

10/24/2021 - John 11:28-44 - "Christ, Our Hope in Life and Death"

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Date: 24 October 2021

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[0 : 00] Let's dive into the message today. Last week, we studied the first portion of this, what they call a pericope. It's a narrative from a beginning to an end.

And we've been able to look at three lessons that we were able to learn about death last week. How about that for a Sunday morning pick-me-up, right?

So we learned about that. What do we make of death? And so there was a lot going on in the passage that we were able to study last week. We were able to break that down into three lessons.

I was fishing for seven lessons, but we were able to do three lessons. And we saw the tension sort of rising in the passage between danger being right around the corner, Jesus returning to Jerusalem, where basically he just left and people were ready to stone him.

He's returning. There's danger there. We saw what I was trying to communicate as like a theme of like a dance that was going on between death and Lazarus' condition and Jesus' love for this family.

[1 : 13] And also the dance between death and life as he spoke with Martha and even spoke with his disciples. And we see that the disciples and Martha, their faith was pretty much put on display.

And this week, we're gonna be continuing with that. The text that we start with today actually talks and connects the previous passage when she had said this.

So this is why I debrief us a little bit of where we were for the contextual understanding of scripture. And so we're gonna finish up this section and this will walk us through Jesus' great sign of raising a man who had been dead for four days.

You know, people being risen from the dead isn't something that we haven't read about within the pages of scripture. There are four accounts within the Old Testament of somebody being raised from the dead in Elijah's raising of the widow in 1 Kings 17.

Elijah's raising of the Shunammite widow's son, the woman's son in 2 Kings 4. And then also the posthumous death of bones being thrown into Elijah's grave and then all of a sudden the bones come to life.

[2 : 38] I mean, this is, or them touching Elijah's bones and then the person coming to life just by touching in 2 Kings 13. I mean, wild instances of people coming to life.

And also King Saul using the witch of Endor to raise Samuel in 1 Samuel 28. Within the Old Testament, we see raising from the dead.

We see in the New Testament, there's actually three accounts. But the other two being found in Luke, Luke 7, the widow's son in Nain, and then Jairus' son in Luke 8.

And obviously right here in front of us, John 11. But we gotta ask ourselves, what sets this account apart?

Why is it set apart? It's unique, we can definitely observe, because there's no other gospel account of Lazarus' resurrection.

- [3 : 39] It's only in John. It's not mentioned in the other gospels. We can say that it's also unique because of the duration that this guy has been dead.
- We went through a graphic and actually provided images of a decaying body for everyone on the screen last week. That's a joke. If anybody was missing last week, that did not happen.
- The attendees last week can attest. But we saw, and we're trying to understand that this guy was four days dead, and that is significant.
- That sets this apart. And so the text today, as we're going to see it, and let me put the sermon title for any note takers.
- The title is, Christ, Our Hope in Life and Death. And we're going to see and understand today grief from two different angles, two different perspectives, as I'm calling it, from a divine perspective and also from a human perspective.
- [4 : 52] Before we look into the first perspective, let's pray. Father, we place you at the center of our gathering. We turn to your word, and we look upon supernatural words that bring life.
- The very words that you spoke to Lazarus is what we read. This is powerful. So help me, Father, Father, to proclaim your word with great precision as you intended them to be understood.
- And Father, help us all to have open ears and soft hearts to receive your word today. Praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.
- Amen. So the first thing we see is a perspective here. The first perspective is a divine perspective of grief and death.
- Look with me. As the text continues in this pericope, it says in verse 28, when she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, the teacher is here and is calling for you.
- [6 : 08] And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. When then, now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.
- 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.
- 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 have not, would not have died.
- Verse 28 through 32, we see that what was going on between Martha's response to Jesus' delay was almost mirrored with Mary's response to Jesus' delay.
- And to simply reiterate, they were saying, it's too late, Jesus. There is no hope right now.
- [7 : 21] Our brother is four days dead. Jesus, if you had been here, no hope. And this is how this section begins to unfold of there being an absence of hope between Martha's first response and now Mary's.
- We learn something about grief, church, here. We learn something about grief. Grief is nasty. And humanity has become a victim of such a season as a direct effect from the imputed sin of Adam.
- And I want to unpack that as we go because that is significant within looking at this passage. Because while grief was part of God's plan, everything is according to God's plan, nothing happens outside of his knowing.
- However, grief was never part of his original design. And Jesus is now going to witness very personally grief.
- And look at what happens in verse 33. when Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

[9 : 08] Jesus enters in to the precise effects that stemmed back to Adam and Eve in the garden in the fall, that he was surrounded in weeping.

And this is significant because this is to be understood. I mean, I've heard some people cry. I probably haven't heard weeping. This is profusely crying in its sense of the term.

And this is actually according to Jewish tradition temptation because custom says that families who were going through grief would have to hire at least two flute players to aid in their grief and also hire a professional weeping woman to help weep and to guide that grieving emotion that you have someone to weep with.

This is all according to the Mishnah. And this was happening. We see that this makes a lot of sense with that in mind, this sort of organized weeping time because in verse 31, we understand that when Mary left to meet Jesus, when the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her because they were supposed to in this week-long grieving process, they saw Mary rise quickly and go out and they followed her supposing that she was taking this weeping ceremony, this grieving season to the place of the tomb.

And so, now we see Jesus in the middle of this profuse crying. Everyone is weeping. There's professional weepers.

[11 : 00] And now, now Jesus is facing the effects of the fall. surrounded in a profuse cry.

And his response, deeply moved, greatly troubled. To be deeply moved is not moving him in tears yet.

To be deeply moved, that's by the sense of the original term, this is being outraged. This is Jesus being irate.

And he was greatly troubled. This is to indicate being disturbed. This is mental distress. And in these two emotions, deeply moved and greatly troubled, Jesus calls for the location of the tomb.

He said in verse 34, where have you laid him? And they said to him, Lord, come and see. Doesn't this kind of reflect for a moment?

[12 : 11] Back at the beginning of the gospel of John, when he was calling disciples, and where they were pointing to Jesus, the Messiah, saying, come and see life.

Now we have humanity saying, come and see death. death. We see a complete reversal occurring in this text.

And you can almost sense the tension within him. I would imagine that his trip over to the tomb, being irate and disturbed, was probably similar to a volcano about to erupt in just inner anguish and toil.

Jesus encounters the sorrow that death provoked, and he's mad. Why? We have to ask ourselves, why is he mad?

With all sadness around, why? I mean, is Jesus not sympathetic for the people weeping? I would imagine that he'd break down and probably put his arms around Mary and Martha and even the Jews who were all weeping?

[13 : 28] Is he not sympathetic towards other people? Or, church, could it be that his response is directed toward the reality that death even exists in this time?

Death being the greatest enemy of God and stems back to the fall. And that all this weeping surrounding him is simply collateral damage of those effects from the fall.

I think that that is simply why Jesus is mad, greatly troubled. It was sin that exposed death and illness, along with all the other plethora of issues that we have in the world.

Turn on CNN or Fox News, whichever weapon you choose. And, you know, you see the world is messed up. And it's not going in a good direction.

And it has started and we can identify very back, very far back here in Genesis 3 where it all started. And what we're seeing here, church, this is a divine perspective of grief.

[14 : 46] grief. That it was not the weeping of the people surrounding him that was causing him grief. It was at the face of death, of going to the tomb, the shortest verse in the Bible, verse 35.

Jesus wept. This is a unique word in and of itself. It's a different word to distinguish from the other weeping that was going on around him by even the professionals.

This is not crying due to sorrow or grief, but of physical pain and anger. Crying because you're so mad.

And Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, the Word of Life, cries, experiencing the reality of death, the effect of the fall, and the human emotions that he entered into.

And this is huge because what you have is a storm of divinity and humanity. The divine perspective is seeing the problem with sin.

[16 : 04] Humanity is staring right at the face of death and the reality of the heaviness that grief has on our human emotions and our lives.

And so this is kind of a dual encouragement, I believe, for us as a church. Because Jesus enters into tears with those around from a divine perspective of the distorted reality from sin.

sin. But he also exposes to the world that Jesus can feel with us.

That Jesus can feel for us. Because Jesus was there staring death in the face. And this is something, grieving is not something that should be looked at.

If you grew up in kind of like a rugged household and your dad told you that only sissies cry to go find somewhere else to cry and that nobody wants to see that, Jesus proves that it is not sinful, it is not shameful to sorrow.

[17 : 20] Jesus models as well, even from, regardless of the perceived hopeless, unlooking critics, we see that there's many instances of people's kind of perspectives of the situation.

It's usually wrong. And they say, the Jews said, see how he loves him? But others said to them, but some of them said, could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?

They're all evaluating why Jesus is crying and it's very complex. It's the storm of divinity and humanity coming to a hole.

hole. And he's weeping. What we should see is that death is worth shedding a tear for. It's worth being weak for.

It's certainly worth grieving for. Hebrews 4.15 assures us that we have a high priest who is able to sympathize in our weakness.

[18 : 22] And it's passages that prove it to be so. And Romans 12.15 instructs us to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep.

Yes, fathers, weeping with those who weep. Why is death worth shedding a tear for? Because Jesus did.

And in that, we understand that death is a reflective time in our weakness to cling to the one who is strong, who brings life, not death.

And what a text like this teaches us is to realign our grief, to see it from a perspective as Jesus saw it, that death is real, but according to the gospel, death never gets the last word.

And yes, we're not minimizing the gravity and just telling people who are grieving to suck it up, buttercup. You know, it's going to be okay, isn't Jesus on the throne?

[19 : 26] It's not giving us a disposition of minimizing somebody's grief, but Jesus is the one who gives us hope. And we're going to see that in our next perspective.

And the second perspective is as the text continues in verse 38, divine perspective of grief and hope. And it says, then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb.

It was a cave and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, take away the stone. And 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.

Jesus said to her, did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God? We see a similar emotion taking place in this passage.

We see that he was deeply moved again, the same term that was used, meaning disturbed and Jesus was still angry.

[20 : 51] Jesus stares at the face of death. I think the greatest depiction of the face of death is how they describe the cave in this. That just as a face has a mouth that's open, a cave has an opening.

And right here we see that that cave, that mouth, by the sense of the metaphor, is closed. It is sealed, just as lips can be sealed, shut.

And Jesus stares at the face of death, the tomb, in which the stone has been rolled to lock the mouth, as if death in this occurrence has already had the last word.

And Jesus says, take away the stone. Open death's mouth. This is what they call a contest.

It says, open the mouth of death. And Martha reiterates a little bit of a sense of unbelief still in this passage regardless of her confession previously.

[21 : 58] She says, Lord, you don't want to go in there. You've seen a body. I'm sure you know that after four days you don't want to go in there. It smells wretched.

You don't want to see your friend like that. This is not a time for an open casket ceremony. It's four days into decomposition. And in verse 40, they pry open the mouth of death.

And after removing the stone, Jesus lifted his attention upward. He prays a prayer of thanksgiving. He gives us insight of that unity between him and the Father and also that this moment has been upon his prayers for those who were around him to believe.

And when he said these things in verse 43, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

Come out. Come out. Come out. Come out. Come out. Come out. You could imagine being the tomb, the mouth of death, that voice reverberating within the corners of that cave.

[23 : 17] And at this call, a heart began to beat again. A nervous system began to spark again.

Breath, at the call of his command, breath entered the lungs of a dead man. And we receive that insight in this passage.

The flesh that was rotting and decaying, the stench, all became whole at the call of his command.

D.A. Carson actually makes an interesting point that it's good that he specified Lazarus to come out because based on the authority of Christ's call, that would have, if he didn't specify, all the tombs of the dead would probably have opened and it would be quite a Halloween party.

D.A. Carson didn't mention the Halloween party. That's mine. And look at what happens in verse 44. The man who had died.

[24 : 34] Notice the language that the narrator uses in this passage. It's not Lazarus who had died. It's not take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead man, they're not even referring to Lazarus by his first name.

They're indicating his condition. And this is important because they are saying that this dead man, he wasn't merely fallen asleep.

He was in a coma. This guy was dead. John is saying this guy has been passed. The man who had died came out.

His hands and feet bound with linen strips and his faith wrapped with a cloth. And Jesus said to him, unbind him and let him go.

Here comes Lazarus. Lazarus, a man whose body was previously decaying, four days into that decaying state. You don't want to know what happens at day four.

[25 : 36] It's a bloating phase and the decaying process. It's something that is a true miracle and sign and wonder. And here comes Lazarus, grave clothes and all.

And now he wasn't mummified. He didn't float out of the tomb as some people speculate because he was wrapped in cloth. They weren't mummifying him. Ancient tradition in this time period, he was much more loosely wrapped with layers of spices and linen and he was probably able to at least waddle out.

Imagine that sight. A guy who's been dead four days is like waddling out of the tomb and you could imagine the disoriented like how did I get in here? Where am I going? But obviously he could see the light of day.

And so here comes Lazarus, grave clothes and all. All at the time of Christ's divine call and command for life.

The same call that raises the spiritually dead to spiritually life. It's the same call that the shepherd calls sheep to follow him.

[26 : 54] church, Jesus commanded the grave's mouth to open so that the grave could declare the glory of God.

It's a declaration that Jesus Christ has the last word. Jesus Christ has power over death.

death. This is his design. Life. Jesus is stronger than death. It gives the church confidence when we see the words in the Bible that say, death, where is your victory?

Death, where is your sting? We can confidently even mock death as this passage gives to us. Death cannot hold onto that which Christ clings tightly.

Death's grip is great. Christ's grip is greater. Unbind him, he says. The grave clothes seem to represent sin's hold upon us, symbolic of sin's hold upon us.

[28 : 08] The shackles that once were bound to us in our spiritual death, he says to this former dead man, you are free from death.

This, church, is the new exodus of God's people unfolding before us. The raising of Lazarus is the consummation of Jesus declaring his power over death.

life. And those who believe in him become beneficiaries of the life that Jesus gives eternally. It's interesting how our attention has shifted so far off of our grief, right?

Weeping. Wait, oh yeah, we were just talking about weeping in the first perspective. Oh, you mean that hopeless state that we originally had?

the test that Martha who professed that she believes that Jesus is the Son of God, the Almighty Messiah, and all of a sudden she's doubting to even open the grave in our passage.

[29 : 27] She flunked the test of faith. Mary who flunked the test of faith and the disciples who think that they're going to Jerusalem to die, simply saying, I told you so.

Why did you not believe in me? Church, don't allow our grief to expose doubt in God's love, in God's control, in God's promise.

Knowing that he has the power to work super naturally, we can accredit a lot of the natural order and how we view life with gravity and the speed of things, you know, to secular science and everything like that, but God is not bound to our limitations.

He works supernaturally, even to within an instant and call of command to bring life from death. And knowing that should bring us great confidence that we can rest in our grief, experiencing our inner turmoil, our emotional turmoil, we can know and trust that his plan is best.

Because if the one who can act fails to act, we have to trust in his plan above all, regardless of the outcome.

[30 : 56] This is the humbling conclusion of Job that he experienced in the book of Job when he, when his conclusion after experiencing his great loss. It's the same for Martha and Mary in this passage as they grieved their loss.

And church, it's the same for us today during our loss. You see, John 11 is such a vibrant testimony of what Jesus Christ has accomplished for us.

Do you hear me this morning? John 11 is such a powerful testimony of what Christ has accomplished for us. Paul, let me explain.

Paul says in Ephesians 2, 1, that we are the ones who were dead in our trespasses. Dead in our trespasses and sins.

But Jesus, being the resurrection and the life in this passage, the Almighty over life and death has called the church from this spiritual death, this hideous, decayed process.

[32 : 18] We've been dead. Some of us, if we want to count our lives by the numbers, that if we were born into sin, we've been decaying for years and years and years until we have heard the good news of Jesus Christ.

And he has called us from that spiritual death, that healing process of our decayed state, and he brings us alive with him. And this deserves nothing but to marvel at God's love and power.

And according to John 11, the only appropriate response of all of this is simply to believe, to confess that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God.

John 5, 25 says, The hour is coming, I say to you, the hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

And now, I usually write a conclusion, but this is the conclusion. This sign is the conclusion of the gospel.

[33 : 37] This is the tipping point. It's all downhill from this point. If you've been plugged in with this series, I don't know what else to say. It's either you hear and trust and believe in these words that Jesus Christ is the Son of God or reject it.

There's only two ways to respond and conclude our time. And if you have been listening and you have ears to hear this morning that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, what are you waiting for?

Apart from him, you're stinky. You're decaying. You don't want to go in that tomb apart from Christ. Christ. And the good news of Jesus Christ is he is willing and he is able to open your tomb and allow you to walk out in life.

Maybe I don't even sense the gravity of this text as I should. Don't let your grave have the final word.

It is available to you here and now. Our hope in life now and death is in Christ alone.

[35 : 02] That church is God's design. Let's pray. So people of faith say Forbes they're present as a world as instituted as a