

March 29, 2020 Pastor Rich Elseroad

Lazarus Lives!

John 11:1-45

In the Gospel of John there are only seven miracles reported of the thousands that Jesus performed. Interestingly, John doesn't call them miracles but rather he calls them signs. The raising of Lazarus is the seventh one. It is a climatic, culminating miracle.

John's purpose is clear in telling about this incredible event. Simply put, it is that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ and by believing have eternal life.

In this miracle we see how magnificently Jesus' humanity and divinity come together. First let's focus on Jesus' divinity and later when we get into the story, His humanity.

It was an undeniable miracle – witnessed by many who spread the story to 1000's of what they saw with their own eyes.

And now it comes to us. Do you believe this really happened? This is a very important question. Because if Jesus really did this then all He says about Himself and about you is true.

We live in a culture engulfed in believing in the supernatural and fantasy. There are phony stories, fake miracles, fake healings– fake everything. Could it be that Satan is at work here, confusing us about reality? The result is to diminish the real miracles of Jesus.

On the other side are those who have made a god out of science, in essence saying the miracles of Jesus couldn't happen, with many concluding that there is no God.

Science is a gift of God. *It is thinking God's thoughts after Him* as Thomas Kepler once said. I am grateful that science flourishes in our country. It has been a great blessing, but it isn't god.

Let's now plunge into the details of this story. But throughout I'd like you to keep asking yourself: 'Do you believe this really happened?'

Right from the start we don't know much about Lazarus. His name means "whom God helps." And how true that would be!

He had two sisters, Mary and Martha. Mary was the one who poured perfume on Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. Lazarus was Jesus' friend. Jesus "phileod" him. There are several words for love in Greek and this one is a friendship love. On the other hand, Jesus "agaped" Mary and Martha and that is the word for a divine, self-sacrificing love.

Think of it: Jesus had a friend. How human He was and how like us. Think of your best friend dying prematurely. How heartbreaking that would be. This is exactly Jesus' emotion in this account.

But hearing about Lazarus' sickness, nevertheless He delays going there. Jesus announces to His disciples, "This sickness will not end in death. No it is for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it. "

On Jesus' arrival in Bethany (a small town 2 miles from Jerusalem) He is confronted first by Martha. "If you had been here my brother would not have died." Jesus answers: "Your brother will rise again." Martha replies: "I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Then comes one of the most important verses in the entire Bible – one really directed to all people of all time.

**"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"**

Do you? Will you answer like Martha, "Yes, Lord I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God who has come into the world."

Jesus said: I am the Bread of Life – then He fed 5000,

Jesus said: I am the light of the world – then He healed a blind man.

Jesus said: I am the resurrection and the life – then He raised a dead man.

Mary too would confront Jesus. 'If only you had come in time.' Jesus saw the weeping. He was deeply moved. The words suggest a deep, deep emotion with perhaps an involuntary groan coming from His heart.

We hate death. So does God. Death is the result of sin and it is ugly.

Jesus comes to the grave. Then comes that immortal verse that joins Him with all humanity: "Jesus wept."

Once more He was deeply moved as He comes to the entrance of the grave. "Take away the stone." Jesus commanded.

"But," Martha declares, "he's been dead for 4 days and there will be a bad odor." Another less eloquent version might have said: "He stinketh!"

Jesus declares: "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God." Then Jesus prayed to the Father. "Father I thank you that you have heard Me. I know you always hear Me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here that they may believe you sent Me."

Then in a loud voice Jesus cried out: "Lazarus come out!"

Can you imagine watching this! It caused many to believe in Him. Did it happen?

In the still popular William Barclay Daily Bible Study series he writes: "It does not really matter whether or not Jesus literally raised a corpse to life in 30 AD. But it matters intensely that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life for every man who is dead in sin and dead to God today."

This is horribly wrong – shockingly so! If this event in the Bible is not factually true, then we have no salvation. The Bible is about reality – about truth – about eye witnesses. Yes Lazarus died. Yes, he was raised from the dead. Yes, he would die once more. And yes, he would be raised a second time to eternal life!

Jesus' public ministry was coming to an end. This monumental and final testimony of who He was would be rejected by the nation and leadership of

Israel, just as God knew it would. But we mustn't reject this miracle, this sign and the testimony of Jesus. We must answer like Martha: "Yes, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God who has come into the world."

I've picked 3 major lessons/applications from this true account. There are obviously more but these three stick out to me.

First, is the fact that we need saving. We were heading for death because of sin. In fact, if you don't believe in Jesus, you are right now dead in your sins. Our sins bind us up like Lazarus' grave clothes. Only Jesus can set us free!

Secondly, Jesus has power over death. There was a country preacher who commented that when Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus come out!" had He not limited that command to Lazarus alone, every corpse in the graveyard would have come forth.

The fear of death and the decline of our bodies can stalk us. But our faith in Jesus intercedes. His promise is clear: 'I will bring you through death... in a sense I will cancel it for you and make it nothing more than just falling asleep.'

When fear creeps up, think of Jesus. Think of His promises, His love and His words, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.'

Thirdly and finally, Jesus tells us about everlasting life, of Heaven, of a place with no death, no tears, of a paradise.

Believe in heaven like you believe in everything Jesus said and did. Plant the promise of it in your mind and heart and never let the vision of it disappear.

**"I tell you the truth, whoever hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." John 5:24**

Lazarus lives and so will all believers!!