

The resurrection and the life John 11-1-44

Preamble:

Book store recommends...

Promo Sunday school... (Christians in the marketplace, story of NT, and resolving conflict and forgiving others)

Update on mission...

Sermon introduction:

Keller chapter 8 in Making sense of God

Mike was a football star in high school and college. After college he played for NFL Europe. When his football career ended, he went to Chiropractic school. Then he established a very successful chiropractic practice in north Spokane.

I was extremely grateful for Mike because he gave pastors free Chiropractic care. Which meant he gave me free chiropractic care. He encouraged me to come to his office often.

Mike was a great guy. He overflowed with charisma and kindness. He loved people and it showed!

As a result, I was devastated when Mike died suddenly a few months ago. He cut his finger. The cut got infected. The infection spread. He was admitted to the hospital and died a few days later.

We were all shocked and devastated. It all happened so fast!

Death is the great enemy. It comes for everyone. Some die suddenly, others die slowly. Some die old and some die young. Some die rich and some die poor. Some die of natural causes, others die from accidents.

No matter how we die, the point is simply this—we will all die. Which makes it seem like death always wins.

Which raises a few questions—will death ever be defeated? Will we ever live in an era where death is no more? Is there hope beyond the grave?

Yes! This brings us to John 11 and the story of Lazarus. This incredible story of hope unfolds in four scenes, each scene is marked by an action of Jesus Christ.

Jesus delays

Jesus promises

Jesus weeps

Jesus speaks

First, Jesus delays

John 11:1-16 (ESV) — 1 Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. **2** It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. **3** So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you

love is ill." **4** But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

Jesus is not denying that Lazarus will die; rather, He is denying that death will have the final victory.

5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. **6** So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. **7** Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

The words of verse 6 are somewhat shocking. Wait a minute Jesus, if you really love Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, why are you delaying? Why are you lingering? Why aren't you running to Bethany to pray for Lazarus asap so that he does not die? Don't you care about his life or Mary and Martha's feelings? If you don't hustle, he probably will die.

His delay almost seems heartless, doesn't it? It seems unloving.

Yet, because he "loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." (v. 5) he chose to delay. In other words, he chose to allow Lazarus to die, because he had an amazing plan for everyone—which would only unfold if Lazarus died.

God allows his own to experience pain and suffering for a greater good. Which is why Jesus delayed. He wanted them to witness a stupendous miracle that would change them forever. He wanted them to witness his power over death. He wanted them to see his glory. He wanted to dramatically strengthen their faith and give them eternal hope. But they could only see these things if they suffered first.

8 The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" **9** Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. **10** But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." **11** After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." **12** The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." **13** Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. **14** Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, **15** and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." **16** So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Here is the point so far, Christ hears that Lazarus is about to die, yet he delays going to Lazarus to heal him. Why? He knows that Lazarus must die to accomplish a greater good.

Illustration:

Do you remember the story of Joseph from the OT? Joseph is despised by his brothers. Eventually they sell him into slavery. Did God deliver Joseph then? No. Joseph ends up in Potiphar's house. He served Potiphar as a slave. Did God deliver him in Potiphar's house? No, God delayed.

Then Joseph is falsely accused by Potiphar's wife. He ends up in prison... And in prison I'm sure that Joseph cried out to God for deliverance, but again God delayed. God did not deliver him.

Finally, Joseph is freed from prison and ends up serving as the prime minister of all of Egypt. In that role he saves his entire family (the nation of Israel) from starvation.

He would not have been in a position to save his entire family if God would have answered his prayers for deliverance years beforehand. God had a greater good in mind.

Application:

We can sometimes feel like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Jesus, don't you care? Why are you delaying??? Why are you letting me suffer?

Lord why the chronic pain?

Lord, why are you letting my career fail so miserably?

Lord, why are you allowing me to be cheated, misrepresented, and persecuted? Don't you care?

Lord, why are you allowing me to experience crippling loneliness? Why are you allowing my friends and family to reject me?

Lord, why are you allowing my children to wander away from you?

Lord, why are you allowing me to be stuck in such a loveless marriage?

Lord, why did you allow my child to suffer and die?

When God delays, we sometimes wonder if God cares, don't we?

God never promises us a life of ease and comfort, but he does promise to work all things for our good and his glory (Rom. 8:28).

God's ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:8). They are much better.

God delays for two days, because he loves Mary and Martha. God allows us to experience pain and sorrow because he loves us, and he knows that our pain is working towards a greater good. What is the greater good? Our sanctification and God's glory (v. 4).

Fortunately, Jesus does not delay forever. This brings us to the second scene.

First, Jesus delays...

Second, Jesus promises

John 11:17-27 (ESV) – 17 Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

This reference to four days, repeated in v. 39, is designed to prove that Lazarus was really dead, and not merely sick.

18 Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, **19** and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. **20** So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. **21** Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Without hearing Martha's tone of voice, it is hard to know if Martha is accusing Jesus or affirming Jesus. But, based on the next verse it seems like she is affirming Jesus.

22 But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." **23** Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." **24** Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

Like most of the Jews of her day, Martha believed that God would raise the saints on the last day, right before the final judgment. She does not realize that Jesus would raise her brother much sooner.

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, **26** and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" **27** She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

This is the fifth "I am" statement in the gospel of John. . . and arguably the most riveting (see 6:35, 48, 51; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5).

Jesus does not merely say that he will bring about the resurrection or that he will be the cause of the resurrection (both statements are true). He says something far stronger and outlandish. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life."

When he says that he is the resurrection he is claiming that he is the author and creator of life, and he is claiming to be the one who will make all things new. What things? All the things ruined by the fall.

When he says he is the life, he is claiming that he is the one that brings fullness of life or eternal life, which begins the moment one believes the gospel.

Illustration:

"A Cambridge professor who was a Christian used to do open-air evangelism in the city center. One day he was heckled by a bystander asking him to prove that heaven existed. "My dear fellow," the man replied, "I live there." In other words, he experienced eternal life every day in his relationship with Jesus. (Moody)

Application:

Don't miss Christ's promise in all of this.

John 11:25–26 (ESV) — 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, **26** and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

How do we experience resurrection and life?

Not through our efforts (expand).

We receive resurrection and life through believing. This is Christ's amazing promise. Belief is more than accepting facts, it is a deep personal trust.

What a promise??? V. 26 "Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Christ is asking everyone this question.... Christ is asking you this question.

With that said, Christ promise is not a guarantee of a pain free life, which brings us to the next scene.

First, Jesus delays.

Second, Jesus promises.

Third, Jesus weeps

John 11:28–37 (ESV) — 28 When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” **29** And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. **30** Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. **31** When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. **32** Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” **33** When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

Verses 33 raises the question—what “deeply moved” and “greatly troubled” Jesus?

The Greek term “deeply moved” (sometimes translated “groaned”) always suggests anger, outrage, or emotional indignation (see v. 38; cf. Matt. 9:30; Mark 1:43; 14:5). One commentator suggests that it would be more accurate to say that Jesus was “irate.”

But why? Why was he irate? More than likely, Jesus was irate because he hated death. Death is the greatest enemy of humanity. Death is the result of sin. Death brings sorrow and suffering. Death was not part of God’s original design. In just a few short days, He would battle this ancient and powerful foe on the cross.

Illustration:

One of our children battled cancer ten years ago. As a result, we have spent time with other parents whose children battled cancer. They often say, “I hate cancer” or “cancer sucks” or “@#%\$ cancer.” Cancer causes so much suffering and sorrow that they hate it. It is hard to blame them. Cancer has ruined many people’s lives. It destroys families financially, cancer care is incredibly time consuming, and worst of all it ends the lives of children.

It is hard to blame parents for hating childhood cancer.

I think this is how Jesus felt about death. He hated it!

34 And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” **35** Jesus wept.

Why? Why did Jesus weep, when he knew he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead?

Had Jesus given in to despair? Did He not know what He was about to do? He probably wept for two reasons. First, the Scriptures exhort, “**Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep**” (Rom. 12:15). Jesus was on the verge of perhaps His greatest miracle, but He entered into the grief and loss of those whom He loved. Second, he was fully human. He was saddened by all the brokenness that accompanies death.

Illustration: Levi... “why in the world do Christians get sad at funerals?” weeping with those who weep...

Application:

Jesus tears remind us that God is not a stoic God. Rather, he feels our pain and weeps along with our weeping. He sees our struggles, trials, and sorrows, and he cares. The god who spoke the universe into place out of nothing, cares about you and your trials. When you cry, he cries.

He is with his people in their suffering, experiencing the depth of their pain and weeping with them (vv. 33, 35, 38). His is transcendent and immanent.

Fortunately, Jesus does more than weep, he acts! Which brings us to final (climatic) scene.

Jesus delays

Jesus promises

Jesus weeps

Fourth, Jesus speaks

John 11:36–39 (ESV) — 36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" **37** But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?" **38** Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. **39** Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days."

Again, John highlights the fact that he has been dead for four days. He is not sick, he is dead!

40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" **41** So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. **42** I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." **43** When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."

Charles Spurgeon (19th century pastor) makes the point that Jesus had to specify that he was calling Lazarus, otherwise every dead body in Palestine would have burst forth from the grave. Why? Jesus is God! At the beginning of time, he spoke, and the universe leapt into existence out of nothing.

Christ's words are a graphic preview of Christ's power, which will be on full display at the final resurrection, when every person who has ever lived will rise from the grave at the sound of Christ's voice (John 5:25, 28, 29).

44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

The moment Christ called for Lazarus to come forth, Lazarus' heart began to beat, nerve impulses began to race throughout his body, his brain waves ignited, and his rotting, putrefying flesh became was instantly healed.

Then the crowd stared into the darkness of the grave and saw movement. They saw Lazarus' body sit up on the stone, then stand erect, then emerge mummy-like into the sunlight. I'm sure some screamed in terror.

Christ spoke and Lazarus dead body came to life!

Application:

This is the sixth and most spectacular sign, so far, in John's gospel.

So far Christ...

Turned water into wine
Healed the official's son
Healed the lame man
Fed the five thousand
Healed the blind man

For the sixth sign, he raises Lazarus from the dead.

These signs prove that Christ is the divine Messiah.

Yet, there is one more climatic sign.

By raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus lays the groundwork for the seventh and final sign—his own death and resurrection. Seven is the number of perfection and the final sign is the perfect sign!

Notice the parallels between the resurrection of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus.

Lazarus was in a "tomb" (11:38) and Christ was in a "tomb" (20:1)

Lazarus's stone was removed (11:39, 41) and Christ's stone was removed (20:1).

Lazarus was Dead for "four days" (11:39) Christ was dead for "three days" (19:31; 20:1)

Lazarus's body was wrapped with "strips of linen" (11:44) and Christ's body was wrapped with "strips of linen" (19:40; 20:5).

Lazarus had a "Cloth [wrapped] around his face (11:44) and Jesus had a "Cloth . . . wrapped around his head" (20:7).

Lazarus resurrection elicits belief (11:42, 45) and Christ's resurrection elicits belief (20:19–23, 29).

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the ultimate sign that Jesus Christ is the divine Messiah. The one who can give you resurrection life.

Do you believe?

Application:

All those that put their hope in Jesus Christ will someday rise from the grave with glorified resurrection bodies.

Christ resurrection ensures our resurrection.

Christ's resurrection proves that death has been defeated decisively.

This means that Christians don't have to fear death!

This means that Christians will see their loved ones again!

This means that no matter how hard your life gets, the best is yet to come.

This means that there is hope beyond the grave.

This truly changes everything—for eternity!

Conclusion:

When Mike Valent died a few months ago his clients, friends, neighbors, and family were shocked. The shock eventually turned to sorrow. Many tears are still being shed.

But make professed faith in Jesus Christ. This means that someday, he will rise from the grave just like Lazarus rose from the grave. But Mike's resurrection will be so much better. Lazarus received his old body, but Mike will rise to a glorified body.

Why? Jesus Christ, through his life, death, and resurrection ensured that our bodies would rise someday without any of the effects of sin.

I'm going to let the apostle Paul have the last word this morning.

1 Corinthians 15:54–57 (ESV) — 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." **55** "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" **56** The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. **57** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's pray...

Deacons questions

1. What is the main point of this story?
2. What does this story tell us about suffering and trials?
3. Why does God sometimes not answer our prayers?
4. Describe a time when God delayed answering your prayers and later used that delay for your good and his glory.
5. What does this story tell us about the character of God? What moves him to tears?
6. What does this story tell us about death?
7. How does this story bring hope to the Christian?
8. How can you specifically apply this story to your life this week?