

THE SIGN OF HIS POWER OVER DEATH

Leader pages on pp. 126-129

THE POINT:
JESUS OFFERS US THE HOPE OF A NEW LIFE.

JOHN 11:25-27;38-44

MEMORY VERSE

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live.

26 Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world."

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38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.

39 "Remove the stone," Jesus said. Martha, the dead man's sister, told him, "Lord, there is already a stench because he has been dead four days."

40 Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"

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41 So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you heard me.

42 I know that you always hear me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so that they may believe you sent me."

43 After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" **44** The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go."

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KEYWORDS

I am the resurrection..." (v. 25)–

The fifth and perhaps greatest "I am" statement. Every time Jesus declares "I am," He is declaring He is God who has come in the flesh.

You are the Messiah (v. 27)–

Directly translated, Messiah means "Anointed One."

Dead four days (v. 39)–Jewish superstition held that a person's spirit waited by the body for three days looking for an opportunity to return.

A loud voice (v. 43)–Greek words are phone [voice, sound] megas [great] and thus could be directly translated "megaphone."

WHAT DOES JESUS'S POWER OVER DEATH MEAN FOR OUR LIVES?

Charles Richard Drew, MD, known as the “father of blood banking,” revolutionized blood preservation techniques, saving countless lives. His doctoral research on blood banking and transfusions laid the groundwork for creating the first large-scale blood banks.

During World War II, Drew spearheaded the Blood for Britain project, delivering crucial plasma to England. He also organized the first American Red Cross Blood Bank and introduced mobile donation units, known today as bloodmobiles.

Despite his groundbreaking work, Drew faced challenges and resigned from the Red Cross, protesting their policy of segregating blood by race. But his work continues to save lives.

In today's passage, we're going to read about a time when a friend of Jesus was gravely ill, and the family wanted Jesus to be there for them. When his death occurred, the family wrestled with what Jesus could have done if only He had been present in those moments.

Yet, we will soon see there was a far greater truth to be demonstrated in the death and resuscitation of Lazarus.

He Declares He Is the resurrection // John 11:25-27

Jesus is the resurrection and life. Martha did not fully understand the implications of what Jesus said because moments later, she cautioned Him against opening Lazarus's tomb (v. 39). Nevertheless, she expressed a trust in who Jesus is.

At the beginning of John 11, we learn that a man named Lazarus was sick (v. 1). Lazarus was a friend of Jesus, as well as the brother of Mary and Martha. In previous encounters with Jesus, Mary was found at the feet of Jesus, while her sister, Martha, was doing a lot of work (Luke 10:38-42). Later, Mary was seen as the one who anointed Jesus with expensive perfume prior to His death (John 12:1-8). So, there's backstory here. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were some of Jesus's closest companions. The friendship was such that when Lazarus was sick, they immediately notified Jesus (11:3). Jesus made a bold proclamation to His disciples and then took an unexpected action. First, Jesus declared that the sickness would not end in death (v. 4) but was to glorify God, and then He decided to stay where He was for two more days (v. 6). We can only imagine the anticipation



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and anxiety that must have been rushing through the minds of the family. When will Jesus get here? The amount of time between Lazarus's death and Jesus's arrival was four days (v. 17).

Upon His arrival to the grieving situation, Jesus first encountered Martha. In Martha's grief, she claimed that she knew Lazarus would have lived if only He had been present. Jesus didn't respond to her claim but instead demonstrated the purpose of His late arrival: "Your brother will rise again" (v. 23). Martha didn't understand what was about to happen. Still, she gave an answer based upon her understanding that she believed her brother would rise again in the last days, which was a reference to the reign of Christ at the end of time (v. 24).

Jesus gave one of the most powerful declarations of Himself at this moment: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live" (v. 25). This statement was a radical consideration of the end of life. For some Jews, death was treated as a final defeat and a sign that God had deserted them. Jesus's statement, however, emphasized that resurrection should be treated with the same reality as death, but without the finality with Jesus in the picture. It wasn't a myth or fable to believe in the resurrection. In fact, this moment reflected the crux of Martha's belief in who Jesus truly is (v. 27).

Martha's confession expressed faith not only in the resurrection to come but in the person of Jesus Christ. It's upon this confession that we see the complete picture of Jesus wrapped up in this moment:

- **"You are the Messiah" (v. 27).** Jesus is the Promised One—spoken of all the way back in Genesis 3—who would come and destroy the serpent. As the Messiah, He is the King of kings and has complete authority over everything.
- **"The Son of God" (v. 27).** Jesus was declared before His birth, at His baptism, and by others who could see His nature for the uniqueness of His power and divine person.
- **"Who comes into the world" (v. 27).** Jesus came with a mission to live a perfect life, do the will of God, and provide a ransom for the lost.

These statements uttered by Martha describe the nature of Jesus and demonstrate understanding of His person, life, and purpose!

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BELIEVING THERE'S A RESURRECTION AND BELIEVING JESUS IS THE SOURCE OF THAT RESURRECTION?



DIGGING DEEPER FRIENDSHIP

Jesus had a deep and meaningful relationship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Their home in Bethany became a place of rest and refuge for Him. They were more than just followers; they were close friends. Mary often sat at Jesus's feet, taking in His teachings, while Martha was the one bustling around, ensuring everything was perfect for their guests. Despite their different personalities, Jesus valued both sisters equally. Lazarus, their brother, experienced Jesus's incredible power when he was raised from the dead. This miracle not only strengthened their bond but also demonstrated Jesus's deep compassion and divine authority. Through their interactions, we see that Jesus valued friendships, shared meals, and provided comfort and hope to those He loved. This relationship highlights how Jesus's love and care transcended mere formality, bringing genuine kindness and friendship.

How would you describe Jesus's relationship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus? How important are relationships with family and friends?

He Understands Our Sorrow //

John 11:38-40

To witness God in action, we need to trust and follow Him, even when it doesn't seem to make sense.

We don't know why Mary stayed back when Martha went to see Jesus, but we do know that she remained in the presence of the comforters. When she saw Jesus, she fell at His feet; her grief seemed to go to another level as she considered what could have been. "Lord," she said, "if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died!" (v. 32).

Jesus asked to be taken to the tomb. Upon arriving, we see that Jesus began to weep (v. 35). Never has so short a verse carried so much depth of meaning. How was Jesus processing Lazarus's death as He wept? Perhaps there was anger over the effects of sin that leads to death, and grief that it had impacted Lazarus and those around him. The tears that Jesus shed was a genuine display of His humanity. Jesus wanted to see the tomb where Lazarus lay. Then, in a radical move, Jesus gave the first of three commands in this passage as He ordered the stone removed. The request was so radical that Martha even questioned its purpose. And, once again, reinforced the reality of Lazarus's death to Jesus (v. 39). While we would like to think that Martha had her confession down perfectly, the truth is that to her, the death of Lazarus was still a reality that she was wrestling with in her mind. Martha gives us a picture of someone who can say they believe certain things, yet practically still struggle to live them out. Jesus's response to Martha's statement (v. 40) was a gut-check moment regarding her confession. Did she really believe what Jesus had said, or was she just giving lip service to what she thought Jesus wanted to hear?

Therefore, true confession is always going to be partnered with a surrendered life. A surrendered life not only expresses faith in Christ but is shown in committed obedience to the things of God. It means that we see Jesus not just as someone who we know things about, but as the One who is our Savior and Lord. And as such, we commit to His ways over our ways and to a life of fruitfulness and Christlikeness.



IN WHAT AREA OF YOUR LIFE DO YOU NEED TO BELIEVE GOD'S WORD OVER THE CIRCUMSTANCES YOU CAN SEE?

We Can Face the Future with Hope // John 11:41-44

Jesus began not with a prayer requesting the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This was a time of gratefulness for Jesus. His revealing of Himself, His nature, and His mission, was about to be fully culminated. So, Jesus offered a prayer showing that the complete plan and purpose of God was set in motion before this moment (v. 41). The prayer was meant to be edifying for the crowd, who was watching and listening to Jesus (v. 42). The prayer was about what would happen after this moment, and the lives that would be impacted. Jesus knew full well that someone could see this miracle and begin to either believe or reject the nature of who He is.

Immediately upon the completion of the prayer, Jesus called for Lazarus to come out of the tomb. His statement, "Lazarus, come out!" (v. 43) is the second command given in the passage. The shouting of the command was not just for Lazarus but for those who were watching as well. Jesus wanted to be sure that it wasn't just any man who walked out of the tomb; it was Lazarus being called out. And unlike earlier, where the command to remove the stone from the tomb was met with

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skepticism, this command was met with joy and the immediate obedience of Lazarus, the dead man, as he walked out of the tomb with hands and feet bound in cloth (v. 44a). Then Jesus gave the final command in this passage: “Unwrap him and let him go” (v. 44b). This command would have been given to those who were present at the tomb, including to some perhaps who had expressed skepticism earlier.

The impact of this moment brought about just what Jesus expected. Unfortunately (from a human perspective), there were some who reported what happened to the Pharisees (v. 46), setting off a chain of events that led to their plot to kill Jesus (v. 53). However, some also began to believe in Jesus’s true identity (v. 45). While we couldn’t see Lazarus rise from the grave, we have the ability to experience a different resurrection—the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives!

Wherever you find yourself in this passage, the greatest truth to see is how true life is found in no one else other than Jesus Christ. As we prepare to celebrate Easter this coming week, may this truth be as present in our lives as ever!

WHEN HAVE YOU SEEN GOD DO SOMETHING UNEXPECTED AND HOW DID IT AFFECT YOUR FAITH?

DID YOU KNOW?

African Americans facing grief today often navigate complex layers of emotional, historical, and cultural challenges. Healthy grieving may involve seeking support from both within and outside your community. Many African Americans find solace and recognize the vital role of communal strength. Cultural practices, such as attending church services, or participating in prayer circles offer comfort and a sense of shared experience. Mental health professionals who understand the unique historical trauma and systemic issues impacting African Americans can provide tailored support, making therapy also a valuable tool for coping. Healthy grieving might also mean staying active, practicing self-care, and finding ways to honor the memory of lost loved ones. By embracing a holistic approach, you can navigate grief, healing both individually and collectively.

Biblical Truth: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matt. 5:4).

How did Jesus offer support during the death of Lazarus? What can we learn from the actions of Jesus?

LIVE IT

How can our faith be enriched when we face death?

Finding hope and faith in Jesus during loss or hardship can be a source of comfort and strength. His teachings and love offer a sense of peace and purpose, even in the toughest times. Believing in Jesus reassures us that there is a greater plan and that we are never truly alone. This faith can inspire strength and a renewed sense of hope, helping us navigate through grief and adversity with a heart full of trust in Jesus Christ.

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- **Explore.** Do a computer search of Bible verses that show the nature of Jesus Christ and share those with someone this week who may be struggling in his or her faith.
- **Evaluate.** Spend some time reflecting upon your personal confession and salvation story. Consider how your confession is being matched by how you are surrendering to the Lord.
- **Invite.** As a group, begin to pray for someone this week that you know may be skeptical of the truths of Christ, and take time during the week to invite this person to attend Easter services with you.

DAILY READINGS

1. BELIEVE AND SEE HIS GLORY // JOHN 11: 40

Hebrews 11:6 reminds us that it is impossible to please God without faith. We must “believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” Mary and Martha’s brother, Lazarus, dies, so they send for Jesus. He does not come right away to raise him from the dead. When He comes to the tomb, a stone is lying against it, and he says to remove it. Martha informs him that there is probably a stench since Lazarus has been dead for four days. In this verse, Jesus reminds her that if she believes, she will see the Glory of God. God is always at work in our lives even if we don’t know or understand the work.

Have faith in who He is and expect Him to move in your situation.

2. MY REDEEMER LIVES // JOB 19:25

This chapter provides Job’s reply to Bildad, one of his three friends who visits him after losing his children, possessions, and health. Job questions how long Bildad will torment him with his words. He states that if his condition is due to his sin, it only concerns him. He cites several examples to support that the Lord has wronged him and put him in this position. Job feels that everyone has turned against him and tells his friends to have mercy on him. He inquires why they persecute as God does. After a litany of his persecutions, this verse states that in all that he is experiencing, he knows that his Redeemer lives.

Most High God, because You live, may our hope rest in you during difficult circumstances.

3. GOD’S MIGHTY POWER // LUKE 9:43

When a spirit seizes a man’s only son, he shrieks, and it causes him to have convulsions until he foams at the mouth. The man informs Jesus he begged his disciples to drive it out, but they were unable. At this, Jesus describes them as unbelieving and perverse and inquires how long he will be with them and put up with them. He tells

him to bring his son to him. As the boy approaches, the demon knocks him down and throws him into severe convulsions. Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit, heals the boy, and gives him back to his father. As shown in this verse, they all marvel at God’s greatness.

Because of Christ, we have access to the All-Powerful God. May we rely on Your power today.

4. PRAY FOR WORKERS // MATTHEW 9:38

How often are you praying for those who are carrying out the Lord’s work? Jesus continues going around to towns and villages, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the good news, and healing diseases and sicknesses. He feels compassion for the crowds when he sees them because they are distressed and dejected. He compares them to sheep without a shepherd. He says to the disciples, “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few.” In this verse, he commands his disciples to pray to the Lord of harvest to send out workers into His harvest. Like the disciples, we, too, should pray this prayer. Send workers into your harvest to communicate the good news to sinners.

“Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you” (Matt. 7:7).

5. SAVED TO BEAR FRUIT// ROMANS 7:44

Romans 6:22 affirms that since we have been set free from sin and have become enslaved to God, we have fruit, which results in sanctification, and the outcome is eternal life. In this passage, we are provided a comparison of that of a husband and wife. When a husband dies, she is free from the law of marriage. In the same way, we are free from the law through Christ’s death so that we may belong to one another. This verse shows us that we belong to Christ, who was raised from the dead so that we might bear fruit for God. Today, let’s assess the fruit we bear.

How is the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life?