

April 2, 2017  
 Sermon for the Fifth Sunday in Lent  
 St Peter Lutheran Church  
 Bowie, TX  
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
 John 11: 1-46

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

John 11:1–46 (ESV)

### **The Death of Lazarus**

**11** Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” <sup>4</sup> But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God 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 ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. <sup>7</sup> Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” <sup>8</sup> The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” <sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. <sup>10</sup> But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” <sup>11</sup> After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” <sup>12</sup> The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” <sup>13</sup> Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. <sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, <sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” <sup>16</sup> So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

### **I Am the Resurrection and the Life**

<sup>17</sup> Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. <sup>20</sup> So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” <sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” <sup>27</sup> She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

### **Jesus Weeps**

<sup>28</sup> When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” <sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup> 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.” <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” <sup>37</sup> But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”

### **Jesus Raises Lazarus**

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. <sup>39</sup> 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." <sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> 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." <sup>43</sup> When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." <sup>44</sup> 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."

### **The Plot to Kill Jesus**

<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, <sup>46</sup> but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

What would you say is the greatest invention in our world today?

Well, I'm not sure how I'd really vote, but at least honorable mention would go to the pause button, with rewind and fast-forward as close runners-up. These buttons on the remote control allow us to hold or replay our favorite moments in sports or movies.

I know, I'm being a little silly here, but run with me on this for a bit.

What if we could use them on the Bible? We do have a moving report before us in the Gospel, after all—the account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

You know the basic story. Jesus gets word that His friend is sick. He waits a couple of days, but then, even though it puts His life in danger, He heads for Bethany.

Jesus knew that the priests, scribes and Pharisees were looking for a chance to have Him killed, but Jesus went anyway. Lazarus was His friend but more than that, by going He would have another opportunity to show the glory of God.

But why did Jesus wait? I've mentioned it before so some of you may remember. There was a belief taught by the Jewish rabbis that the soul of a person hung around for three days, or until decay set in. If Jesus would have raised Lazarus during those three days it could have easily been written off to no big deal, because Lazarus' soul hadn't left his body yet. So Jesus made sure that He didn't get there until four days later, then there would be no doubt that Lazarus had been dead.

So, by the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus has died, and there was literally no hope. It wasn't just the smell Martha was concerned about when Jesus told them to open the tomb, but really, what would be the point now. Jesus could heal a sick man, but even He couldn't do anything now. It's been four days after all.

Martha and Mary, Lazarus's sisters, had hoped Jesus would help, but now it seemed too late. Still, Jesus does help in a great and wonderful way, though not without first weeping.

He raises Lazarus back to life, giving the Jewish leaders a big opening to begin their plot to kill Jesus. What a great story!

What's your favorite part? Pause it. Rewind. If you're watching a movie at home, you've probably done it at least once. I do it all the time. Ooh, that was good; let's watch that part again!

I love Jesus' bold words to Martha, "*I am the resurrection and the life*" (v 25). Whenever Jesus once again uses *εγω ειμι*, I AM, the same words that God used in Exodus 3:14 when Moses ask Him what to tell the Israelites. The Father said: "... to Moses, "*I am who I am.*" ... "*Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.'*" This is a big deal!

Jesus unmistakably called Himself God. Something that His enemies would not have missed! Jesus has come to save the day, and not His enemies nor even death can stop Him.

As He said, He is God in the flesh, after all.

And what about Martha's words in reply? "*Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world*" (v 27).

Who would have thought that poor, "preoccupied with housework" Martha could say something so profound? Maybe Mary, who had sat at the feet of Jesus, might come up with that...but still, that scene at the tomb was amazing, wasn't it? They were all worried about the smell, and then Jesus prays that wonderful prayer: "*Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 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.*" And then shouts, "*Lazarus, come out!*" (v 43).

And he does! Awesome!

The whole dramatic scene was really good. I would have paused and hit rewind a bunch of times by now.

What an amazing setup for the whole episode.

The calm, cool, and collected Jesus doesn't panic when He gets the news Lazarus is sick. He even delays a few days until after Lazarus has died, knowing full well He'll bring him back to life when He gets to Bethany.

And what about His disciples? They're the complete opposite, all panicky and worried. Jesus tries to clue them in, but they just don't get it.

Oh, and then when Martha first sees Jesus—how moving is that! *“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died”* (v 21).

Then Mary says the very same thing and falls at Jesus' feet weeping! Such agony! But we know, right along with Jesus, what's about to happen. So we continue watching.

But wait a minute (v 35). Why are there tears on Jesus' face? Rewind! Back that up! Something's wrong here. The hero isn't supposed to be crying, especially when He knows what's about to happen.

Why is He crying? All along He's been Mister Calm, Cool, and Collected, the hero with the plan. And now tears?

Perhaps they're for Mary and Martha. He *is* a compassionate guy, and you'd have to be made of stone not to be moved by their heartache, right?

But still, Jesus knows what's about to happen. All of that sadness is about to be replaced with joy! He is the resurrection, planning all along to give life to the one now dead, and yet he cries? Something here still doesn't seem to add up.

So we hit the pause right there. Let's think about this for a minute as we try to figure it out. I do this too when watching a show.

Imagine the scene with me. Check out Jesus' eyes. Watch Him as He looks at Mary and then over at the crowd. It's almost like He sees them and yet sees past them. It's almost as though . . . Wait a minute, did Jesus hit fast-forward?

Does He see another Mary, his mother, weeping, in the company of mourners?

Does He hear another accusation like when they doubted He could do anything after 4 days? At the cross in Jesus near future they would shout: *“He saved others; he cannot save himself”* (Mt 27:42)?

Does He maybe feel the pain of a rescue that doesn’t come? *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* (Mt 27:46).

Does He see another tomb, but this time it’s *His* body that’s laid inside? Maybe...just maybe.

Let’s us fast-forward too. The tears, though very real, are momentary. They pass, and Jesus calls forth Lazarus in a resurrection that not only foreshadows His, but ours also.

Jesus raises Lazarus, knowing full well that His actions that day will finally mobilize His enemies to get Him killed.

That, however, has been His plan all along—a plan that, ironically, is left to Jesus’ chief human adversary, Caiaphas, the High Priest that year.

Caiaphas, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said: *“You know nothing at all. <sup>50</sup> Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.”* (vv. 49-50)

Jesus had come to die for His people and, by so doing, gather all God’s children together. (vv 51–52)

It’s good to see that Jesus doesn’t float through the events of our story unaffected. He is not a cold, calculating deity here, unmoved by human suffering. Our sin and pain wounded Him, but He bore them freely, not willing for death to have the final say for mankind.

Christ is the Resurrection and the Life after all!

As we rewind for one final look at the plot of our salvation, we see this was all foreshadowing, a preview of something bigger yet to come.

Fast-forward. Lazarus’ resurrection was coming on the heels of suffering and death.

Death was swallowed up by life!

Sound familiar?

What we witnessed in God's Word this morning in Bethany is a foreshadowing of Holy Week!

As Jesus picked up our sins and carried them to the cross. His mother cried as He died and was laid in a tomb. I don't want to ruin the ending, but you know very well what happened three days later.

And the cool thing for us, is that when we feel our sins weighing us down, when we don't know what to do next, even when we are in pain and fear for our life, we can fast forward to Jesus' resurrection and know that we too will rise again.

Our salvation is secure, our eternity is secure, because Jesus already took our sins, the sins of the world to the cross and paid for them.

As we repent and call upon the name of Jesus as our Savior, we can close our eyes, safe and secure in the knowledge of our salvation because we know how it ends because Jesus has already been there and back.

What we witnessed today in Bethany will be celebrated all the more gloriously in two weeks on the glorious Easter morning.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and mind through Christ Jesus!

Amen.