

## “Resurrection of Lazarus”

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### Opening Prayer

Good Evening, hopefully you are doing well wherever you may be. No matter what your circumstance may be and no matter where you are, do know that we are in prayer for you and that we care! Your church is still here, and if there is anything that we can be doing for you do not hesitate to let us know. God can and will see us through all of this craziness we are experiencing in our world, we can trust in Him. He certainly cares. In fact in our scripture reading for this evening it is very apparent that we do not serve a Creator who is aloof, but rather one who is deeply invested in us. We often picture God/Jesus/the Holy Spirit upon the throne and as being very cool towards us because He knows all. We often think that the Lord does not understand us or does not share in our emotions because He doesn't have them. Beloved Congregation, as the resurrection of Lazarus shows, this is simply not true. We serve a Lord who knows, cares, and understands... even if He sees the big picture when we do not.

Our miracle for today picks up where our sermon on Sunday left off. Jesus, after talking about how He is the good shepherd, plainly tells the Jewish leaders in John 10:30 that “I and the Father are one.” He tells them that He is God in human flesh, and their response is to pick up stones to stone Him to death for blasphemy. As it isn't Jesus's time He eludes them and many people really begin to believe because of His great miracles that He is the Christ in spite of the hatred from the religious teachers. In chapter eleven, immediately after all this, Jesus is faced with the illness and death of a beloved friend, Lazarus. Lazarus is the brother to Mary and Martha, and it is noted in verse three that Jesus loves Lazarus. However, when Jesus hears the news about His dear friend being sick, His response is rather strange. Verse four reads “But when Jesus heard this, He said, ‘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.’” We also read in verse six “So when He heard that he [Lazarus] was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.” If you haven't heard this story before or studied it much, then this likely seems strange to you... as it should.

We often take for granted the great miracles that Jesus performs. This miracle, raising up a dead man named Lazarus, has been talked about in the church so much in the last two thousand years that it has in many ways become commonplace. Many of us knew even before reading this today that Jesus was going to raise Lazarus back up. We also know in the back of our minds that Jesus had bigger plans in mind, but the people of His day wouldn't have known that before it happened. When Jesus says that “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God,” that sounds a whole lot like Jesus is planning on healing Lazarus from illness. But

of course that isn't the plan, and so when Jesus stays put for two more days, He essentially lets Lazarus die.

Again, we know what Jesus's plan is here, but no one else would have. In fact when Jesus tells the disciples in verse eleven that Lazarus has fallen asleep and that He is going to wake him up, the disciples assume that Lazarus must be recovering since he is asleep. Jesus then plainly tells them the truth... Lazarus has died. Put yourself in the shoes of these people that Jesus interacts with prior to Lazarus's resurrection. The disciples, Mary and Martha, and the others who are mourning are all shocked that Jesus would let Lazarus die. Even though Jesus mentions several times (vs. 11, 15, 23) that He is going to raise Lazarus back up, it is understandable that none of them understand what Jesus is saying. They are used to Him speaking in parables, they are massively grieving, and they are questioning why Jesus who has shown great power would allow this to happen. While we know in hindsight how great Jesus's plan is, Beloved Congregation, I am sure you understand this in your life today.

If we are honest we often feel this way. We question why God would allow something so difficult and painful to happen to us. He promises us good, He tells us to not fear in the Bible 365 times, and yet horrible stuff still happens. In the case of Martha and Mary, it was the death of their brother. As Mary tells Him in verse thirty-two, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." For us it is more like "Lord, if you had been here my child would not have grown ill," or "Lord, if you had been here I wouldn't have lost my job," or "Lord, if you had been here our world would not be so painful." Beloved Congregation, we should take note of Jesus's reaction to Mary, and understand that it also applies to us. In verses 33 we read "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled." We should take note that Jesus here cares. He isn't aloof, He isn't pitying Mary and Martha, He legitimately is emotionally devastated... just like you and me. This leads to the shortest verse in the Bible, verse thirty-five. "Jesus wept."

Jesus weeps at the death of His friend, and He weeps because the people around Him mourn. Jesus does this in spite of the fact that He knows Lazarus will not remain dead. He does this in spite of the fact that He is God in human flesh, that He is so much greater. Beloved Congregation, God understands and cares about us even though He sees the big picture. We honestly will never see and understand everything because we are not God. There will always be hurts. "Why did my mom have to pass so soon?" "Why is my family so broken?" "Why do people still hurt, and starve, and suffer?" In our sinful world we will never understand everything. The Lord, even though He does, and even though He knows the good outcome, still grieves with us. He cares. If there is one thing that you should take away from the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus, it is just that... the Lord understand and He cares.

As we continue to deal with a worldwide shutdown over Coronavirus, we would do well to remember that our Lord weeps with us. These are tough times for many reasons. They are

frightening and anxiety filling. But our Lord still reigns and He still cares. John 11 ends with Jesus raising Lazarus, and even though Lazarus does still die again, he still has eternal life to look forward to. We too have that assurance, yet even as we suffer now, our Creator understand and cares. Let us pray.

### **Closing Prayer**