

I AM

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

DATE

September 12 & 13

WEEK

5 of 7

OVERVIEW

John 11:1-55

KEY VERSES

John 11:25-26

SETTING THE STAGE

By chapter 11 in the Gospel of John, we are near to the last week of Jesus' life leading to the cross. Jesus had already turned water into wine, healed a lame man, fed the 5,000, walked on water, healed a man born blind, and crossed racial and cultural boundaries by talking to the Samaritan woman at the well.

The reputation of Jesus was firmly established and His life was becoming increasingly in danger at the hands of the Pharisees. Jesus had been traveling for three years or more with His 12 disciples and though we do not know many personal relationships beyond those 12 and the parents of Jesus, this particular chapter unveils dear friends of Jesus. Throughout this gospel, John has been very specific in wanting the reader to believe in Jesus. This gospel writer clearly wants the life of Jesus to be communicated even more so than the miracles of Jesus.

Perhaps no other chapter in the Gospel of John communicates both the divinity and humanity of Jesus as does John 11. We will see Jesus delay a response. We will see Jesus challenged by a friend. We will see Jesus moved to the point of tears as He weeps openly for His friends. Yet in this same story we will see the power of God and the glory of God fully exposed through resurrection and life, paving the way for what would happen in a matter of days on the cross and in the tomb.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. Friend in Need
2. Friendship Challenged
3. Truth Revealed
4. Relationship Redeemed

THINGS TO KNOW

- Bethany is a small town about 2 miles outside Jerusalem.
- John chapters 1-11 cover approximately 3-3 ½ years of the ministry of Jesus. John chapters 12-21 cover one week, plus some appearances after the Resurrection.
- John 11 is the true turning point on the road to Calvary.

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THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

Introduction

Friendship is a wonderful aspect of life. Friends are people you can depend on in any given situation. A true friend is often more reliable than a family member. Proverbs 18:24 “A man of too many friends come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Friends are those people whom you laugh with, cry with, and simply do life with by choice.

It is very typical for us to think about Jesus as a teacher, preacher, religious leader, miracle worker, and of course the Son of God. We quickly think of stories of Jesus walking and talking with His disciples, teaching them while traveling to various villages, towns, and cities throughout Israel. Some stories may come to mind of Jesus talking with strangers without revealing names, such as the woman at the well or the leper who was healed. Jesus was always accessible to the people, but we still envision Him in a role that is on a pedestal of sorts.

We rarely think of the human side of Jesus as one who had friends and normal life to some degree. Jesus was the son of a carpenter; therefore, it is likely He was a carpenter during His teenage years and early adulthood. Jesus likely grew up fishing with His dad Joseph and friends. That is what I said, friends. Jesus was fully human, and He had friends. He had a sense of humor as evidenced in some of the phrases and wordplay that He used, which is sometimes lost in the English translation.

Today as we look at John 11, it is contextually a story about friends of Jesus. Three siblings lived in a small village named Bethany outside of Jerusalem. These siblings were among the closest friends of Jesus outside of the apostles. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were the kind of friends who would hang out, eat dinner, share stories, catch up on life, and laugh. These siblings were very aware of who Jesus was as a teacher, preacher, leader, miracle worker, and most importantly the Son of God. They knew Jesus to be not only approachable but accessible, just as any close friend would be that you could truly count on in times of need.

1. FRIEND IN NEED

JOHN 11:1-3 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. ³ So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, “Lord, behold he whom You love is sick.”

These three siblings, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, were friends of Jesus. Mary and Martha had a reputation for both hospitality and worship. Their brother Lazarus was sick, and they reached out to their friend, Jesus. They knew the power and authority of Jesus. They knew the reputation of Jesus. Jesus healed the multitudes and the individuals. Jesus healed the anonymous and the familiar. Jesus even healed those who were complete strangers.

But now, His friend, whom He loved is sick. The word translated as “love” is the Greek word “*Phileo*” which means “regard with affection, kindness, delight, love.” It is the concept of “brotherly love.” The word translated as “sick” is the Greek word, “*Astheneo*” which means “deficient, weak, ill.”



There was no doubt in the minds of Mary and Martha who to call to help their brother in this time of physical need. Jesus, being such a good friend, would certainly come quickly to heal Lazarus of this sickness. They did not ask for a specific response from Jesus, merely presented the need. Perhaps they expected Jesus to be on the same page as them and come immediately. Not unlike what we do when we pray, expecting God to be on our page, meeting our need, based on our timetable.

JOHN 11:4 *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.”*

Their friend Jesus received the message about the need of Lazarus. Jesus knew something that Mary and Martha did not know, there was a greater purpose for this situation. *“This sickness is not to end in death.”* Words spoken by the One referred to in this gospel as the Word of God. Words said with confidence. Words said with boldness and assurance. The end result of this sickness will not be death.

In fact, there is a twofold purpose for this situation that Jesus mentions at the very beginning of this story of friendship. This response sets the agenda and provides an approach to what will take place.¹

1. It is for the glory of God.
2. It is so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

From the perspective of Mary and Martha, they had a sick brother who needed to be healed.

From the perspective of Jesus, He had a Heavenly Father who needed to be glorified.

So often we see the immediate need of a situation and how we can best benefit from the outcome we desire. Mary and Martha are not to be blamed in this scenario; they were loving sisters to their brother. He was likely their sole means of support. They did not want Lazarus to suffer and they should be commended for turning to Jesus in their time of need. However, their time of need did not override the timing of Jesus. The tension remained, unbeknownst to Mary and Martha, that Jesus had a different purpose than what they had proposed in their minds.

JOHN 11:5-6 *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.*

A friend loves at all times. Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. This is the same word used in verse 3, at least in English. In Greek, it is a different word, *“Agape,”* which is the highest form of love, as in the love God has for us. It is referred to as godly love or sacrificial love, as used in John 3:16. In verse 3, Mary and Martha were underestimating the love Jesus had as their friend. They were settling for brotherly love, which is wonderful and fulfilling, though limited. But Jesus knew His love for all of them, including their sick brother Lazarus, far exceeded brotherly love, it was godly love which is limitless.

Jesus had this godly, heavenly love for Lazarus who was sick, as we will learn, to the point of death. Yet, upon hearing this news, Jesus intentionally stayed two days longer in the place He was when He received the message. Jesus was confident, while Mary and Martha were concerned. The response of Jesus was not based on callousness or lack of compassion. When Jesus receives the bad news, He reveals the same point of view He had in John 9:3 when confronted with the

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¹ Biblegateway app, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, John.

man born blind. Sickness, disease and even death have lost their power, have lost their sting in light of Jesus coming into the world. In Him, death has simply become a sleep from which He will someday awaken us. ²

Do not miss the promise Jesus made in verse 4. Jesus did not promise that Lazarus would not die; He promised that his sickness would not end in death. His point? Death may claim the life of Lazarus, but death will not have the final say in the matter. ³

2. FRIENDSHIP CHALLENGED

Jesus and the disciples eventually made their way to Bethany. Along the way they had conversations about the danger that awaited Jesus in general as the religious opposition was increasing and intensifying. The disciples were being protective of Jesus; though Jesus was being persistent in the ministry before Him, knowing He was ultimately approaching Calvary in the coming weeks.

JOHN 11:17-19 *So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.*

Take note of who was with Mary and Martha compared to who was not. Many of the Jews had come to “console them concerning their brother” who had died. This would be similar to what we do with friends who have lost a loved one. We visit them, take them meals, listen to them, share stories and memories together. Noticeably absent is Jesus; teacher, preacher, miracle worker and supposed friend.

The expectation was that Jesus would come and heal Lazarus of his sickness. The expectation was that Jesus would care enough to do what Mary and Martha had desired. The expectation was Jesus, as a friend, would drop everything and come running right away. The expectation simply was not met. Thus, their friendship was challenged in spirit and in words.

JOHN 11:20 *Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. ²¹ Martha then said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.*

Martha had a reputation of being task-oriented and orderly. She did not hesitate to go and confront her friend, Jesus. Look again at the words she said in verse 21, and you can almost imagine her standing toe to toe with Jesus, challenging their friendship. It seems as if she is casting blame on Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” And if not blame, she was

expressing her grief in how things would have been, could have been, and should have been different if only Jesus had come sooner.

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If we are honest with ourselves we have probably cast blame on Jesus for not answering a prayer in the way we had expected. Perhaps casting blame on Jesus for a job that was lost, or a marriage that ended in divorce, a death of a child, or a prognosis of a disease. We may not have stood proverbially “toe to toe” with Jesus, but more than likely we have cast blame; we have expressed grief in how we pictured outcomes differently.

And again, if we are honest, true friends can take it. True friends can handle the emotion, the blame, the pointing of the finger; letting the anger and hurt be released rather than stifled. Jesus was a true friend.

² Michael Card, *John, the Gospel of Wisdom*, IVP Books, Downers Grove IL, 2014, p. 132.

³ Chuck Swindoll, *Swindoll's New Testament Insights: John*; Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI; 2010, p. 199.

Martha continued in this encounter, with verse 22.

JOHN 11:22 *“Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”*

The challenge Martha had against Jesus was not based on a lack of faith. In fact, her faith was strong. Even in this time of grief and loss, she knew in her heart that Jesus, as the Son of God, could ask God anything and it would be done. Being honest with Jesus to the point of exposing your emotions, frustrations, and pain is not necessarily a lack of faith. In fact, that kind of honesty and openness is oftentimes based on a very strong and confident faith as in the case of Martha.

Notice the response of Jesus was not one of lecture, shame, or belittling towards Martha. Jesus listened. Jesus stood there with Martha. Jesus was a friend letting Martha get her feelings out openly. This is a wonderful model of how to respond to someone in times of intense grief. And it was at that moment that Jesus spoke words of life.

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3. TRUTH REVEALED

JOHN 11:23 *Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”*

That is good news! Though there was double meaning in His words. The first was an immediate healing of Lazarus being raised from the dead, which Jesus knew was going to happen, Martha did not. The second was that Jesus would raise up those who believed in Him on the last day (John 6:39-40, 44, 54). Martha knew this to be true based on His teachings, as we see in her answer to Jesus.

JOHN 11:24 *Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”*

And this sets up the moment of revelation for Jesus in the very next verse.

JOHN 11:25-26 *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”*

“I am the resurrection and the life,” is the fifth of the seven *I Am* statements. Jesus was revealing truth beyond what Martha had expressed. Martha was focused on the future promise of eternal life. There is both tremendous confidence and great faith in that future promise. However, Jesus was reminding her there is more to the truth than just a future promise. There is the present reality. Jesus wanted Martha to think about the person who would do the resurrecting, rather than the event itself. Jesus’ own power raises people to life, just as Jesus’ own Person satisfies people spiritually as bread satisfies physically, and *He Himself* is, therefore, the essential element in “resurrection.” Without Him, there is no resurrection or life. This was really a double claim.⁴

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The focus of all the *I Am* statements is the very first word, “I” where the focus is exclusively on Jesus. There is no doubt Who has the power and authority over death and life. In this statement, Jesus insists that He is the only One who can raise the dead and give life, both of which are the sole prerogatives of the absolute God, whose name is “I AM.”⁵

⁴ www.soniclight.com/john

⁵ Jey J. Kanagaraj, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*; OM Books Secunderabad; Andhra Pradesh, India; 2005, p. 364.

As a friend, Jesus wanted to make sure Martha understood this truth personally and practically. Jesus presents this double meaning which initially sounds like double talk. Some die but will live. Others will live, but never die. In these words, Jesus provides hope for both the future and the present. Some have died as believers in Jesus Christ. Their physical death was not the end, spiritually they continued to live. Likewise, for those who are living and breathing physically, yet believe, they will never die spiritually.

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Jesus does not leave any room for speculation. Everyone most certainly will die. In addition to unavoidable physical death, we are all dead spiritually. There is nothing we can do on our own to change this fact. Jesus provides the solution to our sin problem Himself. He tells Martha that He Is (I AM), the Resurrection, and the Life. Notice that Jesus does not say that He “has” resurrection and life. Jesus says that He, in fact, IS both “*the Resurrection and the Life.*” Resurrection and eternal life are who Jesus is and what Jesus offers. In other words, rescue from the sting of sin and death is tied to the very essence of Jesus.

Without taking a breath, Jesus then asks His friend, “*Do you believe this?*” Perhaps one of the most important questions that anyone can be asked by a friend. Jesus did not want Martha to focus on just the miracle worker Jesus, but to embrace the person Jesus. The One who was there at the beginning with His Father at creation. The One who taught to the masses of people. The One who had delayed coming to heal his friend, her brother Lazarus. Jesus did not want Martha to miss the life-change in the present.

4. RELATIONSHIP REDEEMED

It was in this “toe to toe” encounter that Martha declared her confession of redemption.

JOHN 11:27 *She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.”*

With these words, Martha proclaims the truth of the ages which was lost on so many religious leaders of the day. Notice how personal and emphatic her declaration is. “*I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.*” With these few words, she proclaims Jesus, her friend, to be the Messiah. Anytime you see the word translated as “Christ,” it is the Greek word “*Christos*” which means “Messiah, the Anointed.”

Her brother was still dead. Her circumstances had not changed. Her prayers and hopes of healing had not become reality as of yet. But Martha professes with clarity and confidence her redemption of belief. There is no doubt. There is no blame. There is no wavering or compromising. This friend standing before her was Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The good news of the Gospel is that Jesus is still the Christ. Jesus is still the Son of God. Jesus is still the One who comes into the world even today through the Holy Spirit. This same Jesus that stood toe to toe with a grieving friend still redeems those who believe in Him.

After this confession of redemption, Martha went back inside to tell her sister Mary that Jesus was outside. Mary went out to see Jesus as everyone followed her outside thinking she was going to the tomb of her brother. When Mary saw Jesus, she fell at His feet as she did each time she was in the presence of Jesus, a posture of worship and humility. We are told Mary says the same words to Jesus, “*if You had been here...*” but the exchange went in a different direction.

JOHN 11:33-35 *When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, ³⁴ and said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵ Jesus wept.*

This is the context for the shortest verse in the Bible, “Jesus wept.” He was among friends who were grieving the loss of their beloved brother. Jesus showing His humanity through emotions wept as close friends do.

No one knew what was about to happen, other than Jesus. Remember the reason for the delayed departure when He received the message. There was still unfinished business.

JOHN 11:38-40 *So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, “Remove the stone.” Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, “Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days.” ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”*

Jesus could have easily rolled away the stone Himself. But He wanted them to participate in this miracle. Jews were not to open up a sealed tomb, and after four days the body would have begun decomposing. Martha is the one who challenged her friend, Jesus again. And Jesus responded by talking about belief and glory; not raising her brother from the dead. This story of friendship and ultimate resurrection was to see the glory of God. The power of God.

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JOHN 11:41-44 *So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. ⁴² 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.” ⁴³ When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.” ⁴⁴ The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”*

Not knowing anything other than the glory of God was about to be revealed, they removed the stone unleashing that which had never been experienced before in this manner. Jesus prayed so all could hear which was so that they may believe in God, thus giving glory to God.

Then Jesus called for His friend Lazarus to come forth, though still wrapped and bound in cloth. Once again, Jesus calls upon them to participate and unbind him, and let him go.

This was the final miracle recorded in the Gospel of John before Jesus was crucified (aside from healing the soldier’s ear in the garden when He was arrested). This was a turning point in the ministry of Jesus as He was getting closer to the cross. He was going to lay down His life for His friends, including you and me, so we might also have a redeemed relationship with Him.

HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

How close Jesus was with His friends in Bethany was not determinative of their relationship. It did not matter how many times they laughed together, ate together, or simply hung out together. Nor did it matter whether they were in the same town or miles and miles away. It did not even matter that one of them had fallen ill and died.

No matter how often we attend church or listen to a Bible Study, or take part in any other religious activities, the truth of the matter is we are all dead in our sins and separated from God without a personal surrender to Christ as Lord and Savior. Death is a diagnosis; as Dr. Young frequently emphasizes, “we are all terminal.” A diagnosis demands a decision and requires a response.

What Jesus conveyed to Martha is that if we have been given the cure to our spiritual death, the only way that cure becomes ours is by taking action; believing the truth of the Gospel. When Jesus says, “*I am the resurrection and the life*” He gives us a new life for the present and the future. Christ can raise the dead and meet every need of the new life that follows that miracle because He is both “*the Resurrection and the Life*.” The Lord can move into “dead” and seemingly hopeless human situations, and by His resurrection power, transform people and circumstances and infuse life that makes everything new.⁶ That still happens today and can happen in your life if it has not already. Jesus is still the great “I AM.”

ROMANS 6:4 *Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

⁶ Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus in the Present Tense*, David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, CO; 2011, p. 98.