

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## JOHN II.38-48



**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 11.38-48  
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## Introduction to *John 11.38-48*

We have been taking our time looking at the events leading up to the raising of Lazarus. John wants us to slow down and ponder this incident carefully, and there's a very good reason for this.

The raising of Lazarus is a watershed moment in the ministry of our Lord. Everything prior to it has prepared the way for it, and everything that follows is but the logical outworking of it. Jesus' works, claims, and teaching, as well as John's witness concerning Him, all come into focus in this incident, as also the entire purpose of His earthly sojourn.

And yet even this event is not the "hour" Jesus was living toward. Greater glory is yet to be revealed, as we shall see.

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## 1 Faith in Process

Read and meditate on John 11.38, 39.

Jesus is led to the tomb of Lazarus, which is a cave, against the entrance of which a large stone had been set. Lazarus has been in that tomb four days.

*<sup>38</sup>Therefore, He was groaning in Himself, and came unto the tomb, which was a cave, a stone laid to the entrance. <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, "Remove the stone." But Martha, she who was the dead man's own dear sister, said to Him. "Lord, it has been four days; and surely there will be a stench."*

- John 11.17-22

Reflect

1. This is the second time John has told us that Jesus was groaning. Here, however, He was groaning "in Himself." He was irritated and agitated, and we can see Him straining to keep His agitation to Himself. Why was this situation so troubling to Jesus? Why was He so restrained here, as opposed to what we saw in John 2? Complete this prayer: *Lord, sometimes it's best that I keep my feelings to myself, such as when...*

2. Caves were common burial places in John's day, carved into rock and covered by a large stone, to discourage animals and grave robbers. Why do you suppose John wanted us to know this particular detail about Lazarus' tomb? What does this portend? *Lord, you are always present in every passage of Scripture, and always pointing us forward to...*

3. The form of the verb, "Take away", is perhaps significant, if only to immerse us more fully into the drama. First, it is in the imperative mood; that is, it's a command. Jesus, arriving at the tomb, assumed the authority to command those who had charge over the dead. Was He challenging any social taboos or protocols? Second, the verb is plural, so Jesus was directing His instruction to at least two, and possibly more, grown men. It would take that many to move the stone. Imagine you were there, hearing Jesus say this, and realizing what it would take to move that stone. What would you be thinking? What did Jesus *want* you to be thinking? What does He want *us* to be thinking? *You are Lord of life and death, Jesus, and You command that...*

4. Bless Martha, always thinking about others. "Lord, before You have them do that, may I just point out that..." On what plane was Martha's mind operating? On what plane was Jesus' mind operating? We have the mind of Christ, not of Martha (1 Cor. 2.16). What implications are suggested here concerning the kind of mindset we should bring into our daily lives? How can we do that more consistently? *Lord, let me not be constrained in my thinking, planning, or acting by the limitations of this world, but by the boundless possibilities of...*

5. Francis Schaeffer was once asked why our experience of Christian faith isn't more *real*, more truly *spiritual*. He responded by saying that our lack of true spiritual reality comes about because "while we say we believe one thing, we allow the spirit of the naturalism of the age to creep into our thinking, unrecognized." Martha was a woman of faith, as we have seen; but hers was a faith in process. She *believed* in Jesus, as far as she knew Him (v. 27). But she clearly did not understand all the ramifications of her faith. She had some growing to do before her faith would become more real, because while she believed that Jesus was Christ and Son of God, her mindset was still worldly, material, temporal, and small. Can you see in her any similarities with Christians today? With your own faith? Explain. Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

*Summary*

“Are you—as someone who has bestowed the kind of power on your apostles that can remove mountains—are you not able to roll away a small stone from the entrance of the cave? But he chose not to roll the stone away because the spectators did not believe. Otherwise, they might have been able to say that what he did relied on trickery and deceiving the eyes. They would say there had been an apparently dead man laid in the grave, and that [Jesus] wanted to make it look like he called and the other heard. And so now he leads them to the grave, so that after they have rolled away the stone, the foul smell might reach them and furnish them with testimony that the man was actually dead. And then, once they believe Lazarus has died, they will no longer doubt his resurrection. The Lord had already planned for this when he came. Notice what immediately follows. Martha approaches the stone and says, ‘Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead for four days.’ But the ever-living one, who is fully conscious of his power, says, ‘I chose to learn this from you, [Martha]. In fact, repeat what you said about him, “By this time he stinks.” Repeat it, proclaiming that his resurrection is real.’ His death was established several times in order that the fact of his resurrection might be established.... He commanded the Jews to roll away the stone with their own hands, reserving for himself the greatest sign so that they might be witnesses of the sign done by him.” *Hippolytus (fl. 222-245 AD)*

Jesus wanted to make sure the reality of death was clear and unmistakable to everyone at that tomb – the weeping and groaning, the difficulty of moving that stone, the stench from the tomb, the shock of violating a social norm. Why so much careful orchestration? How did all this relate to what Jesus had promised about this situation?

*Closing Prayer*

O LORD, *You are* the portion of my inheritance and my cup;  
You maintain my lot.  
The lines have fallen to me in pleasant *places*;  
Yes, I have a good inheritance.  
I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel;  
My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.  
I have set the LORD always before me;  
Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.  
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;  
My flesh also will rest in hope.  
For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,  
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.  
You will show me the path of life;  
In Your presence *is* fullness of joy;  
At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16.5-11

**Psalm 16.7-10, 11 (refrain)** (*All to Christ: Jesus Paid it All*)

I bless Your Name, O Lord; my mind instructs each night;  
You teach me by Your Word and guide me in the right  
    Make me know life’s way! Pleasures fill Your hand;  
    Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

You are ever with me, Lord; in You I shall not fall.  
But rejoicing in Your Word, I abide within Your call.  
    Make me know life’s way! Pleasures fill Your hand;  
    Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

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Soon Your glory I shall see, for as Jesus rose again,  
You come to gather me to my home with you in heav'n.  
Make me know life's way! Pleasures fill Your hand;  
Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

## 2 Through Unpleasantness, Glory

*Read and meditate on John 11.40, 41a.*

The only antidote to living by the standards of this world is to pay attention to every word Jesus speaks – not just listening, but hearing.

*<sup>40</sup>He said to her, “Did not I say to you that if you would believe in Me, then you would see the glory of the Lord?” <sup>41</sup>So then they took away the stone from where the man was lying, dead.*

- John 11.40, 41a

*Reflect*

1. Review John 11.39. On what is Jesus’ mind fixed? What about Martha’s? She is listening to, looking at, and standing in the presence of the One she has confessed as Christ and Son of God, but she’s not seeing what He sees. Why not? Does this ever happen to you? Complete this prayer: *Lord, it’s so easy to lose sight of You in this world, because...*

2. Let’s look more carefully at Jesus’ response to Martha. He asks a question. How do questions work to sometimes arrest our train of thought and help us to refocus? Why did Jesus ask Martha this question? *Lord, let Your Spirit ask me question after question, so that...*

3. In looking back at verses 25 and 26, we note that this is not *exactly* what Jesus had said to Martha. To what was Jesus equating “you would see the glory of God”? How would this glorify God? What would it signal about Jesus? Was Jesus expecting Martha to make the connection between what He *said* and what He *meant* by what He said? Explain. *Lord, help me to make the connections between what You say to me in Your Word and how I...*

4. How would Martha have received this question? As a gentle reminder? A rebuke? An opportunity to “connect the dots” of Jesus’ words? What train of thought would this question likely have set in motion in Martha’s mind? Is it good to get people thinking like this? Explain. *Lord, we don’t always have to tell everyone everything, but if we can get them thinking about You, then You...*

5. The grave keepers didn’t wait for Martha’s response. She was probably so dumfounded that she could not speak. They simply did what Jesus had commanded them to do in verse 39. What would have been the *initial* result of their action? But to what did that ultimately lead (v. 44)? Does the glory of God (v. 40) sometimes shine brightest through our doing something we might regard as unpleasant or inconvenient? If we hesitate because of the potential for unpleasantness, can we expect to see the glory? Explain. Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

*Summary*

“But now, between the words ‘Take away the stone’ and ‘therefore, they took away the stone,’ the words of the dead man’s sister hindered the removal of the stone. And it would not have been taken away at all even later had not Jesus answered and said to her unbelief, ‘Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?’ It is good, then, that nothing intervenes between Jesus’ command and the action enjoined by his bidding.” *Origen (185-254 AD)*

If we’re always worried about unpleasantness or inconvenience or other kinds of difficulties that can arise from obeying Jesus, will we *ever* obey Him? Explain.

*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 A Lesson in Prayer

*Read and meditate on John 11.41b, 42.*

This brief prayer of our Lord offers guidelines to help us in practicing prayer as a way of life. We will step aside from the action at Lazarus' tomb to see what we can learn to help us in our prayers.

*Then Jesus, with His eyes turned upward, as if looking to the skies, began to pray: "I thank You, Father. You have heard Me, <sup>42</sup>as You, Father, always do. But I have said this for the sake of all the people standing here, that they may call on You, and all believe that You have sent Me."*

- John 11.41b, 42

*Reflect*

1. Both Jesus (Lk. 18.1) and Paul (1 Thess. 5.17) urged us to practice prayer as a continuous discipline. In this they were merely echoing the teaching of such Psalms as 55.16, 17 and 119.164. Jesus paused to pray before calling Lazarus back to life, but this spoken prayer was merely the overt expression of an inward conversation that He maintained continuously. How do you see that in these verses? What does this suggest about what Jesus intended in Luke 18.1? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I want to pray without ceasing and not grow weary in it. Show me how to...*

2. We note that Jesus lifted His eyes upward, which indicates that He turned His face away from the situation as He began to pray. What is the significance of this? Why did Jesus turn His face upward to pray? Was He looking beyond the temporal situation into some greater reality (cf. Acts 7.55, 56)? Do you suppose that turning His face upward helped Him to focus more effectively on the content of His prayer? Given that Jesus prayed this way, why do we typically bow our heads when we pray? What guidance for prayer can you draw from this? *Lord, I know that You are high and lifted up, and that heaven and Your glorious throne are all around me. When I pray, therefore, help me to...*

3. The question arises as to why Jesus *spoke* His prayer at this moment, rather than simply continue carrying on His conversation with the Father within Himself. The answer, of course, is in the prayer itself. What can we learn from this about the power of prayer for ministering to others? Is it possible that our prayers, rather than minister to others, could be a stumbling block to them in some way (cf. Lk. 18.9-14)? Explain. *Let my prayers, Lord, always be...*

4. We get a glimpse into the mind of Christ through this prayer. We can see Him taking in this whole situation and thinking ahead to outcomes in line with what He told His disciples and Martha (Jn. 11.4, 15, 40). What does Jesus' prayer suggest about the larger context and focus for *all* our prayers? We have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16), so whenever we pray, what should we be seeking? How can this help us to have more confidence in our prayers? *Lord, the object of all prayer is that You might be glorified. Today, I pray that You will be glorified as I...*

5. Finally, we note that Jesus' prayer begins with thanksgiving. Meditate on Philippians 4.6, 7. Why is it a good idea *always* to include thanksgiving in our prayers? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

*Summary*

“We must carefully observe and examine what has been written concerning the position of Jesus’ eyes.... He had changed his thought from his conversation with those below and lifted it up and exalted it, bringing it in prayer to the Father who is over all.... The one who imitates Christ’s prayer, lifting up the eyes of his soul and bringing them up in this way from everyday concerns, memories, thoughts and intention must in this way address to God the great and heavenly words of prayer concerning great and heavenly matters....” *Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

Because we don’t know how to pray as we should, we should take every opportunity to learn from the Savior, Who ever lives to make intercession for us. What’s the most important lesson about prayer for you from these verses?

*Closing Prayer*

Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies;  
Make Your way straight before my face.  
For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth;  
Their inward part *is* destruction;  
Their throat *is* an open tomb;  
They flatter with their tongue.  
Pronounce them guilty, O God!  
Let them fall by their own counsels;  
Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions,  
For they have rebelled against You.  
But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You;  
Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them;  
Let those also who love Your name  
Be joyful in You.  
For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous;  
With favor You will surround him *as with* a shield.

Psalm 5.8-12

**Psalm 5.7-12** (*Meirionydd: O Savior, Precious Savior*)

O Lord, Your lovingkindness escorts me in this place.  
I bow before Your highness and praise Your glorious grace!  
In righteous ways You guide me; Your pathway I will know.  
No good will be denied me as I with Jesus go.

My foes would fain deceive me and crush me in the way;  
Their lying tongues would grieve me and lead my soul astray.  
Their guilt hangs on above them; their guile shall be their fall;  
They spurn the One Who loves them: reject them, one and all!

Let those rejoice who seek You and shelter ‘neath Your wing.  
Their tongues shall rise to speak to Your praise; Your grace they sing.  
Your people You will bless, Lord, all those who to You yield;  
Preserve them with Your best Word, and guard them like a shield.

## 4 The Power of His Word

Read and meditate on John 11.43, 44.

The moment arrives, and Jesus shows the power of His Word to bring life.

*<sup>43</sup>Now when Jesus all these things had said, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" <sup>44</sup>And the man who died, and had for some four days been buried, came forth, bound both hand and feet with grave clothes, and a linen band around his face. And Jesus said, "Unloose him; let him go."*

- John 11.43, 44

Reflect

1. We recall that Jesus changed water into wine simply by *thinking* those additional molecules into existence (Jn. 2). Other miracles were performed before a minimum public; only a few heard Him speak or saw what He did, though the reports were spread widely. Here, surrounded by a throng of shocked mourners, Jesus spoke with a "loud voice." Why did He choose to do this miracle in this way? Complete the following prayer: *Lord, You have sent me to proclaim Your Word throughout my Personal Mission Field, to make Your Word loud and clear to...*
2. Lazarus was dead. All his bodily functions had ceased, and the process of decay had already begun. How many different things had to happen in Lazarus for him to come back to life? What does this indicate concerning the power of Jesus' Word? *You are sovereign, Lord Jesus, over all things, all aspects of my life, and I look to You with gratitude for...*
3. Meditate on Hebrews 1.3. The word here translated *upholding* in NKJV means literally "to bear, carry, or move along." Can you see in Jesus' raising of Lazarus an analogy to His *upholding* all things? How much is encompassed by *all things*? How does the Word of Jesus' power operate to bear, carry, or move along these *all things*? *You are sovereign, Lord, over all things, and thus infinitely wise, infinitely strong, infinitely...*
4. Lazarus, quickened by Jesus' Word, came forth from the tomb in his grave clothes. Jesus instructed those around him to "Loose him, and let him go." Meditate on Ephesians 4.17-24. Compare these verses with John 11.44. What does Jesus intend for us? How does that happen? *Clothe me, Lord Jesus, by the power of Your word, with...*
5. Recall Jesus' purpose for raising Lazarus (Jn. 11.4, 14, 40). Were all these accomplished in this moment? Explain. Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

"Here we have a man past the prime of life, a corpse, decaying, swollen, in fact, already in a state of dissolution, so that even his own relatives did not want the Lord to draw near the tomb because the decayed body enclosed there was so offensive. And yet, he is brought into life by a single call, confirming the proclamation of the resurrection, that is to say, that expectation of it as universal that we learn by a particular experience to entertain. For as in the regeneration of the universe the apostle tells us that 'the Lord himself will descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel,' and by a trumpet sound raise up the dead to incorruption—so now too he who is in the tomb, at the voice of command, shakes off death as if it were only sleep. He rids himself of the corruption that had come on his condition of a corpse, leaps forth from the tomb whole and sound, not even hindered as he leaves by the bonds of the grave cloths round his feet and

hands.” *Gregory of Nyssa (335-394 AD)*

The Word of Jesus Christ has vivifying power. How do you experience that power?

*Closing Prayer*

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth;  
Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises.  
Sing to the LORD with the harp,  
With the harp and the sound of a psalm,  
With trumpets and the sound of a horn;  
Shout joyfully before the LORD, the King.  
Let the sea roar, and all its fullness,  
The world and those who dwell in it;  
Let the rivers clap *their* hands;  
Let the hills be joyful together before the LORD,  
For He is coming to judge the earth.  
With righteousness He shall judge the world,  
And the peoples with equity.

Psalm 98.4-9

**Psalm 98.4-9** (*Duke Street: Come, Let Us Sing unto the Lord*)

Raise to the Lord your loudest voice!  
Break forth and sing! Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Praise, praise to You, our God and King,  
With all our hearts and strength we bring!

Now let the whole creation ‘round  
Burst into song with joyous sound!  
Jesus will come to judge the earth;  
Let all proclaim His matchless worth!

## 5 The People Respond

*Read and meditate on John 11.45, 46.*

The response of the people to the raising of Lazarus from the dead is both more immediate and more ominous – a portent not only of things to come, but of the way things will always be.

*<sup>45</sup>And many of the Jews who came to comfort Mary, and had seen the many things that Jesus did, believed in Him. <sup>46</sup>But some went to the Pharisees and told them.*

- John 11.45, 46

*Reflect*

1. The Jews who came to comfort Mary and Martha must have been friends or acquaintances, perhaps even members of their extended family. All Mary did was lead them to Jesus. Jesus did the rest. There is a lesson here for us in working our Personal Mission Field. Explain. Complete the following brief prayer: *Only You, Lord, can lead people to believe in You and be saved, but my part is...*

2. We read that “many” of these people “believed” in Jesus. It’s quite possible that some of these would be among the 120 who gathered in the upper room following the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1.12-15). At this point, what did they believe? What did they know, and what had they concluded about Jesus? How should this inform our witness for Christ? *As I share the Good News with others, Lord, help me to remember to...*

3. John explains that these people “had seen the things Jesus did...” That would include, among other things, His raising Lazarus from the dead. But people today don’t have the benefit of Jesus in our midst, raising dead people to life, giving sight to the blind, healing cripples, and the like. How can they see the glory of God in the things Jesus does (cf. Matt. 5.13-16; Phil. 2.13; 1 Cor. 10.31)? Such as? *Be at work in me, Lord, willing and doing of Your good pleasure, so that...*

4. The tone of exultation turns quickly dark and ominous, as John reports that some of those who had come to comfort Mary, rather than believing in Jesus, “went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did.” Why do you suppose they did this? Were they exulting to tell them? Were they frightened? Had they been sent by the Pharisees to spy on Jesus and report back? Maybe some of each? Should we expect that everyone who sees Jesus working in and through us, and hears the Good News of His Kingdom, will be thrilled? Why not? *Lord, help me to love even those who will not believe in You. Guard me against...*

5. Some people believed, but some did not. And, as we shall see, some actively contrived to destroy Jesus. Does this mean Jesus was not an effective witness? Meditate on Acts 17.32-34. Can you see that the response to Paul’s preaching was the same as to that of Jesus? Does this mean Paul was not an effective witness? What’s the lesson for us as we pray and work our Personal Mission Field? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

*Summary*

“The Jews, who were present, had different opinions about what had happened. Some believed in him because of the miracle, which he had performed. Others, on the contrary, were so far away from believing that they went to denounce him to the Pharisees, as if he had dared do something unlawful. But even what they did out of hatred and evil desire still contributed to making the accomplished miracle well known to everyone.” *Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 AD)*

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Our calling is not to win people to Christ. Only God can do that (1 Cor. 3.5-9). Our calling is to be His witnesses (Acts 1.8), and to realize that not everyone who sees Jesus at work in us and hears the Good News of His Kingdom will believe. What can you do to be more consistent in your calling?

*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 What to Do?

Read and meditate on John 11.47, 48.

The deliberations of the Jewish leaders over the “Jesus situation” demonstrate the powerful effects of sin, blinding people to the goodness of God, and giving primacy to the concerns of self.

*47Then the Pharisees and priests convened a council, saying, “What then shall we do? This Man works many signs, 48and all the people will believe in Him if we leave Him alone like this. Then you will see, the Romans will bring shame upon our face, and take from us our nation and our place.”*

- John 11.47, 48

Reflect

1. Misery loves company. So do anger and self-interest. The meeting described here was not an informal gathering, but called session of the Jewish council. The prime movers here were seeking an official action. Sin often likes to wrap itself in the garb of officialdom. Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, sinful people can make even a good form of government serve sinful purposes. We’ve seen this in our own country as...*
2. Suppose you had been in attendance at this meeting. Nicodemus undoubtedly was, and perhaps others who shared his view of Jesus. When the question was put in verse 47, what would you have been thinking? How might you have responded at that point, before verse 48? What risk would that have involved (cf. Jn. 7.50-52)? Do you face any such situations as you work your Personal Mission Field? How can you prepare for these? *Give me grace and wisdom, Lord, so that when others oppose you, I...*
3. The religious leaders in Jerusalem were not stupid. They had been keeping an eye on Jesus, and they saw the way matters were tending. They knew that if they allowed Him to continue His ministry unhindered, “everyone” ultimately would believe in Him. They offered two reasons for why this would have been unacceptable, the first a *political* reason. What was it? Is there a lesson here – or at least a caveat – about the relationship between political power and faith in Jesus? Explain. *We do not trust in politicians or government, Lord, but we do not ignore them, either, because...*
4. The second reason why they believed they needed to stop Jesus was mostly personal, although they robed it in nationalistic terms. Is Jesus a threat to people’s perceived sense of status, privilege, or wellbeing? Is this threat justifiable? *Lord, You gave up privileges and primacy of place to come to earth for our salvation. Help me, as I follow You, to...*
5. Sin can be powerfully blinding, trapping people in self-interest and the status quo, and keeping them from seeing through to the abundant good following Jesus can bring. What can you learn from this situation to help you in bearing witness to Jesus? Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“Notice both the audacity and the blindness of their evil. It was audacious because they had already witnessed the fact that he had performed many signs, and yet they thought they could plot against him—as if he could do nothing when they plotted against him. On the other hand, they were no less blind either because it makes more sense to be on the side of someone who performs such miracles than [to be a part of] the plot of those who do not want to allow him to live. Or perhaps they thought that he performed signs that were not the result of divine power and that this was why he could not do all things or deliver himself from their plot.

They resolved, therefore, not to let him live, thinking that they would place an impediment in the way of those who believed in him and also prevent the Romans from taking away their place and nation.” *Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

No wonder God commands His people to hate sin (Ps. 97.10). What does it look like when believers hate sin? When you hate sin?

*Closing Prayer*

The LORD reigns;  
Let the earth rejoice;  
Let the multitude of isles be glad!  
Clouds and darkness surround Him;  
Righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of His throne.  
A fire goes before Him,  
And burns up His enemies round about.  
His lightnings light the world;  
The earth sees and trembles.  
The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD,  
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.  
The heavens declare His righteousness,  
And all the peoples see His glory.  
Let all be put to shame who serve carved images,  
Who boast of idols.  
Worship Him, all *you* gods.  
Zion hears and is glad,  
And the daughters of Judah rejoice  
Because of Your judgments, O LORD.  
For You, LORD, *are* most high above all the earth;  
You are exalted far above all gods.  
You who love the Lord, hate evil!  
He preserves the souls of His saints;  
He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.  
Light is sown for the righteous,  
And gladness for the upright in heart.  
Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous,  
And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.

Psalm 97.1-12

**Psalm 97** (*Darvall: Rejoice, the Lord is King!*)

Rejoice, the Lord is King! O earth, lift up your voice;  
Be glad, you islands, shout and sing: Rejoice! Rejoice!  
*Refrain v. 9*  
Beyond, above all gods and nations be exalted, God of love!

His just and righteous throne ‘mid clouds and darkness stands;  
His fiery wrath consumes His foes in every land.

*Refrain*

Earth trembles at the sight of Jesus’ holy face;  
The mountains melt before His might and praise His grace.

*Refrain*

*The Gospel of John: John 11.38-48*

The heav'ns above declare His glorious righteousness;  
And tribes and peoples everywhere His Name confess.

*Refrain*

While Zion gladly sings, let all be brought to shame  
Who to vain idols worship bring and scorn His Name.

*Refrain*

All you who love the Lord, despise sin's wicked ways!  
Praise Him Who guides us by His Word through all our days.

*Refrain*

## 7 The Raising of Lazarus

Read and meditate on John 11.38-48.

The raising of Lazarus is a watershed moment in John's gospel. Everything that has happened prior to this incident has prepared the way for it, and everything that follows from it is but the logical consequence of this astonishing event.

<sup>38</sup>Therefore, He was groaning in Himself, and came unto the tomb, which was a cave, a stone laid to the entrance. <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, "Remove the stone." But Martha, she who was the dead man's own dear sister, said to Him. "Lord, it has been four days; and surely there will be a stench." <sup>40</sup>He said to her, "Did not I say to you that if you would believe in Me, then you would see the glory of the Lord?" <sup>41</sup>So then they took away the stone from where the man was lying, dead. Then Jesus, with His eyes turned upward, as if looking to the skies, began to pray: "I thank You, Father. You have heard Me, <sup>42</sup>as You, Father, always do. But I have said this for the sake of all the people standing here, that they may call on You, and all believe that You have sent Me." <sup>43</sup>Now when Jesus all these things had said, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" <sup>44</sup>And the man who died, and had for some four days been buried, came forth, bound both hand and feet with grave clothes, and a linen band around his face. And Jesus said, "Unloose him; let him go." <sup>45</sup>And many of the Jews who came to comfort Mary, and had seen the many things that Jesus did, believed in Him. <sup>46</sup>But some went to the Pharisees and told them. <sup>47</sup>Then the Pharisees and priests convened a council, saying, "What then shall we do? This Man works many signs, <sup>48</sup>and all the people will believe in Him if we leave Him alone like this. Then you will see, the Romans will bring shame upon our face, and take from us our nation and our place."

- John 11.38-48

Reflect

1. Review the works Jesus has done prior to the raising of Lazarus (chapters 2, 4, 5, 6, and 9). By taking all these works together, can you see that Jesus would have the power to raise a man from the dead? Explain. Complete this prayer: Lord, You created, You healed from afar and by a touch, You fed the thousands, You raised a dead man. For me, You can certainly...

2. We can say the same about Jesus' claims and teaching. Review His primary teaching moments to this point (chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10). What did Jesus teach that suggests He should have been able to raise Lazarus from the dead? *Your Word is filled with precious and very great promises, Lord, which all find their fulfillment in You. Today, help me to lay hold on those promises, so that...*
3. The raising of Lazarus also heightens John's focus on the different ways people responded to Jesus. Explain. *Not everyone will believe my witness to You, Lord, but...*
4. John had previously described Jesus as the Word of God, Who has power to create everything that exists, and to bring light and life to the world (Jn. 1.1-12). How does this event confirm that Jesus of Nazareth is that Word? *Speak, Lord, and take away my fears, and strengthen my soul, and I...*
5. Jesus had said this situation would bring glory to God, glorify the Son of God, and strengthen the faith of His disciples. Was He right? Explain. How should the raising of Lazarus affect us, who are followers of Jesus today? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

*Summary*

"He who trusts in Jesus comes forth wearing bonds worthy of death from his former sins and still bound around his face, so that he can neither see nor walk nor do anything because of the bonds of death until Jesus commands those who are able to loose him and let him go." *Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

We are all Lazarus. We all need to be loosed from our death garments and clothed with Jesus by His Word (Eph. 4.17-24). Give thanks to God the Father, that He has given us a Savior Who can speak new life into our soul day by day.

*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.

*The Gospel of John: John 11.38-48*

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 11.38-48*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. What purposes did Jesus set for the raising of Lazarus? How were these realized?
2. Why do you suppose Jesus didn't simply tell everyone what He was going to do? Why did He make them wait until He did it? Is there a lesson here for us, in our walk with the Lord?
3. What should we learn from this incident about the power of sin? How powerful *is* sin? Is anything *more* powerful than sin?
4. What kinds of responses should we expect as we talk with others about Jesus?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 11.38-48? 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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Thank you.