be lifted up”?! It is intriguing, then to me, that the people ask, “Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”]

Jesus ends this conversation explaining that you will only have the light for a little while longer. He bids them to walk in the light and to believe the light so that they become children of light.

When He is finished speaking, He hides Himself from them, which is a curious ending to this passage.

What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)

To me this is a bit of a strange passage because Jesus is talking so much in metaphor. We can glean from this passage that Jesus will be lifted up which is a reference to the cross and that he must die in order for faith in him to spread.

We also learn from this passage that Jesus is willing and ready to accept what must come; his desire is to glorify the Father and he knows what this will cost him.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?

Similar to yesterday, the issue of cost pierces my soul. Am I willing to bear the cost of following Jesus? Am I willing to hate this world for this sake of following Jesus and finding eternal life? I take the word ‘hate’ to be not so much the emotion of one person hating another but my willingness to seek after Jesus and what He wants me to do and be, rather than seeking after the good things of this world.

Saturday, March 20: John 12:37-50 NIV2011

³⁷ Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ³⁸ This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet:

*"Lord, who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"^e*

³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

⁴⁰ *"He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their hearts,
so they can neither see with their eyes,
nor understand with their hearts,
nor turn—and I would heal them."^f*

⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.

⁴² Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved human praise more than praise from God.

⁴⁴ Then Jesus cried out, "Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. ⁴⁵ The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

⁴⁷ "If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸ There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. ⁴⁹ For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. ⁵⁰ I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)

This passage brings to conclusion the preceding sections. In this passage John provides a wrap up of the spiritual dimension's taking place under the surface regarding Jesus.

John notes that despite the miracles and signs Jesus has done many still do not believe in Him. He ties this to a prophecy by Isaiah because their eyes have been blinded and their hearts hard and against the things God is doing.

And yet (42) many are believing including many from among the Jewish leaders. However, those among the Jewish leaders are not willing to go public about their belief in Jesus because they would be put out of the synagogue. John closes this paragraph with a sad comment, *they loved human praise more than praise from God.*

At this point Jesus makes a profound statement, *Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.* Yet again, in this gospel, Jesus thinks of Himself and His ministry in terms of doing what God the Father, "the one who sent me," wants. Jesus then makes a comment about the light and that those who believe in Him will not stay in darkness. [The theme of light and darkness has been a common one for Jesus in recent readings.]

Jesus concludes by again directly linking His words with the words of the Father, that what He speaks the Father speaks. Jesus also says that He came to save not to judge those who don't

believe in Him. However, those who reject His words will be judged and will be condemned on the last day.

What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)

This passage, as many before, makes the claim that following and believing in Jesus means that one is following and believing in the one who sent him -the Father- and by believing in Jesus a person has eternal life. The converse is also true that those who reject His words, do not believe His words and do not believe in him, will be condemned.

This is yet another strong proclamation about the necessity of believing in Jesus in order to be saved.

Embedded in this passage is also a warning to those who want to keep their belief secret for fear of persecution or ostracization. This occurs in that short paragraph about the leaders who believe in Jesus but do not tell others because they fear the Pharisees and do not want to be put out of the synagogue. Jesus closes that paragraph with the chilling statement, *they loved human praise more than praise from God*. This functions as a warning for believers in John's day and for believers of all time that we might face consequences for our belief in Jesus.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?

Lord, I have a nagging voice within that I do not do enough to tell people that I am a follower of Yours. I don't know if this is true and I need to take a deep look at myself and ask if this is so. Or is this the enemy trying to get under my skin and disrupt my walk with you and my witness for you by creating shame in me?

Lord, give me proper discernment, please. I certainly do not want to be like those religious leaders who hid their faith in You for fear of what others will think about me. I do not want to love *human praise more than praise from God*. Amen.

Sunday, March 21, 2021 - Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the Living Hope website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@LivingHopeCT.org.

Click here for an audio link to my sermons, <https://livinghopect.org/resources/audio-sermons>. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days. We also livestream our full services which are up on our YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgKURRsbX92qqIFgDF1iRWA>

