

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN II.1-16



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel of John: John 11.1-16
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Introduction to *John 11.1-16*

The raising of Lazarus is a climactic moment in the Gospel of John. The apostle used this story in various ways: to connect us with Israel's Old Testament past (waiting beyond the Jordan to enter the land), to recall important themes related to the mission of our Lord, to point forward with hope, and to establish Jesus as Lord of life and glory. We need to work through this story slowly so that we don't miss any of the rich significance John intends for us.

The story begins on the east side of the Jordan with the news that Jesus' beloved friend has fallen ill. Jesus could have hurried to heal him, but He chose to wait for Lazarus to die before He went to him. In explaining His reasons to His disciples, Jesus set the stage for the dramatic action that would shortly ensue.

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1 A Sick Friend

Read and meditate on John 11.1-3.

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of Bethany had a special place in Jesus' life. We do not know much about them, but it is possible they may have hosted Him on occasion, and supported His work in various ways. They understood that Jesus loved them as well.

¹And not too far from there in Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister, Martha, there a certain man named Lazarus was sick. ²(Now Mary, who anointed Jesus' head with oil, and who His feet wiped with her hair, was sister to the man who died.) ³Therefore they sent unto Him saying, "Lord, he whom You love is sick."

- John 11.1-3

Reflect

1. Meditate on Luke 10.38-42. Mary is mentioned first among the sisters, as if she were the first to come to mind. Why might this have been the case? Complete this prayer: *Lord, help me to choose the better part every day, and to...*
2. Read the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16.19-30. This parable was spoken shortly before the events of John 11 (according to both the *NKJV Harmony of the Gospels* and the *Harmony of the Gospels* compiled by A. T. Robertson), perhaps even *en route* to Bethany. Do you suppose Jesus intended any connection between this parable and Lazarus whom He loved? Explain. *Lord, You are always trying to teach us to see beyond this world to the world to come. Help me learn to do this, so that...*
3. In verse 2, John points us ahead to John 12.1-7. Why do you suppose John "jumped the gun" on the story of Mary's anointing Jesus, by mentioning it here? Is he trying to shape our thinking about Mary? And if so, in what way? And why? *Mary gave her most precious possession to You, Lord; surely I can...*
4. Bethany would have been not too far from where Jesus was staying on the east side of the Jordan. It's clear that Mary and Martha knew His whereabouts, since they sent someone to advise Him of Lazarus' sickness. What significance should we attach to the way they refer to their brother? Didn't Jesus love everyone? Explain. *Thank You for loving me, Lord. Help me to love You more, and to...*
5. The parable of Lazarus may have been intended in some ways to foreshadow the resurrection of Jesus' friend, as the resurrection of Lazarus was designed to foreshadow Jesus' own rising from the dead. The name *Lazarus* is Hebrew and means "God is helper." John is the only gospel writer to include this story, which occurred as Jesus was journeying toward Jerusalem for the final time. What does John want to say to us as we read this story? What affections is he trying to stimulate within our soul? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

“His sisters sent a message to Jesus saying, Lord, the friend whom you love is sick.’ By these words they appeal to his affection, they lay claim to his friendship, they call on his love, urging their familiar relationship with him to persuade him to relieve their distress. But for Christ it was more important to conquer death than to cure disease. He showed his love for his friend not by healing him but by calling him back from the grave. Instead of a remedy for his illness, he offered him the glory of rising from the dead.” *Peter Chrysologus (380-450 AD)*

Jesus’ power and love are available to those who love and serve Him. How should this encourage us?

Closing Prayer

Those who trust in the LORD
Are like Mount Zion,
Which cannot be moved, *but* abides forever.
As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.
For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest
On the land allotted to the righteous,
Lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity.
Do good, O LORD, to *those who are* good,
And to *those who are* upright in their hearts.

Psalm 125.1-4

Psalm 125.1-4 (*St. Gertrude: Onward, Christian Soldiers*)

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!
Like the hills surrounding safe Jerusalem,
Christ surrounds His Church and holds her in His mighty Hand!
All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

Wickedness shall rest not on this holy land;
Sinfulness shall never come forth from their hand.
Trusting in the Savior, firm in His caress,
Ever shall His favor on this holy city rest.
All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

2 Love Waits

Read and meditate on John 11.4-6.

There are higher things than health. And sometimes love will wait, so that those higher things can be realized.

⁴When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of the Lord instead, and that the Son of God shall glory know through it." ⁵Now Jesus loved these women so, and Lazarus as well. ⁶Yet He delayed for two more days once He had heard, and stayed beyond the Jordan.

- John 11.4-6

Reflect

1. Jesus did not say that Lazarus would not die. Rather, He indicated that death was not the final outcome of His friend's sickness. Why could He say this? How should this comfort those who believe in Jesus? Complete this prayer: *Death has no hold on or victory over us, Lord, because...*
2. What is the glory of God? How can sickness and death bring glory to God? *Lord, we are commanded to glorify You in everything we do, even in how we prepare to die. Help me, therefore, to...*
3. More specifically, Jesus said that this sickness of Lazarus would allow *Him* to be glorified. Jesus waited for Lazarus to die, because then He would be glorified. Wouldn't Jesus have been glorified in simply healing Lazarus *before* he died? Why was there apparently *more* glory in waiting? *Lord, You can see further down the road than I can, and it pleases You sometimes for me to wait for answers to my prayers. Help me to wait well by...*
4. We are told again (v. 5) that Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Yet He did not hasten from where He was to relieve their suffering. How would you explain Jesus' love here? Was He acting like someone who really loved these people? Explain. Does love sometimes require that we accept suffering for some higher good than restored wellbeing? Explain. *Lord, whenever I must suffer, help me to remember that...*
5. Let's put this story in context. Jesus will cross the Jordan from the east to the west, like Joshua before Him, with many new believers in tow. On the way to Bethany, He will tell the parable about Lazarus and the rich men. After Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, Mary will anoint Him for burial, and then He will enter Jerusalem to the cries of "The King of Israel!" Why was it so important to allow Lazarus to die? Why was it important for His disciples? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

"Jesus saw that in the end, Lazarus's illness and death would be for the glory of God. This is not to

say that the sickness came on Lazarus so that God should be glorified, for it would be silly to say this, but rather, since the sickness had come upon Lazarus, Jesus foresaw the wonderful conclusion to Lazarus's illness." *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

Nothing is more important in life than that God be glorified. And that may entail, from time to time, *our* being inconvenienced or allowed to suffer. How can we glorify God through trials of various kinds?

Closing Prayer

I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps.
He has put a new song in my mouth—
Praise to our God;
Many will see *it* and fear,
And will trust in the LORD.

Psalm 40.1-3

Psalm 40.1-5 (*Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth*)

I waited patiently for God; He inclined and heard my cry,
Lifted me up above the sod, set me on a Rock on high!
New songs in my mouth He gave; may He through me many save!

Blessed are all who trust in You, turning both from lies and pride.
Countless wonders, Lord, You do, and Your thoughts with us abide.
Lord, Your worth who can declare? None with You can e'er compare.

3 While It Is Day

Read and meditate on John 11.7-10.

Jesus decided to return to Judea to awaken His friend Lazarus from his “sleep.” The disciples were wary, but Jesus explained His decision, albeit in enigmatic terms.

⁷After this He said to His disciples, “Let us go again into Judea.”⁸His disciples said, “Lord, You know that the Jews there want You dead, and are You going there again?”⁹But He replied, “You know that there can only be twelve hours in any day. Whoever in the daylight walks will stumble not, but in it he will see the light of the world.¹⁰But he who walks at night will stumble; there will be no light in him.”

- John 11.7-10

Reflect

1. Two days passed since Jesus and His disciples received the news about Lazarus. Jesus, knowing that Lazarus had died, decided to return to Judea. The way He phrased this – “Let us go to Judea again” rather than simply “Let us go to Bethany” or “to Lazarus” – suggests that Jesus was thinking about more than just Lazarus. Lazarus was certainly the *proximate* cause for His decision, but He seems to have had more in mind than merely Lazarus. Does this suggest anything concerning how to think about the tasks and duties before us each day in our Personal Mission Field? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, help me always to keep the larger picture of Your calling in mind as I...*

2. The disciples were naturally a bit wary about returning to Judea (v. 8). John inserts this reminder here in case we have lost sight of the growing antipathy toward Jesus among the religious leaders of Judea. He is re-establishing the somber tone of chapter 10, to prepare us for what is to come. How do you suppose the disciples felt about this decision? But they went along with Jesus anyway. How does their doing so instruct us as disciples of Jesus? *Lord, do not let me succumb to the fear of men, because I know...*

3. Verses 9 and 10 probably left at least some of the disciples looking at one another and saying, “Huh?” Let’s take a closer look at this enigmatic response. First, note that Jesus made a distinction between “the day” and “the light of the world.” How would you explain each of these? *Today, Lord, this day, let me see You shining as the Light of the world, so that I...*

4. “Day” represents our time on earth, which is relatively short (“twelve hours”). While we’re on this earth, we want to *see* the Light of the world. But for that to be the case, and for us to live in the “day,” we’ll need to go *with* that Light *wherever He goes or sends us*. How can seeing your life as a [Personal Mission Field](#) help you to keep the Light of the world in view, and to see each task or duty within a “Light of the world” frame of reference? *Lord Jesus, let Your Light shine in me and through me,*

and keep from walking...

5. Contrariwise, if we choose *not* to see the Light, that Light will not be “in” us. Thus our “days” will become “nights,” and we will stumble about in uncertainty and confusion. What is Jesus saying about our time on earth? Is there a danger that Christians spend more time in the “night” than in the “day”? Explain. Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

“What did the Lord mean? As far as I can judge ... he wanted to dissuade them from their doubting and unbelief. For their words were meant to keep the Lord from death, who had come to die, in order to save themselves from death too. ... And so, when [these] men presumed to give advice to God, disciples to their Master, servants to their Lord, patients to their physician, our Lord reproved them, saying, ‘Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks during the day, he does not stumble.’ Follow me if you do not want to stumble. Do not give counsel to me when you should be receiving it from me instead.... He showed himself to be the day by appointing twelve disciples. If I am the day, he says, and you are the hours, is it for the hours to give counsel to the day? The day is followed by the hours, not the hours by the day.... Even when Judas fell, he was still succeeded by Matthias, and the number twelve was preserved. Our Lord did not make the choice of twelve disciples arbitrarily, then, but to indicate that he himself is the spiritual Day. Let the hours be lightened by the day so that by the preaching of the hours, the world may believe on the day. Follow me, then, says our Lord, if you wish not to stumble.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Wherever we go in life, whatever the danger or difficulty, if we go with the Light of the world, He will shine into every aspect of our lives, making all our life “day,” refracting Him in all we say and do. Stay close to the Light of the world, and you will walk in the new day of new life, rather than the darkness of unbelief and sin. How should you apply this to your daily life – all your roles, relationships, and responsibilities?

Closing Prayer

When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
The LORD has done great things for us,
And we are glad.
Bring back our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the South.
Those who sow in tears
Shall reap in joy.
He who continually goes forth weeping,
Bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
Bringing his sheaves *with him.*

Psalm 126

Psalm 126 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*)

When God restored our fortunes all,
We were like those who sweetly dream.
Our mouths with joy and laughter filled,
Made Him our constant song and theme.

Then the astonished nations said,
“The Lord has done great things for them!”
Indeed, great things our God has done,
Whose Name we praise, Amen, Amen!

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King!
Let grace like flowing streams prevail.
All they with tears of joy shall sing
Who sow while yet they weep and wail.

They who in tears of sorrow sow
And cast their seed on every hand,
With joy shall reach their heav’nly home,
And bring the harvest of their land.

4 Thinking like Jesus

Read and meditate on John 10.11-13.

Sometimes we can see that Jesus is thinking at a level that other people simply have not attained. Here is an excellent example.

“These things He said, and then He said to them, ‘This Lazarus our friend is sleeping, but I go to him that I may wake him.’”¹² His disciple answered, ‘Why? If he is sleeping, he will get well.’¹³ But the Lord spoke of his death, although they thought that He was talking about resting.

- John 11.11-13

Reflect

1. Jesus used the word *sleep* to describe Lazarus' state, and *wake* to explain what He was planning to do. In what ways was this an appropriate use of these ideas? How was Lazarus *asleep*? What would Jesus do to *wake* him? Complete the following prayer: *Lord, one day I, too, will fall asleep in You, and I thank You that...*
2. The disciples took Jesus literally. Evidently, they did not yet have the sense of being *asleep* that Jesus was talking about here. They were thinking on one level, while Jesus was thinking on another. Meditate on Isaiah 55.8, 9. How can we see this illustrated in this exchange between Jesus and His disciples? How would the disciples get the clarification they needed, and thus learn to think about *sleep* in other than temporal and material terms? *Help me, Lord, when the thoughts You reveal in Your Word are too high for me to grasp, to look to You for...*
3. The principle here is explained in 1 Corinthians 2.12, 13. The Holy Spirit teaches us “the things that have been freely given to us by God” by “comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” The Bereans seem to have been practicing this principle in Acts 17.11. What do these verses suggest about how we should approach understanding things which are beyond what we can immediately grasp? *Thank You for Your Spirit, Lord, Who teaches me...*
4. How did Jesus' phrasing His intentions this way turn into a teaching moment for His disciples? Can you think of other times in Jesus' ministry when He did a similar thing (cf. Matt. 16.5-12)? What makes this an effective way to teach new ideas or truths? *All around me every day, Lord, ordinary things and everyday situations are speaking Your truth. I just need to...*
5. The Christians of the first few centuries found this idea of being *asleep* a most hopeful way of thinking about death. They named their burial grounds *cemeteries*, which in Latin means “dormitory.” How can believers use this understanding as a source of comfort and encouragement? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

“It was really true that he was sleeping. To his sisters he was dead; to our Lord, he was sleeping. To those who could not raise him again, he was dead. Our Lord awoke him with as much ease from his grave as you might awake a sleeper from his bed. He calls him then ‘asleep,’ with reference to his own power, ... as the apostle says, ‘But I would not have you to be ignorant, concerning those who are asleep.’ ... Asleep, he says, because he is foretelling their resurrection. And so, all the dead are sleeping, both good and bad. But just as it matters to those who sleep and wake again daily, what they see in their sleep—some having pleasant dreams, others nightmares so scary that they are afraid to fall asleep again in case they reoccur—so it is [in death]. Everyone sleeps and wakes up again in circumstances peculiar to his own situation.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Jesus used everyday situations to reframe people’s experience and teach them how to think with His own mind. Lazarus was dead? Well, yes; but not really. And Jesus knew it was important for His disciples, as shepherds of His flocks, to think about life and death matters in a manner appropriate to His Kingdom and rule. This is thinking with the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16; 2 Cor. 10.3-5). How might you learn to think more consistently like this?

Closing Prayer

The LORD *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You *are* with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
Forever.

Psalm 23

Psalm 23 (*Taladh Chriosda: Song of the Christ Child*)

The Lord my Shepherd is, and I
Shall not want; He makes me lie
In green pastures, leads me by
Refreshing waters, still.

Restore my soul, Lord, day by day;
Lead me in Your righteous way

For Your Name's sake, Lord, I pray,
According to Your will.

And though through death's dark vale I go,
I no fear of evil show,
For Your rod and staff, I know,
Shall guard and comfort still.

A table You before me spread
In the midst of those I dread,
And with oil anoint my head;
My cup You over fill.

Thus goodness e'er shall follow me;
Mercy all my path shall see;
Your house shall my dwelling be,
Forever after still.

5 Step by Step

Read and meditate on John 11.14, 15.

Jesus explains to His disciples that He is glad Lazarus is dead, because his death will serve some very important purposes.

¹⁴So

He told them plainly, "Friends, you need to know that Lazarus is dead." ¹⁵And for your sakes I'm glad I was not there, so that you may believe in Me. But let us go to him."

- John 11.14, 15

Reflect

1. Previously, Jesus had spoken *obliquely* about Lazarus' condition ("Our friend Lazarus sleeps"). Here He spoke *plainly* – "Lazarus is dead." Why do you suppose He didn't speak plainly at first? Is there a lesson in verses 11-14 about how God's Word becomes clearer to us? Complete the following brief prayer: *Lord, Your Word is not always clear to me. Sometimes it seems You're speaking to me "slant." So I know I need to...*
2. It may have sounded strange to the disciples for Jesus to say He was "glad" that He hadn't been there to prevent Lazarus' dying. But Jesus' gladness was not because Lazarus had died. His death would serve larger purposes, beginning with how the situation would affect the disciples. What did Jesus mean by "that you may believe" (v. 15)? Didn't the disciples already believe in Him? *Lord, I believe in You; help me to believe...*
3. Belief – or *faith* – in Jesus is not something that comes to us full and complete. We *believe* in Jesus unto salvation, but there is always room to *believe more* unto *greater measures* of our great salvation. How can we know when we're increasing in faith? What does growing in faith require? Why would the disciples increase in faith at the tomb of Lazarus? Why does it make Jesus "glad" when our faith increases? *Lord, I'll know that my faith is increasing when...*
4. Let's try to hear Jesus' remarks in verses 14 and 15 as the disciples might have heard them. Remember: All they knew was that Lazarus was dead. They did not know what was going to happen. But Jesus said He was glad "for your sakes" that this was the case. Something about this situation was going to enable them to "believe." Why didn't Jesus tell them more? Is there a principle of disciple-making in the way Jesus responded here? What might have been some of their thoughts as they arose to cross the Jordan and head toward Bethany? Is there a lesson in this situation for your own calling to follow Jesus? *Lord, I don't always know what You're doing, or where You're leading me, but I have Your Word with me always. So...*
5. I know we're working very slowly through these verses, but so much is going on here, and I want us to read and pay attention to every word of Scripture, since every word was inspired by God and is fraught with meaning. Jesus said to the disciples, "Nevertheless let us go to him." Jesus hinted at what He was planning by saying "let us go to *him*" rather than to Mary and Martha or Bethany or the

tomb. This is all that Jesus revealed about what He was planning to do. The verb “let us go” is hortatory – it’s in the form of a mild command which includes the speaker and is meant to encourage. All the disciples knew about Jesus’ plan to increase their faith was to get up and follow His every next step on the way to *him* – to Lazarus. Is there a lesson in discipleship here? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

“Is he who does not desire the death of a sinner, now glad of the death of a friend? I rejoice, [Jesus says], not for my own sake, nor for the sake of the dead, but for your sake. For I need this death as the foundation for your faith.” *Hippolytus (fl. 222-245 AD)*

Following Jesus is a matter of increasing in faith through being clear about His Word and taking whatever next steps He indicates. We don’t need to know everything from the beginning. We just need to make sure we understand what He requires at each moment. What is your practice in discerning the will and leading of our Lord for your daily life?

Closing Prayer

I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps.
He has put a new song in my mouth—
Praise to our God;
Many will see *it* and fear,
And will trust in the LORD.

Psalm 40.1-3

Psalm 40.1-5 (*Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth*)

I waited patiently for God; He inclined and heard my cry,
Lifted me up above the sod, set me on a Rock on high!
New songs in my mouth He gave; may He through me many save!

Blessed are all who trust in You, turning both from lies and pride.
Countless wonders, Lord, You do, and Your thoughts with us abide.
Lord, Your worth who can declare? None with You can e’er compare.

6 Return to Judea

Read and meditate on John 11.16.

We can only wonder if Thomas' expression of *bravado* represented the attitude of all the disciples. Perhaps. At any rate, they all went back to Judea with Jesus.

¹⁶Then Thomas, whom the others called the Twin, said to the rest, "Let us go also, so that we may die with Him."

- John 11.16

Reflect

1. Jesus had said, "Let us go..." Thomas used the same word (it's one word in Greek) in responding, "Let us go..." adding *also*, or perhaps, *then*. Here we might have expected Peter to pipe up and lead the charge; instead, it's Thomas. How would you assess this response of Thomas? Can we give him some credit here? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, help me to say the same things You say, especially with respect to...*

2. Thomas understood that going back to Judea was dangerous, as did all the disciples (cf. v. 8). What shall we make of Thomas' sense that going to Judea would mean that Jesus was going to be killed? Why did he think that would happen? Do you suppose he understood the full significance of Jesus' being killed? *Lord, You gave up Your life that we might live; help me to live fully in the life You have given me, so that...*

3. My take on Thomas' response is that he probably meant what he said, at least intellectually, although I doubt he could have understood all the horror that was to ensue when they finally arrived in Jerusalem. But John thought it important to include this verse, so that Thomas would be on the record as encouraging all the other disciples to go with Jesus according to His Word. Why, in view of John 20.24-29, might John have thought it important to include Thomas' response here? *Lord, You have commanded us to encourage one another in doing good (Heb. 10.24). Today, help me to encourage...*

4. These 16 verses represent a "final descent" into the decisive period of Jesus' life and work. They are filled with portent: What will happen when they get to "him" (v. 15)? What about all those people who want to kill Jesus (v. 8)? How will the disciples' faith be affected (v. 15)? How will Jesus be glorified (v. 4)? Can Jesus indeed cause one to "wake" who has "fallen asleep" (v. 11)? Put yourself in the shoes of the disciples, as you hear Thomas saying, "Let us go then..." What are you feeling? How do you deal with that feeling, so that you get and go with Jesus and the others? *Lord, whenever I fear following You in any way, help me to...*

5. Do you think the disciples would have crossed the Jordan into Judea if Jesus had not been with them? How did Jesus' presence with them affect the disciples? How would you counsel a fellow believer to know the presence of the Lord whenever he might be afraid for any reason? Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“There is audacity in Thomas’s words, but also timidity. It was the outflow of a devout heart, but it was mixed with a small faith. For he does not endure being left behind and even tries to persuade the others to adopt a similar resolution. Nevertheless, he thinks that they are destined to suffer [death] at the hands of the Jews, even against the will of Christ... He neglects to look at the power of the Deliverer as he should have. And Christ made them timid, by enduring with patience beyond measure the sufferings he did experience at the hands of the Jews. Thomas therefore says that they should not separate themselves from their teacher, although undoubted danger lay before them. So, perhaps with a knowing smile, he said, ‘Let us go,’ that is, ‘Let us die.’ Or, maybe he meant, If we go, we certainly will die. Nevertheless, let us not refuse to suffer, for that would be too cowardly. Because if he raises from the dead, fear is superfluous seeing that we have someone who is able to raise us again after we have fallen.” *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

Following Jesus takes courage, but such courage is only possible when we remain with Jesus. He enables us to go beyond our fears into realms of obedience where all that matters is that our actions agree with what Jesus commands. How would you apply this to your daily walk with and work for the Lord?

Closing Prayer

I will extol You, my God, O King;
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.
Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness *is* unsearchable.
One generation shall praise Your works to another,
And shall declare Your mighty acts.
I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty,
And on Your wondrous works.
Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts,
And I will declare Your greatness.
They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness,
And shall sing of Your righteousness.
The LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion,
Slow to anger and great in mercy.
The LORD *is* good to all,
And His tender mercies *are* over all His works.
All Your works shall praise You, O LORD,
And Your saints shall bless You.
They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom,
And talk of Your power,
To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts,
And the glorious majesty of His kingdom.

Psalm 145.1-12

Psalm 145.1-12 (*Brother James' Air: The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want*)

I will extol You, God, my King, and ever praise Your Name!
I bless You, Lord, for everything each day, and e'er the same!
Great are You, Lord, my praise I bring; unsearchable Your fame!

To ev'ry generation we Your wondrous works shall tell.
The splendor of Your majesty we contemplate full well.
We speak of all Your mighty deeds and all Your greatness tell!

Then shall we all the glorious fame of Your great goodness sing –
Your righteousness, Your gracious Name, Your mercy: Praise we bring!
Your steadfast love remains the same, mercy our covering.

Your works shall thank You; all Your saints shall bless and praise You, Lord!
Your works You do so faithfully, according to Your Word.
The falling You uphold and the oppressed You rescue, Lord!

7 Death and Glory and More

Read and meditate on John 11.1-16.

In these 16 verses, Jesus makes some important associations: death and glory, waking and sleeping, waiting and going, questioning and believing, day and night. These introduce what will transpire in Bethany, which itself sets the stage for everything that follows in John's gospel. We need not merely to *read* these verses, but to *live* in them.

¹And not too far from there in Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister, Martha, there a certain man named Lazarus was sick. ²(Now Mary, who anointed Jesus' head with oil, and who His feet wiped with her hair, was sister to the man who died.) ³Therefore they sent unto Him saying, "Lord, he whom You love is sick." ⁴When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of the Lord instead, and that the Son of God shall glory know through it." ⁵Now Jesus loved these women so, and Lazarus as well. ⁶Yet He delayed for two more days once He had heard, and stayed beyond the Jordan. ⁷After this He said to His disciples, "Let us go again into Judea." ⁸His disciples said, "Lord, You know that the Jews there want You dead, and are You going there again?" ⁹But He replied, "You know that there can only be twelve hours in any day. Whoever in the daylight walks will stumble not, but in it he will see the light of the world. ¹⁰But he who walks at night will stumble; there will be no light in him." ¹¹These things He said, and then He said to them, "This Lazarus our friend is sleeping, but I go to him that I may wake him." ¹²His disciple answered, "Why? If he is sleeping, he will get well." ¹³But the Lord spoke of his death, although they thought that He was talking about resting. ¹⁴So He told them plainly, "Friends, you need to know that Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵And for your sakes I'm glad I was not there, so that you may believe in Me. But let us go to him." ¹⁶Then Thomas, whom the others called the Twin, said to the rest, "Let us go also, so

that we may die with Him.”

- John 11.1-16

Reflect

1. How was Jesus using the ideas of *day* and *night* and *light* and *dark* in these verses? Have we seen these ideas before in the Gospel of John? What does this have to do with how we conduct ourselves in our Personal Mission Fields each day? Complete this prayer: *Lord, help me to remember that I am always on mission for You, so that I...*

2. How was Jesus using the ideas of *sleep* and *being awakened* in these passages? Have we seen this idea (“life”) before in John’s gospel? Why was it important that He should awaken Lazarus at just this time? How would this help His disciples to believe in Him? How does it help you? *O Lord, let me always keep in mind, and eagerly look forward to, that day when...*

3. God can be glorified in even the saddest and most desperate of situations. And when He is glorified, those who know Him are strengthened in their faith. And the key to each of these – God’s glory and our believing – is keeping our eyes on Jesus. How can we do that more consistently? Has this notion of God being glorified been touched on before in John’s gospel? *Lord, I would see You throughout the day, looking at You with the eye of my heart so that...*

4. Not even the prospect of death should keep us from following Jesus according to His Word. How can Christians encourage one another in this, like Thomas encouraged his fellow disciples? Why is it important that we do so? *Use me today, Lord, to encourage...*

5. Review John 11.1-16. How many themes previously presented in John’s gospel are brought forward here? How much of what John has yet to relate is foreshadowed? Can you see why this story of Lazarus is a climactic moment in John’s story? Explain. Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

“Among all the miracles done by our Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection of Lazarus holds a prime place in preaching. But if we consider attentively who did it, our duty is to rejoice rather than to wonder. A man was raised up by him who made humankind. He is the only one of the Father by whom, as you know, all things were made. And if all things were made by him, why is anyone amazed that one was raised by him when so many are daily brought into the world by his power? It is a greater deed to create men and women than to raise them again from the dead. Yet he decided both to create and to raise again; to create all, to resuscitate some.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Jesus did not fear the prospect of being put to death, because, as He was about to demonstrate, He is the Lord of life. Death holds no threat for those who live in the day, who have been awakened to new life in Jesus Christ, and who are determined to follow Him and live for His glory, even if it means death. How should knowing this embolden you as a witness for Jesus Christ?

Closing Prayer

I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.

My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;
The humble shall hear *of it* and be glad.
Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.
I sought the LORD, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces were not ashamed.
This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard *him*,
And saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him,
And delivers them.
Oh, taste and see that the LORD *is* good;
Blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!

Psalm 34.1-8

Psalm 34.1-9, 3 (*Alleluia [Lowe]: Mighty God, While Angels Bless You*)

I will bless the Lord at all times; I shall praise Him evermore!
My soul makes its boast in Jesus – Him we gladly all adore!
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I sought the Lord, He answered, and from fear delivered me.
Those who look to Him are radiant; shamed their face shall never be.
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I cried to God, He heard me, and from trouble rescued me.
‘Round their camp His angel lingers that they may delivered be.
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

Taste and see how good is Jesus; blessed are all who in Him hide.
None shall lack for any blessing who in Christ will e’er confide.
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

The Gospel of John: John 11.1-16

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What does it mean to “walk” in the day and to “work” in the light?
2. How can believers glorify God in their lives? What’s involved in continuing to grow in our faith?
3. When the fear of others threatens to silence our witness for the Lord, how can we overcome this?
4. Meditate on Hebrews 10.24 and John 11.16? What can you do to be more encouraging to your fellow believers?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from John 11.1-16? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Items for prayer:

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Thank you.