

The Gospel of John

11:1-16

Welcome back to this week's study in the book of John.
As with this study and all bible studies, remember to pray before you start.

This week we will get into the story of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead.
As we read through this story, one thing different about it is that Lazarus is called out by his name.

"*What's wrong with that?*" you may be thinking.

Well as you read throughout the 4 Gospels, and when Jesus heals or even raises someone from the dead, that person is not usually named.

† **Matt 8:5-6** *Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented."*

† **Mark 5:22-23** *And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live."*

Note: *Jairus is named but not his daughter*

† **Luke 8:43-44** *Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped.*

† **Luke 14:2-4** *And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "**Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?**" But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go.*

† **Luke 7:12-15** *And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "**Do not weep.**" Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "**Young man, I say to you, arise.**" So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.*

These are just a few examples but you can see more throughout the New Testament.
But starting out in this week's study, we read something different.

✠ **John 11:1-2** *Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.*

Mary and Martha we know from the other Gospels.

✠ **Luke 10:38-42** *Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "**Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.**"*

But why would Lazarus be named. Why not just say the brother of Martha and Mary? A few reasons; first we know that Jesus will raise Lazarus from the dead and the chief priests will seek to kill Lazarus again.

✠ **John 12:9-11** *Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.*

So it is important to name the person who Jesus raised from the dead, so we know that we are talking about the same person.

You see in other instances of where Jesus raised someone from the dead, they were only dead for a few hours or so. But in Lazarus' case, he was dead for 4 days. The other cases people could argue and say that they weren't really dead. But in Lazarus' case, there was no doubt that he was dead.

The second, and most important reason Lazarus is named is because Jesus tells this parable.

✠ **Luke 16:19-31** *"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil*

things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' "

One thing unique about his parable is that Lazarus is named by name. Go back sometime and read through the parables and you won't find any case of someone being named by name. But in this case, Lazarus is named. I believe that in both cases that this is the same Lazarus.

"But how can you say that since the parable is in Luke and this story is in John?" you may be asking.

Good question. If you will remember that the book of John was written after the other three Gospels were written. It's very possible that John read the letter (Or book as we call it) from Luke, and as he did the Holy Spirit brought to mind the case of Lazarus being raised from the dead, so he included it in his Gospel.

I have no concrete proof of any of this, so take it for what it's worth, but with God I don't believe that there are coincidences, and that God planned everything the way that it is.

So, keeping all of this in mind let's look at the opening verses again.

✠ **John 11:1-2** *Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.*

We have three key people here in this story, Lazarus and his two sisters Mary and Martha. Notice in verse two that it speaks of Mary anointing the feet of Jesus. When did this happen? Actually it didn't happen until the next chapter.

✠ **John 12:1-3** *Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.*

Remember back in Luke where we first read of Mary and Martha, and how Martha was serving but Mary was at Jesus' feet listening to Him teach.

Later after her brother was raised from the dead, she anoints Jesus' feet, not because Jesus raised her brother from the dead, but because she heard and believed Jesus' words and knew that he was the Messiah. We'll study this more when we get into chapter 12. But John still mentions this before it happens. Why? One thing interesting about Mary is that every time you read of her being with Jesus, she is at his feet.

- † **Luke 10:39** *And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.*
- † **John 11:2** *It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.*
- † **John 11:32** *Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."*
- † **John 12:3** *Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.*

Even at the beginning Mary knew who Jesus was and honored him for who He was. We should all be like Mary, humbling ourselves and being servants to Jesus at His feet, instead of thinking that we are anything great.

The story of Mary anointing Jesus' feet is in all four gospels.

- † **Matt 26:13** *"Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."*

Jesus gave the command, and the writers of the gospels made sure to follow Jesus' instruction.

Also there are several Mary's mentioned in the four gospels.

- Mary Jesus' mother **Mat 1:16**.
- Mary as we are reading about now, who is always mentioned as the sister to Martha.
- There is also Mary Magdalene who Jesus delivered from demon possession **Luke 8:2** and was also present at Jesus' crucifixion **Mark 15:40** and recognized Jesus after He rose from the dead **Mark 16:9**.
- Then there's Mary the mother of James and Joses. **Mat 27:56**.
- And Mary the *wife* of Clopas. **John 19:25**.
- Plus a few other Mary's mentioned in Acts.

So as John was writing this letter (or book), he had to make sure that the reader knew which Mary he was talking about.

Now we know that Lazarus is sick, and Mary and Martha knew about Jesus. So what do they do?

✠ **John 11:3** *Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."*

Or as the NLT puts it: *So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, "Lord, the one you love is very sick."*

They didn't leave their brother Lazarus, but sent others to tell Jesus about Lazarus' condition, hoping that Jesus would drop everything and come to help him. But then aren't we all like this when we pray, we want it now. It's always a life or death situation. But God always tells us not to worry, that He has everything in His hands. We just tend to forget that when things seem impossible.

✠ **Matt 6:31-32** *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. "*

Also notice they throw in "**he whom You love**". We know that Jesus loves everyone and the love Jesus had for Lazarus and even John who refers to himself, as "**the disciple whom Jesus loved**" is no different then the love He has for anyone else including you and me.

It's possible that Mary and Martha are trying to persuade Jesus with these words. Kind of like trying to give someone a guilt complex. Or possibly they were just reminding Jesus of how special Lazarus was to Him. Either way, they were trying to give Jesus the sense of urgency here regarding their brother Lazarus.

✠ **John 11:4-6** *When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.*

Now you can read this and say that Jesus was lying here, because Lazarus did die. But the death Jesus is speaking of is eternal death or the second death.

✠ **Rev 20:14-15** *Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

No, Jesus knew that Lazarus would die, but He also knew that He would raise him from the dead. We know this because of what Jesus said would be the reason it happened, "**but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.**" Jesus knew that this sickness would lead to a temporary death and that through the raising of Lazarus from the dead that God would be glorified.

† **John 12:10-11** *But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.*

Now the next two verses may sound kind of strange.

✠ *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.*

Jesus loved them, but He didn't drop everything to go help them? Remember part of the definition of love is:

† **1 Cor 13:4 (NLT)** *Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud*

Jesus loved them and showed Him His love by being patient. If He wasn't, then Jesus would have rushed right over there and healed Lazarus, but God would not have received the glory He did by Jesus doing more than healing Lazarus, but raising him from the dead. Sure a healing could have benefited Mary and Martha and even others, but how much more were they blessed when they saw their brother, friend or neighbor being raised from the dead.

A few weeks ago was the 4th of July, and like most, you probably went and saw a fireworks show. What if the big grand finally was done at the beginning instead of the end? You would ooh and aw for the first minute or so then the rest would be boring, because you saw something grand already, and everything else seemed like small potatoes compared to what you saw at the beginning. Everyone had seen Jesus do the healings, but it was time for the grand finally (so to speak) of Jesus' healing ministry.

So there was anticipation for not just two days "***He stayed two more days in the place where He was.***" but for four days. Jesus did wait two days before He left to go help Lazarus, but it was a two-day journey from where He was to Bethany. We know this because as we will read Lazarus was dead for four days and Jesus waited two days before he left. Two minus four equals two.

✠ **John 11:7-10** *Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?" 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. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."*

Remember back in chapter 10 that the Jews wanted to stone Jesus?

† **John 10:31** *Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.*

The disciples were concerned with this and wondered if Jesus went back if they would try to stone Him again.

People tend to think that the role of a pastor or any ministry is a piece of cake. All they do is read God's word all day and pray and then come to church and teach. Plus, they get paid for all of this. But it's much more than that, so much more.

Try spending a day with your pastor and see what he really goes through each day. You would probably be surprised how much he protects the flock (the church) from all sorts of wolves who try to sneak in. Not to mention all the attacks he is under by others. Then there are the needs of people that he ministers to etc.

Even with a simple bible study like this one on the Internet, there are challenges everyday. Attacks by e-mails, hackers (those trying to break in and corrupt the website and/or my computer), at home, work, spiritually, mentally etc. So many do give up a ministry because they find it's not all a bed of roses and a lot more work than they thought it would be.

So how do we as ministers of God's word keep our sanity and stick with it every day? Knowing that it's not our ministry but the Lord's. Knowing that God will either allow it to continue or will stop it all together, because it's all in His hands. God does the work through me, I am just a vessel that He uses on the Internet to publish His word and teachings.

What about you? Have you given up a ministry because you found it was harder than you thought? Maybe you know how hard it is, are you relying on your own strength so you have decided not to do it? Jesus could have said, "Forget about Lazarus, I'm to be crucified, and if I go back to Judea, I won't be, because they will stone me, and all my work here on this earth would have been for nothing."

Even before time began, God knew what must be done to save His creation of man. Even as God thought about creating the heavens and the earth, He knew what would have to be done. Even as Jesus was born, He knew what Jesus would have to go through. Even as Jesus stood before Pilate, He knew that you would reject Him for many years, but He also knew you would accept Him too.

God also knows the end of the story and how Jesus will rule and reign over all the earth and be glorified for all eternity in heaven. God also knew that you would be there too if you accepted His Son Jesus.

So Jesus wasn't worried at all, because He knew that He was in the Father's hands and will.

Are you worried?

Are you in the Father's hands?

Are His hands too small to handle your problems?

Are your problems bigger than God?

How big (or small) is your God/god?

† **Matt 5:34-35** *But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.*

This is my God, and man is He big!

✎ *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. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."*

Day represents walking in God's will. Night represents walking out of God's will. Jesus was walking in God's will so He knew what He was doing. But when you are not walking in God's will, that's when you stumble and fall or mess up. The only way to know if you are walking in God's will is by prayer and reading His word.

✎ *John 11:11-16 These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him." Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."*

Once again, Jesus is explaining to His disciples that He could have went and healed Lazarus, but that they would benefit more because they waited to see a greater work. We as Christians put our faith in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. But Jesus was showing not only that He could raise Himself from the dead, but that He had the power to raise us from the dead also.

Finally, our friend Thomas says:

✎ *Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."*

We call him doubting Thomas, but the words he speaks here are words of boldness and loyalty to Jesus. The disciples were worried that Jesus would be stoned if He went back to Judea, but they were also worried that they would have to face the religious leaders also and even face death. Thomas didn't care; he was ready to follow Jesus even if it meant he had to die with Jesus.

We tell the Lord we give our all to Him, even our lives. But don't we really mean we do as long as it doesn't interfere with our comfort zone! If we really meant those words of loyalty, then we would do more than we are. But we don't because we are not willing to really die for Him. This is something we all need to repent of, including myself!

Well, that's it for this week, next week we will continue on with this story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

May the Lord richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy, and may you die with Jesus so that you can live for Jesus!