

11/08/20

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THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

**I AM THE LIFE
JOHN 11:28-57**

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Studying Jesus' final public miracle before His death and resurrection
1. Timing and location of this miracle are extremely important – many commentators place it a week and a half before Jesus' crucifixion in a town called Bethany – 2 miles from Jerusalem
 - a) On a normal week, Jerusalem was inhabited by tens of thousands of people
 - b) But this wasn't a normal week. Jerusalem was home to the Second Temple and it played host to the Feast of Passover
 - (1) During this time, Jerusalem grew to six times its normal size as Jews from all over the region would make their mandatory pilgrimage to the city
 - (2) That is exactly where Jesus and His disciples are headed
 2. On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus is met by messengers who have been sent by His dear friends, Mary and Martha
 - a) The message "Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick." Jesus' response "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the son of God may be glorified through it."
 - b) The apostle John make sure to remind us that Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus before he records what appears to be a very unloving response – so when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. (May appear to some that when He heard that he was sick, He did nothing)
 - c) Even in Jesus' inactivity, in His silence, He is working – even when it appears that He is doing nothing, He is working
- B. Then Jesus told His disciples that it was time to go back to Judea– region that was home to Jerusalem and Bethany
1. An idea that was not well received. Jesus added that they were going so that He could wake of Lazarus. Another thing the disciples did not understand. So Jesus made it plain. Lazarus is dead!
 2. Good ol' Thomas said "Okay, if Jesus is going to go die, let's go die with Him.
- C. As Jesus approached Bethany Martha ran out to meet Him
1. Immediately we see Martha's incomplete understanding of Jesus – "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Limiting the power of Jesus to His proximity
 2. "Your brother will rise again." – "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

- a) "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
 - b) Not "I can resurrect the dead or I can bring people to life" but, I AM the resurrection and the life.
 - (1) It's not something He does. It is who He is. Jesus is life. That is exactly how the Gospel of John begins – "In the beginning was the Word — and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him, nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life."
 - (2) He is the source of all life. He creates life out of nothing, He takes what is dead and breathes life into it. Life exists within Himself.
3. Martha was so busy looking to the future Kingdom that she missed the presence of the life-giving King
- a) Much of the church is in the same place – looking to the heavens for the coming Kingdom but missing out on the reality that the King is here.
 - b) The Kingdom of God is in your midst – one day there will be a resurrection of the dead, but the life-giving King is present now. He is working now!
 - c) Spend less time worrying about and guessing what the future holds and more time carrying out our present mission – the King has given the command

II. JESUS IS THE LIFE

John 11:28 And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you." 29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. 31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there." 32 Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. 34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" 37 And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" 38 Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

- A. Jesus has raised two people from the dead prior to this, but they had not been dead for four days
 - 1. Lazarus had been dead for four days. Do you know what happens to your body when it has been dead for four days? The Jews didn't have the same embalming process that we do. They didn't practice mummification like the Egyptians. They let allowed nature to take its course. They added some dried spices and sealed the body in a tomb to help with the smell but that was it.

2. When a someone dies and their heart stops beating oxygen stops moving through the body. Within three hours cells begin to die because of their lack of oxygen and blood starts to build up in the lower places while the muscles stiffen up. By the 24 hour mark all the heat has left to body. By 72 hours bacteria begins to spread in the body breaking down the cells and destroying tissue.
 - a) The tissue begins to decompose and release hydrogen sulfide and methane – an awful smell. I won't got into any more detail – but it is a horrific event
 - b) That is the state that Lazarus would have been in. Death is a terrible thing.
- B. Jesus has a very emotional response to this situation
1. He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. He wept. And then coming to the tomb He again groaned in Himself
 2. The crowds saw His grief and said “See how He loved him!” – which was a true statement. But a more accurate statement would have been “See how He loves us!”
 3. Jesus wasn't weeping over the death of Lazarus – He was weeping because He was about to perform a miracle that would prove His deity. That would make clear that He was the author of life. And word of that miracle would spread to the hundreds of thousands of Jews gathered two miles away celebrating the Feast of the Passover and many of them still would not believe.
 - a) This is why the prophet refers to Jesus as the man of sorrows well acquainted with grief because His sorrow is a cosmic sorrow
 - b) He is heartbroken over His lost children who prefer the stench of death to the aroma of life.
- C. 9 years ago, God really solidified this wonderful truth that Jesus is life – He is the author of life, He is the sustainer of life, and He is the resurrection bringing what was once dead to life
1. It was 9 years ago that they discovered large malignant tumors on my grandfather's brain, and it was 9 years ago that my son Isaiah was born
 2. In the months the followed my grandfather's diagnosis and my son's birth I had a front row seat to the stark contrast between death and life
 - a) As Isaiah began to see more clearly, to start focusing on faces my grandfather slowly lost his sight and his eyes became clouded
 - b) As Isaiah become more and more mobile, my grandfather had a more difficult time getting around and was eventually bed ridden
 - c) As Isaiah began to be more responsive to us, cooing and laughing my grandfather became less and less responsive and his communication was reduced to groans and squeezing our hands
 3. There is something wonderful and beautiful about a new born baby – so much excitement, so much potential – it testifies to the character of Jesus
 - a) Jesus our creator, the author of life, the one who gives good and perfect gifts, the one who provides new beginning – Jesus is life
 4. Equally, there is something very wrong about death
 - a) The finality of it. Having someone you love deeply taken away from you. No more deep conversations on a Sunday afternoon on the couch. No more sharing bowls of chocolate ice cream that are far too big by anyone's standards, no more sharing a laugh together or an embrace

- b) Death seems so contrary to the infinite nature of Jesus
 - (1) Just like Martha said, death stinks

39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" 41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

III. THE MIRACLE

- A. "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"
 - 1. Shows us that Martha is still looking to the future Kingdom and missing the present King
 - 2. It is easier to believe in what Jesus will do in the future than it is to believe who Jesus is in the present
 - 3. Jesus gently reminds her "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God? Did I not say you will go out into the world and make disciples of all nations? Did I not say to you teach them to observe all I have taught you and I will be with you until the end of the age? Did I now say to you I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it?"
- B. Jesus gives a few commands here – the main one "Lazarus, come forth!"
 - 1. Some suggest that Jesus had to be specific or the graves would have started to empty. Uses Lazarus' name.
- C. There are a couple of commands that Jesus gives that usually go unnoticed
 - 1. Take away the stone. Loose him, and let him go.
 - 2. This is typical of Jesus' miracles. He invites people to do what they can do. Feeding of the 4,000 and 5,000. The disciples served the food and collected the left overs. Water into wine. The servants filled the six stone jars and drew some out to give to the master of the banquet.
 - 3. They couldn't raise Lazarus from the dead, but they could move the stone. The disciples couldn't turn the 5 loaves and 2 fish into a meal that fed 5,000 but they could serve them.
 - a) We can't deliver people from addiction. We can't save marriages. We can't take someone who is dead in their sins and bring them to life. We can't heal someone who has suffered years of abuse. But Jesus can. And we can be present with them to meet their practical needs as Jesus meets their spiritual needs.

- b) It is Jesus who creates something out of nothing. It is Jesus who grants life. It is Jesus who saves sinners. But we can serve the food, we can roll away stones, we can loosen graveclothes. We can serve the children, we can keep a watchful eye on the service, we can clean the sanctuary, we can drop of meals. All the while pointing people to the one who gives life!
- c) We do what we can do, while God does what only He can do.

45 Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. 46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. 47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." 49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." 51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. 53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. 54 Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples. 55 And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. 56 Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, "What do you think—that He will not come to the feast?" 57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.

IV. WHAT SHALL WE DO?

- A. The Pharisees gathered a council and asked an important question – what shall we do?
 - 1. This man works many signs. That much cannot be denied. And now this Jesus has taken a man who was dead for four days and brought him back to life
 - a) What shall we do?
 - 2. The question behind the question is really “how do we silence him?”
 - 3. Amazing. The King has come. The Messiah. The Savior that they have been waiting for and they are worried about losing their place and their nation.
 - 4. All the evidence is there bit evidence means nothing to a heard heart. Evidence means nothing to someone who loves the temporary pleasures of this world.
 - a) Their dilemma is “we can’t kill Him, the people love Him. But we can’t let Him live or we will lose all our power. Our nation will never be the same!”
 - b) Politics really haven’t changed much in 2,000 years. “Vote for this candidate or the nation will never be the same! Put this person in office or the whole nation will perish!”
- B. Caiaphas the high priest stands up in front of the Sanhedrin and like a true politician says “You know nothing at all!”
 - 1. “The answer is obvious, we have to kill Him! It is the only solution. It is expedient for us that he should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.”

2. Notice Caiaphas doesn't say that it is good, or that it is just, or that it is right, that Jesus die – but it is expedient or beneficial. It is in our best interest.
 3. Little did Caiaphas know that his words were prophetic. It is beneficial that Jesus die so that the whole nation does not perish.
 - a) Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.
 - b) This is so encouraging especially when the world seems so out of control. God uses this corrupt politician, this traitorous, self-absorbed, self-serving, deceitful, arrogant religious leader to testify of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - c) There is no question who sits on the throne. Despite man's wicked ways, God is always in control
- C. As we look forward to Christ's return, let's not forget that He is here and at work. Let's not have our eyes so fixed on the clouds and that we miss what the Spirit of God is doing in our midst
1. ***2 Cor 2:14 (HCSB) But thanks be to God, who always puts us on display in Christ and through us spreads the aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. 15 For to God we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16 To some we are an aroma of death leading to death, but to others, an aroma of life leading to life. And who is competent for this? 17 For we are not like the many who market God's message for profit. On the contrary, we speak with sincerity in Christ, as from God and before God.***