

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## JOHN II.17-37



**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 11.17-37  
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## Introduction to *John 11.17-37*

Sometimes it pleases the Lord for us to wait.

This is one of the primary lessons from John 11. Jesus runs on His own schedule. He is not run around by the wants and needs of people. As we wait on Him to do what only He can do, our faith can grow, and we will glorify God as we should when His good and perfect will comes to fruition for us.

Waiting for anything can be difficult for us. But Jesus knows best how everything should be done and how it should all work out. If we wait on Him in faith, we'll know His blessings and see His glory.

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## 1 Martha's Faith

Read and meditate on John 11.17-22.

Jesus arrived, but not quite to Bethany. He allowed the grieving sisters to come to Him in private, so that He could enter their grief with them, observe and renew their faith, and prepare them for what He was about to do. Martha was the first to arrive.

*<sup>17</sup>And it was so, when Jesus came, He found that he had been already four days in the tomb by then. <sup>18</sup>Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. <sup>19</sup>And many then among the Jews came with the women to give comfort to the dead man's sisters, who were mourning. <sup>20</sup>Just as soon as Martha heard that He was coming, she went to the Lord, but Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup>Then Martha said to Jesus, "Had You been here, now, instead of dying, Lazarus would be still alive." <sup>22</sup>But even now I know that God will give You anything You ask."*

- John 11.17-22

Reflect

1. Meditate again on Luke 10.38-42. Compared with Mary, Martha typically gets a bad rap in this story – so busy doing this and that, trying to please everyone, that she doesn't have time to be with Jesus. Lest we should get the wrong idea about Martha, John includes this vignette of her coming to meet Jesus while He is on the way to Bethany. How does this show that she is a woman of faith? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I know that You have come to meet me in Your Word, and to teach me by Your Spirit, so let me...*

2. John sets the stage for us: four days in the tomb, two miles from Jerusalem, many people arrived (doubtless some from two miles or more – on foot) to join Mary and Martha in mourning their dead brother. How does John want us to feel at this point? What emotion is he trying to conjure within us? Why? Does it matter for our appreciation of the story whether we experience that emotion? Explain. *Lord, thank You that we can weep with those who weep, even as we rejoice with those who rejoice. Today, help me to show Your compassion to...*

3. Meditate on verse 21. What is Martha saying about Jesus? On what basis does she say this? How can you see in this that she is a woman of faith? *Lord, You are the God Who heals, but always on Your terms only. Today I pray that You would...*

4. Meditate on verse 22. Mary offers two powerful expressions of faith here, one direct, and one "slant." What is the *direct* statement, and what does this tell us about her faith in Jesus? What is the *slant* statement – what was Martha hoping for? – and what does her indirectness say both about her character and her faith?

5. Return to Luke 10.38-42. Jesus rebuked Martha because she was not where she should have been when He was present. In our passage, it's clear Martha was not going to make that mistake again. Did Martha learn anything from Jesus' rebuke? Did she love Him less or more because of His rebuke? Did her faith grow from Luke 10 to John 11? What can you learn from Martha about being a person of true faith in Jesus? Bring

together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

*Summary*

“Mary and Martha mourn for Lazarus, and in mourning they need the comfort concerning their brother which the Jews wish to bring them. But before the fullness of time, words despair of being able to make the sister of the dead cease from weeping over him. Martha seems more eager than Mary, since Martha first ran to Jesus, while Mary remained sitting in the house.... Therefore Martha, who was somewhat inferior in this regard, ran to Jesus while Mary remains in the house to receive him as one who was able to bear his presence.” *Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

Here is another example of increased faith. Those who trust in the Lord are eager to be with Him, and when He rebukes them from His Word, they love Him all the more, and delight even more to be in His presence. How does Martha’s example encourage you in your relationship with Jesus?

*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 The Resurrection and the Life

Read and meditate on John 11.23-27.

Jesus assures Martha that her brother will rise to life again. Martha confirms her faith in the general resurrection, but Jesus prepares her for the altogether unexpected by explaining more fully Who He is.

*<sup>23</sup>Then Jesus said to her, "Your brother, Lazarus, who is dead, will rise again."<sup>24</sup>She said to Him, "I know that at the resurrection it is so that he will rise again."<sup>25</sup>And He replied, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me shall live, though he may die. <sup>26</sup>Whoever lives and trusts in Me shall never die. Do you believe Me?" <sup>27</sup>She replied, "Yes Lord, I know that You are He, You are the Christ, the Son of God, He Who is come into the world."*

- John 11.23-27

Reflect

1. Jesus' approach to comforting Martha was to tell her that death is not the end of the story. Such comfort is real, but when we comfort someone this way, should we expect it immediately to allay all grief? Explain. Complete this prayer: *We rejoice in the hope of eternal life, Lord, but we grieve for the loss of loved ones because...*
2. In verse 24, Martha revealed her faith in the general resurrection, which she said will occur "at the last day." What was she thinking about? Can you think of any Old Testament texts that point to this idea? *Lord, I'm grateful that a day of resurrection is coming. Help me to prepare for it more fully by...*
3. In what sense is Jesus "the resurrection"? In what sense is He "the life"? Who may participate in this, and what does that mean? *Thank You, Lord, that...*
4. Jesus made Himself the focal point of resurrection and life, insisting that all who believe in Him will live and never die. Why is this so? Why does believing in Jesus Christ bring us to resurrection and life? How should this factor into your witness for Christ? *This is our witness to the world, Lord, so today...*
5. Again, we see the depth of Martha's faith. It would not have been possible for her to understand all the subtleties or details of "resurrection" or "life" (who can?), but she believed nonetheless. Is it necessary for us fully to understand, or to make complete sense of everything pertaining to the life of faith, before we believe in the Word of Jesus? How do faith and understanding relate in the life of a believer? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

"The Savior does not inquire 'Do you believe this?' in ignorance as to whether Martha did or did not believe what was said. Rather, he did so in order that we, or indeed those who were then present, might learn from her answer what her disposition was. But another will say that it is not a question but a statement: 'You believe this.' In this case, Martha then completes the Savior's statement saying, Yes, Lord, and not only do I believe what you now say, but I believe now that you are the Christ, something I also believed before. And I believe that you are the Son of God who comes into the world and lives with all who believe in you." *Origen (185-254 AD)*

Faith issues in life as we believe *what* the Word of God tells us. We may not understand all the details, but if we know Him Who speaks to us, we can rest in Him and His Word. How does Martha's faith encourage you in yours?

*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 Mary's Turn

Read and meditate on John 11.28-30.

In something of a role reversal from Luke 10.38-42, Martha, who has been with Jesus, returns to tell Mary, busy grieving, that He is calling for her.

*<sup>28</sup>She went back to her sister secretly and said, "Now He has come, and calls for you." <sup>29</sup>As soon as she heard that, she rose, and quickly came to Him. <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus to the town had not yet come, but was remaining in the place where He had met with Martha.*

- John 11.28-30

Reflect

1. Martha confessed her faith in Jesus, and went immediately away to Mary. We have no record of any response from Jesus to her confession in verse 27. But she did not need any word of confirmation from Him, nor any promise of anything to give her hope for her brother. For Martha, knowing Jesus was enough. The blessings of that relationship would come in time. For now, she needed to get on with her life and go tell Mary to come to Jesus. What can we learn from Martha here? Complete this prayer: *Lord, You will fulfill all Your promises in Your own time. My duty is to...*

2. Do not miss that word *secretly* in verse 28. It bears testimony to Martha's humility. Why? It also shows her sensitivity to and love for Mary. How can you see that? *Lord, keep from the temptation of wanting to parade my faith before others, of boasting about my time with You or my walk with You, so that I...*

3. There's a kind of role reversal in this passage (recall Luke 10.38-42). Mary was too busy grieving to come to Jesus, while Martha quickly rushed to be with Him, even before He had arrived at Bethany (v. 30). Do you suppose there's a bit of Mary and a bit of Martha in each of us? Explain. *Lord, I want to be busy for You at all times, but not before I...*

4. Mary "quickly" rose to go to Jesus when she heard from Martha that He was calling her. Does Jesus "call" us in our lives today? How can we know when Jesus might be calling us, either to come to Himself or to go, like Martha, and urge others to come to Him? *Help me to hear You when You call me, Lord, so that I...*

5. Again, we note that Jesus had not yet arrived in Bethany, but was waiting in a place outside the town – where all the mourners had gathered – for these private meetings of consolation and promise with Martha and Mary. How can you see Jesus' love for these ladies in this? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

"We may observe that the Evangelist has not said where, when or how the Lord called Mary, but for brevity's sake he has left it to be gathered from Martha's words." *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

To whom is the Lord sending you this week with the message that Jesus has come, and wants to see them?

Closing Prayer

Examine me, O LORD, and prove me;  
Try my mind and my heart.

For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes,  
And I have walked in Your truth.  
I have not sat with idolatrous mortals,  
Nor will I go in with hypocrites.  
I have hated the assembly of evildoers,  
And will not sit with the wicked.  
I will wash my hands in innocence;  
So I will go about Your altar, O LORD,  
That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving,  
And tell of all Your wondrous works.

Psalm 26.2-7

**Psalm 26.1-3, 8-12** (*Aberystwyth: Jesus, Lover of My Soul*)  
Vindicate me, Lord on high; I have walked within Your word.  
Never wav'ring, though I sigh, I have trusted You, O Lord!  
Prove me, Lord, prove even me! Test my heart and try my mind.  
Let Your steadfast mercy be in the path for me to find.

Lord, I love Your dwelling place, there where all Your glory shines.  
Keep my soul before Your face, lest for sinful ways it pine.  
As for me, in righteousness I shall walk on level ground;  
Save me, Lord, renew and bless! Let me with Your Church be found!

## 4 If Only

Read and meditate on John 11.31, 32.

It seems clear that Mary and Martha had shared this sentiment with one another. Now Mary was sharing it with Jesus.

*<sup>31</sup>Those who came to be with Mary, and to comfort her, when they saw her go quickly forth, they made their way to follow her, because they thought that she was going to the tomb, and hope to be with her and weep there. <sup>32</sup>Mary came to where the Lord was, falling down before Him there and saying, "Lord, if You had been here, he would not have died."*

- John 11.31, 32

*Reflect*

1. Do you get the sense John was slowing the action down considerably? Why would he do that? Did he want us, like the Jews – indeed, like Jesus (v. 35) – to enter this grieving? Should we expect Scripture to affect us in our emotions as we read? Explain. Complete the following prayer: *Lord, I want to learn Your Word not only with my mind, but in my heart, in my conscience, and...*

2. We note that many people – Jews – had come to grieve with Mary (vv. 19, 31). These Jews were not believers in Jesus, or I'm sure John would have mentioned as much. They were not saved, but here we find them doing a good work, comforting a neighbor. Clearly, unbelievers can do good, but not unto salvation. Nevertheless, why is it important that we, like John here, acknowledge the good works that unbelievers do? *Lord, help me to make a point of observing the good works of my unbelieving friends, and...*

3. The Jews thought Mary was going to the tomb. Instead, she led them right to Jesus (v. 32). How do you suppose these people responded to seeing Jesus back in their neck of the woods? Out of courtesy to the grieving sisters, they mounted no confrontation, but simply observed. What would Mary's actions and words have said to them? *Lord, no matter the state I'm in, what I'm having to deal with or work through, help me always to...*

4. Mary's words to Jesus were identical to Martha's, to a point (v. 21). Clearly, these ladies had shared this sentiment with one another. But Mary omitted the second part of Martha's statement. Does this suggest anything about where she may have been in the process of her grieving, as compared with her sister? At the same time, her action before Jesus was more pronounced than Martha's – she fell at Jesus' feet. People don't grow at the same pace, or in the same way; and they don't grieve in the same way, or process their grief at the same pace. Why is it important to understand this, when we're seeking to comfort those who are grieving? *Thank You, Lord, for Your great patience and love, which I experience every day as...*

5. Review Luke 10.38-42 and John 11.20-32. What can we learn from Mary and Martha about trusting in Jesus and following Him? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

*Summary*

"As Mary came to Jesus, she immediately fell at his feet saying the same things as Martha, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' Martha is not actually said to have fallen at his feet but only to have come to him, so that it seems to many that Mary had a greater love for the Lord. This also appears from the fact that, while the Lord was at their house, Martha was intent on her service, whereas Mary, because of

her great love, sat at his feet, as she did not want to be separated from her teacher even for a short time. Therefore the Lord exalted her in his praise more than Martha.” *Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 AD)*

We can see the Lord orchestrating this situation toward the ends previously mentioned – that God’s glory would be revealed, that the Son would be glorified, and that His disciples and others would believe in Him. John is taking great pains to bring us into the profound sorrow of this situation, because he wants us to be as amazed and astonished as those people then present were. What do you suppose these Jews were saying to Mary and Martha, as they comforted them? How was this good work preparing them for what Jesus was getting read to do?

*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 Jesus Wept

Read and meditate on John 11.33-35.

Jesus wept. But why?

*<sup>33</sup>And when He saw that she was weeping, and the people weeping too, He groaned within His Spirit, and was moved and troubled. <sup>34</sup>And He said, "Where have you laid him?" And they said to Him, "Come to his grave and see." <sup>35</sup>And Jesus wept.*

- John 11.33-35

*Reflect*

1. Verse 35 is the shortest verse in the Bible. It's also quite enigmatic. Given what Jesus knew was about to transpire, it's fair to ask why He wept. Clearly, John wants us to see in His weeping an element of sympathy. How can you see that in these verses? Why was this appropriate? Complete the following brief prayer: *Lord, I know that You know everything about me, and when I'm sad or sorrowing...*

2. We read that Jesus "groaned in the spirit and was troubled" (v. 33). There is a hint of irritation or agitation in those two words *groaned* and *was troubled*. Seeing all these people weeping irritated and agitated Jesus somewhat. Why? What might have caused Him to feel this way? *Lord, keep me day by day from whatever may...*

3. Jesus' only question was to ask where they had laid Lazarus (v. 34), that is, where he had been buried. Why didn't Jesus say, "Now, now, it's going to be all right. You'll see, Lazarus will live again"? Why did He allow them all to continue weeping? What do you think? *Lord, You don't always tell us everything, or act as or when we might like, but...*

4. We note that "Jesus wept" even before they arrived at the tomb (v. 38). He knew would He was going to do, and how everyone would feel in just a short while. Could He have been weeping for joy? Meditate on Hebrews 12.2. Did Jesus know joy and sadness in His great moment of suffering? Is that possible? *The joy of know You, Lord, is a constant presence, even when...*

5. This much we know about Jesus' weeping: It was perfect, holy, altogether appropriate weeping, and it expressed the full range of emotions people feel at the loss of a loved one. Can we learn to weep like Jesus did? Should we? Explain. Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

*Summary*

"Christ was deeply agitated with his inner organs all in turmoil, because at this point he was going to raise up only Lazarus and not yet all the dead. Who then could think that Christ shed tears on this occasion out of human weakness when the heavenly Father weeps over the prodigal son, not when he goes away but at the moment when he welcomes him back? And so, Christ shed tears over Lazarus because he was welcoming him back, not because he lost him. And to be sure, it is not when he sees the crowd weeping that Jesus weeps, but when he asks them questions and sees in their responses no trace of faith." *Peter Chrysologus (380-450 AD)*

Do we weep for the sad plight of those who have no faith in God? With those who sorrow at the loss of a loved one? For joy over a sinner who repents? Jesus bore witness with His weeping. Might not we?

*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 Thinking about It

Read and meditate on John 11.36, 37.

We can see here that, by waiting until Lazarus had died, and taking His time arriving in Bethany, Jesus was allowing space for some people to think more deeply about Him. Not a bad idea.

*<sup>36</sup>The Jews then said,  
“See how He loved him!” <sup>37</sup>So then others said,  
“Could not this Man, Who made a blind man see,  
have kept this man from dying?”*

- John 11.16

*Reflect*

1. How did the Jews, who were mourning with Mary and Martha, interpret Jesus' weeping? Do you suppose this might have affected their attitude toward Him somewhat? Was that a good thing? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, thank You that You love me. I love You, too, and today...*

2. These people knew Who Jesus was, and they remembered what He'd done in healing the man born blind (Jn. 9). The blind man was a beggar – a nobody in Jewish society of that day – and not someone Jesus even knew. But He healed him. Surely, they reasoned among themselves, if He did that much for a *nobody*, He could have healed someone He *loved*? As they saw it, the best thing that could have happened to Lazarus was that he not die. Jesus should have been able to manage that, but He did not, even though He loved Lazarus. They were trying to make sense out of this situation, based on what they knew about Jesus. Why is it a good thing that they were turning all this over in their minds, and talking about with one another? *I want people to think about You more, Lord, to ponder Your works and words, so...*

3. In our day, it's safe to say that most unbelievers never give Jesus a serious thought. They have too many other important matters to occupy their minds. Is that a good thing? Following the example of Jesus, what might you do to help the unbelievers in your Personal Mission Field begin to think a little more seriously about Jesus? *How can I do this, Lord? Let me begin in prayer, as I pray for...*

4. By remarking on Jesus' love, and concluding that He had the power to keep Lazarus from dying – even though He did not exercise that power – these people were showing that their view of Jesus was becoming clearer. Explain. Does it sometimes take a long time for people to change their minds about Jesus? What are the implications of this for our witness for the Lord? *Thank You for being patient with me, Lord, when I first...*

5. Jesus walked into hostile territory and gave people space to think about Him. There is wise counsel in this for our witness for the Lord. Explain. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

*Summary*

“The Jews thought that Jesus wept on account of the death of Lazarus, but in fact he wept out of compassion for all humanity, not mourning Lazarus alone but all of humanity, which is subject to death, having justly fallen under so great a penalty.” *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

Remember: All Scripture is given to equip us for good works (2 Tim. 3.15-17). Only as we linger over the Word, considering the theological and practical implications of every verse, can we discern what God wants us to learn about doing good. Jesus shows us that doing good for others doesn't always entail satisfying their expectations or wants. We must always keep in mind the greater good of God's glory, Christ's glory, nurturing faith in those who believe, and provoking the thoughts of those who do not believe. Can you see how Jesus was working toward all these ends in this story? Explain.

*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 Wait for It

*Read and meditate on John 11.17-37.*

John 11 is a study in timing, and in Jesus' ability to manage events so that God receives glory. Jesus acknowledged only one schedule – His own. As His followers, we need to learn to wait *on* Jesus, and *for* Him.

<sup>17</sup>And it was so, when Jesus came, He found that he had been already four days in the tomb by then. <sup>18</sup>Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. <sup>19</sup>And many then among the Jews came with the women to give comfort to the dead man's sisters, who were mourning. <sup>20</sup>Just as soon as Martha heard that He was coming, she went to the Lord, but Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup>Then Martha said to Jesus, "Had You been here, now, instead of dying, Lazarus would be still alive." <sup>22</sup>But even now I know that God will give You anything You ask." <sup>23</sup>Then Jesus said to her, "Your brother, Lazarus, who is dead, will rise again." <sup>24</sup>She said to Him, "I know that at the resurrection it is so that he will rise again." <sup>25</sup>And He replied, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me shall live, though he may die. <sup>26</sup>Whoever lives and trusts in Me shall never die. Do you believe Me?" <sup>27</sup>She replied, "Yes Lord, I know that You are He, You are the Christ, the Son of God, He Who is come into the world." <sup>28</sup>She went back to her sister secretly and said, "Now He has come, and calls for you." <sup>29</sup>As soon as she heard that, she rose, and quickly came to Him. <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus to the town had not yet come, but was remaining in the place where He had met with Martha. <sup>31</sup>Those who came to be with Mary, and to comfort her, when they saw her go quickly forth, they made their way to follow her, because they thought that she was going to the tomb, and hope to be with her and weep there. <sup>32</sup>Mary came to where the Lord was, falling down before Him there and saying, "Lord, if You had been here, he would not have died." <sup>33</sup>And when He saw that she was weeping, and the people weeping too, He groaned within His Spirit, and was moved and troubled. <sup>34</sup>And He said, "Where have you laid him?" And they said to Him, "Come to his grave and see." <sup>35</sup>And Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup>The Jews then said, "See how He loved him!" <sup>37</sup>So then others said,

“Could not this Man, Who made a blind man see,  
have kept this man from dying?”

- John 11.17-37

*Reflect*

1. The account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead has thus far been a lesson in *waiting*. Jesus waited two days after He learned about Lazarus condition before heading out for Bethany. Then He waited outside Bethany, and waited for both Martha and Mary to make their way to Him. He also waited while the people gathered and began reflecting on what He might have done had He been there. Why all this waiting? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I need to learn about waiting for You, because...*
2. Jesus also made Martha, Mary, His disciples, and everyone else *wait* to know what He was going to do. He never announced His plan or made any promises, except for an oblique word to Martha in verse 23. Why do you suppose Jesus didn't just tell everyone what He was planning to do? Was He trying to accomplish something *in* them? Was He waiting for just the right moment? What do you think? *I can't always know what You're going to do, Lord, but You have promised that whatever it is, it will...*
3. Explain the connection between faith, resurrection, and the glory of God suggested in verses 1-37. What are the implications of this for our daily service of waiting on the Lord? *Revive me daily, Lord, by filling me with Your Spirit and immersing me in Your Word. Then I will...*
4. Jesus also seems to have *waited* for the emotional pitch to rise to the right level – all that weeping! We might have expected that Jesus would want to dispel all the sorrowing as quickly as possible, but He did not. Why? Is sorrowing an important affection? Explain. *I sorrow and am sad sometimes, Lord, but let me never forget as I do that...*
5. Finally, Jesus also waited until a crowd had gathered around Him. Mary led the Jews to Jesus, and then they all processed to the tomb. Keeping in mind John 11.4, 14, and 15, how can you see that all this waiting was necessary for Jesus to realize the purpose of this situation? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

*Summary*

“His tears were like the rain, and Lazarus like a grain of wheat, and the tomb like the earth. He gave forth a cry like that of thunder, and death trembled at his voice. Lazarus burst forth like a grain of wheat. He came forth and adored his Lord who had raised him.” *Ephrem the Syrian (306-373 AD)*

The Scriptures often direct us to wait on the Lord. What does that mean? How should we wait on Him? Are there any lessons about waiting on the Lord to be discerned from John 11.1-37?

*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 11.17-37*

*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:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

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