

John 11: 1-7, 17-44 (ESV) – I am the Resurrection

Main point: Life with Jesus is not defeated by anything, even death itself.



Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: This is the story of the last major “sign” in the gospel of John. Jesus has been healing and doing wondrous things, and many people believe in him. In this final miracle, Jesus shows his power over death itself, humanity’s final enemy. At this time in Jesus’ life, it would have been dangerous for Jesus’ to come near Jerusalem, but his friends Mary and Martha want him to come. They and their brother, Lazarus, are Jesus’ dear friends, and they know that Jesus would be willing to risk his life for Lazarus, as indeed he was.

[This is a long passage, so I suggest breaking down the story and using broad strokes to get through it. Read sections separately.]

I. Read verses 1-7

1. v. 3: *What is the sisters’ message to Jesus? What does it tell us about the relationship between Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and Jesus?*
 - a. “Lord, the one you love is ill.” They are close friends; they love each other.
2. *What is interesting about what the sisters say? Do they ask a question? Is it a request?*
 - a. No – just presenting a need. The sisters don’t dictate how Jesus should respond; they present their concern in humility and trust.
3. v. 6: *How does Jesus respond?*
 - a. Waits two days! Does this feel like love?
4. v. 4: *What’s the reason Jesus says that Lazarus is ill?*
 - a. Jesus says this sickness is to reveal the work and glory of God and his Son. The Father and Son will be glorified.

II. Read verses 17-27

1. v. 17: *How long has Lazarus been in the tomb by this time?*
 - a. Four days. *Is Lazarus just sick or sleeping after all that time?*
 - i. No! really, truly dead.
2. v. 21: *What does Martha say?*
 - a. Martha tells Jesus that she knows Jesus could have done something if he’d come sooner; but also expresses her faith in the future resurrection (Jewish belief).
3. v. 25-26: *How does Jesus challenge Martha’s understanding of resurrection? Where does Jesus put Martha’s attention?*
 - a. Away from death and the future to himself, now, as the true resurrection.
 - b. Jesus says he does not just give life; he is life, has the power of life and death.
4. *Wow! How would you have felt if you were Martha at that moment??*

III. Read verses 28-37

1. v. 32: *What does Mary say?*
 - a. Exactly the same words as Martha

2. *I wonder what's going on with the crowd at this point?*
 - a. Lots of people around grieving with Mary and Martha; weeping loudly
3. *v. 33-35: How does Jesus feel? Remember, he's a human too:*
 - a. deeply moved, troubled; weeps with those who weep

IV. Read verses 38-44

1. *v. 38: So then they all go to the tomb, which was a rock cave. What does Jesus say when they get to the tomb?*
 - a. "Take away the stone." *Again, what would you have thought if you were in the crowd?*
 - b. *What does Martha say?*
 - i. It's going to smell! This body has been decomposing for four days!
2. *v. 40-43: How does Jesus respond to Martha's worry about the body of Lazarus? Why?*
 - a. Jesus tells her and the people to believe, to see God's glory.
 - b. Prays to the Father.
 - c. Commands the dead person to come out: calling across the chasm of death itself.
3. *Why is Lazarus wrapped up?*
 - a. Grave clothes, how the body was prepared, like a mummy – again, very dead.
4. *v. 42: Why does Jesus perform this miracle?*
 - a. "that they may believe that you sent me." *Why is this important?*
 - i. Not some kind of a trick! This miracle is meant to convince people of God's goodness and power, demonstrated directly through Jesus.

V. What does this story tell us about Jesus, life, and death?

1. *Will our bodies eventually die? Did Lazarus die later (again)?*
 - a. Of course! Our mortal bodies slow down and everything eventually dies.
2. *But is death final?*
 - a. No. The life that comes through believing in Jesus is not interrupted by physical death. When we are united with Christ, we share in his life, the life that triumphed over death.

- Ask for prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

John 11

¹ Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ... ³ So the sisters sent to Jesus, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, Jesus stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this Jesus said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ... ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." ²³ Jesus said to Martha, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to Jesus, "I know that Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

²⁸ When Martha had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for

you.”²⁹ And when Mary heard it, she rose quickly and went to Jesus. ...³² [and] she fell at his feet, saying to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

³³When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, Jesus was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴And Jesus said, “Where have you laid Lazarus?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”

³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶So the Jews said, “See how Jesus loved Lazarus!” ³⁷But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to Jesus, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for Lazarus has been dead four days.” ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³When Jesus had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” ⁴⁴The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to the people, “Unbind him, and let him go.”