

“Lazarus, Come Forth!”
John 11:28-44
Reading: Colossians 4:2-6

Bethany Baptist Church
April 18, 2021

...pray...

The apostle John selects *seven* of Jesus' *miracles* serve as *milestones* of His public *ministry* (ch. 1-11).

1. **John 2** – Jesus visited a *wedding* in Cana and averted a *shameful* public disaster for the groom & bride by turning *water* into *wine*.
2. **John 4** – Jesus met a *royal official* who came to Cana to beg Jesus to *heal* his son. The boy was dying back in *Capernaum* but Jesus healed him with a word from *Cana*.
3. **John 5** - Jesus healed a sick old man at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. “*Pick up your pallet and walk!*” But it was *Sabbath*...
4. **John 6** – Jesus *taught* thousands then *fed* with a little boy's *Happy Meal*.
5. **John 6** – That same night, Jesus *walked on water!*
6. **John 9** – Jesus spat on the ground then smeared mud over the eyes of a beggar born blind. The man sees and soon follows Jesus (noted today's story!). But it was *Sabbath*.

Today we witness Jesus' *seventh sign* – the **climax of His public ministry**. A sign that points to His *glory*, His *passion*, and His *salvation*.

Let's return to the funeral of Lazarus. Jesus is there, with Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha. Join me in John 11:25-44 (28-44).

Jesus demonstrates His *power over death*.

1. Jesus' *love* for His friends (vv.28-37).
2. Jesus' *prayer* to His Father (vv.38-42).
3. Jesus' *power* over death (vv.43-44).

Jesus loved His friends, and that means He mourned with them and for them
(Read vv.28-37).

1. The last we saw of Mary (20), she was *sitting* in the house, *receiving* mourners (*shiva*).
 - a. Jesus had apparently *first* sent word for Martha first, but *now* He sends Martha back for Mary.
 - i. She enters the house *quietly* and says to Mary *secretly*, “*The Teacher is here, and He is calling you.*”
 - ii. Martha (24) had just confessed Jesus as *Lord, Messiah, and Son of God*...now she speaks of Him as *Teacher*...
 - iii. ...the ultimate *Explainer* – the ultimate *source of truth!*
 - b. Mary gets up *quickly* and leaves the house *quietly*. Jesus stays *outside* the village, in the place where He spoke to Martha.
 - i. Mary’s exit was *quiet* and *quick*, but **not unobserved!**
 - ii. All of this *carefulness*, reflected in John’s vocabulary (*secretly & quickly*), and in Jesus’ *waiting* outside the village, probably tells us that Jesus prefers to *avoid* another *showdown* with the Jews.
 - iii. Nonetheless, as soon Mary *silently scurries* through the door, they get up to follow her. They *assume* she’s headed to Lazarus’ grave to *weep*.
 - iv. And it appears that Martha goes with them.

2. Then (33) Mary *comes* to Jesus, *sees* Jesus, *worships* Jesus, and *speaks* to Jesus.
 - a. She *comes*. He called for her and she obediently, quickly, came.
 - b. She *sees*. She is Jesus' friend, and she *knows* Him by sight.
 - c. She *worships*. John is very specific here: *Mary...fell at His feet*. And Jesus let her! He was *happy* to be *worshiped*!
 - d. She *speaks*. "*Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.*" The same *first response* as from Martha (21)!
 - i. She *speaks* through her *weeping*, she *speaks* with her face *bowed* to the ground, but she *speaks*....
 - ii. And while Martha is *outspoken* and Mary is *quiet*....
 - iii. Both voice the same *disappointment*: "*if **only** You had been here.*" As if to say: "*where were You when we **needed** You...?*"
 - iv. "*Lord, if You had been here, my brother would **not** have died!*"
3. Jesus **doesn't** *comment* on Mary's *complaint*, but He takes in her *weeping*, and the *weeping* of the Jews. The mourners' *weeping* is loud!
 - a. And Jesus' *response* (33) is very *intense*.
 - b. He was *deeply moved in spirit*.
 - i. This translates a rare word that suggests the *snorting* of a *stallion*!
 - ii. So **not** *sadness*, but *agitation*.
 - c. He was *agitated* and *troubled*. → Strong emotion!

- d. Jesus **wasn't** simply *sorrowful* or *sympathizing*, He's *indignant*!
- i. But *why*...?
 - ii. Perhaps because the *professional mourners* seem a little *superficial*.
 - iii. Perhaps because **Mary**, like **Martha**, seems to have *forgotten* His promise (4) that, "*This sickness is **not to end in death**, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.*"
 - iv. Or perhaps **Jesus** is *stirred up* because *sin* and *death* have such a *soul-crushing impact* on the people that He *loves*!
 1. An *impact* He will soon *reverse* for Lazarus...
 2. And *afterwards*, on Golgotha, *reverse completely* for all His people!
- e. "**Where** have you laid him?" (They are *still* on the road *outside* the village.) It is probably **Mary** and **Martha** who answer, "*Lord, come and see.*"
- f. But *before* they move on, **Jesus wept**.
- i. This statement is *emphatic (riveting)* because it is *terse*! In the middle of this *long, detailed, complicated* account, John wants you to stop and think:
 1. As He *takes* in this scene: the *weeping* sisters (friends), the *crowd* of mourners, the *effects* of the Fall & sin...
 2. Jesus simply, silently **weeps**.
 - ii. According to the underlying vocabulary, the mourners *wept loudly* as Jesus wept *silently*....

- iii. Jesus is the *man of sorrows, and acquainted w/ grief* (Isa 53).
- iv. Jesus is a *great high priest who sympathizes w/ all our weaknesses* (Heb 4).
- v. “*Are you weary, are you heavy hearted? Tell it to Jesus! Tell it to Jesus! Are you grieving over joys departed, tell it to Jesus alone! Tell it to Jesus! Tell it to Jesus! He is a friend that’s well known! You’ve no other, such a friend or brother. Tell it to Jesus alone!*”
- vi. *Jesus wept....*

4. And as Jesus quietly wept, the Jews divided! Read vv.36-37.

- a. We’ve seen this before; Jesus’ *miracles and teaching and character offend most* of the Jews, but *draw some*. **E.g. ...**
 - i. **John 9** - When He healed the *blind beggar* on a Sabbath, the Pharisees *divided* over Jesus’ *identity*.
 - ii. **John 10** – When He previewed His *crucifixion & resurrection* with an allegory about *shepherds, sheep, hirelings and wolves*, the Jews *divided* over Jesus’ *stinging teaching*.
- b. Now, standing *outside* the village, many are impressed by Jesus’ *love* for Lazarus.
- c. But some *complain*. They cite the example (Jn 10) of the *same blind beggar* we met weeks earlier *outside the temple*; Jesus *healed* Him by smearing *mud* on his eyes.
 - i. Couldn’t the *Galilean rabbi* apply the same power to *cure* Lazarus before his sickness *killed* him...?

So as Jesus weeps by Lazarus’ tomb, the sisters cry and the Jews bicker.

Then Jesus *lifts His eyes and prays to His Father* (read vv.38-42).

1. Between vv.37&38, the sisters *lead* Jesus and the rest to the cemetery.
2. Jewish *cemeteries* were *outside* the villages so those passing-by would not accidentally become *ritually unclean*.
 - a. Lazarus' grave was a *natural cave* that had probably had its *floor* leveled and *shelves* carved into its interior walls to hold bodies.
 - b. A *stone* (large flat disk) was laid against the *entrance* to keep out *animals* and *grave robbers*.
 - c. Does *this picture* suggest ***another*** grave to you...?
3. Jesus is still upset (*deeply moved*) as He *approaches the grave*. He issues a terse order: "*Remove the stone.*" The stone that *seals* Lazarus' grave.
 - a. Martha is *fretful!* Despite Jesus' promises, the *first thing* that comes Martha's mind is that her brother is *dead, really dead, four days dead*.
 - b. Which means the odor *sealed in the cave* is **foul!** "*Lord, by this time there will be a **stench**...!*"
 - c. So Jesus *reminds* her (40) of His promise (4): "*This sickness is **not** to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the **Son of God** may be **glorified** by it.*"

4. So *they lifted* the stone from the **cave**. Jesus *lifted* His eyes to **heaven**.

a. He prayed for all to hear: “**Father**, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.

i. Jesus addresses God as His *Father*. That was **unusually intimate** in 1st century Judaism. And *that* was a part of Jesus’ point.

ii. Jesus is **confident** that *God the Father* hears Him.

iii. But He wants the **crowd** to know that God *hears* Him.

iv. Because He wants the crowd to **believe** that God *sent* Him.

1. This is a *huge theme* in Jesus’ teaching (Gospel of John).

2. He is the *Son*, sent by the *Father*, on the *Father’s mission*.

b. *Believe* (42). You just can’t get away from *belief* in Jesus’ teaching!

i. He *calls* you to believe that He is the *Resurrection & the Life*.

ii. He *calls* you to believe that He is *Lord, Messiah, Son of God, Coming One*.

iii. He *calls* you to believe that He *has the ear of the Father*, even in matters of *life and death*!

Because having the *ear* of the Father brings *glory* to the Son.

It's true! Jesus' has power over life and death!

1. **Four** days earlier, *Mary* and *Martha* had stretched out a *long sheet* on a *shelf* in that *cave*.
 - a. Then they laid Lazarus' *body* (their *brother's* body!) on the *sheet*, his *feet* close to one end.
 - b. His *body* was *sprinkled* with *aromatic spices*.
 - c. The rest of the sheet was *folded back* over his body, until *that* end reached back to His *feet*. Now he's *covered*, though *loosely*.
 - d. His *arms* were *bound around* with a *strip of cloth*.
 - e. His *feet* were *also bound*.
 - f. His *face* was covered again with a *separate cloth*.

2. The *cave is opened* and Jesus ***cries out*** with a ***loud voice*** (John's account is emphatically redundant!)
 - a. **The voice that *has preached to thousands* now *preaches to one!***
 - b. Perhaps your translation reads (43), "*Lazarus, come forth!*"
 - c. But Jesus' actual words were as *terse* and *commanding* as the rest of this conversation: "***Lazarus! Hear! ... Come out!***" (pause)
 - d. Old preachers like to say that if Jesus **hadn't** called for Lazarus *by his name*, our Lord would have emptied that *entire cemetery!*
 - e. **Follow w/ me as I read v.44!**

- f. There is a *dramatic difference* in the *decibels* between **vv.43 & 44!**
 - i. Jesus **cried** out “**Lazarus! Hear! ... Come out**”
 - ii. But now He speaks some *simple common sense* to the *ecstatic sisters*: “**Unbind him, and let him go...**”

And we can be certain that’s *exactly* what they did...!

There is a lot of truth *wrapped up* in the Story of Lazarus! Let’s *sum it up* with **three points**: God’s *glory*, Christ’s *passion*, Your *faith*.

1. How does the *sign of Lazarus* bring God glory?

- a. The story of Lazarus *begins* with Jesus making *this promise* (which everyone seemed to *forget!*):
 - i. **V.4** – “*This sickness is **not** to end in death, but for **the glory of God.**”*
- b. Then near the *end* of the story, Jesus *reminds* Martha: **v.40** – “*Did I not say to you that if you **believe** you will see **the glory of God?**”*
- c. So what did we see that brings God glory?
- d. **God is glorified when you believe that God sent Jesus to *do* what only God can do – give life to the dead.**

2. How does the sign of Lazarus *preview* Christ’s *passion*?

- a. Jesus said He is the *resurrection* and the *life*, then promptly raised Lazarus from the grave.
- b. That was a preview of His own imminent *crucifixion* and *resurrection* at Passover. The preview is defined by the details of the story.
 - i. Like Lazarus, Jesus was buried in a *stone-sealed grave*.
 - ii. So like Lazarus, Jesus was *really dead*.

- iii. Like Lazarus, Jesus was *wrapped* in burial cloths.
- iv. Like Lazarus, the stone was *rolled away*.
- v. Like with Lazarus, **Jesus was raised to life by the power of God!** 2X

3. **God's glory & Jesus' Passion brings us to our third take-away: what do believers *believe*?** The *necessity of faith* is all over the *Story of Lazarus*.

- a. Jesus asked Martha if she *believed* Him.
- b. *"I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies... Do you believe this?"*
- c. Martha said to Him: *"Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."*
 - i. *Lord, Christ, Son of God, Expected One (Sent One).*
 - ii. *.... Resurrection & Life (everlasting).*
- d. **Friend, *do you believe this?***

...pray...