

John 11:1-46 – "Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life"

1 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. **2** Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair, and it was her brother Lazarus who was sick. **3** So the sisters sent a message to him: "Lord, your dear friend is sick." **4** When Jesus heard this, he said, "This sickness will not end in death; instead, it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." **5** Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus. **6** So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was for two more days. **7** Then after that, he told his disciples, "Let's go to Judea again." **8** "Rabbi," the disciples told him, "a short time ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and are you going there again?" **9** Jesus answered, "Aren't there twelve hours in a day? If anyone walks during the day, he doesn't stumble, because he sees the light of this world. **10** But if anyone walks during the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." **11** After he said this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I'm on my way to wake him up." **12** Then the disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will get well." **13** Jesus, however, was speaking about his death, but they thought he was speaking about natural sleep. **14** So Jesus then told them plainly, "Lazarus has died. **15** For your sake, I'm glad I wasn't there, so that you may believe. But let's go to him." **16** Then Thomas, who was called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let's go also, that we may die with him." **17** When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. **18** Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. **19** Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother. **20** As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, but Mary remained in the house. **21** Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. **22** Yet even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." **23** "Your brother will rise again," Jesus told her. **24** Martha said, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." **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 that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world." **28** After she had said this, she went to call her sister Mary, telling her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." **29** As soon as Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. **30** Jesus had not yet entered 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 get up quickly and go out, they

followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 When Mary arrived where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't 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 was troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Lord," they told him, "come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Couldn't he who opened the blind man's eyes also have kept this man from dying?" 38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again within himself, 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, by now there will be a stench because he's 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?" 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 strips of cloth, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. Jesus told them, "Untie him and let him go." 45 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he did believed in him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

Key Background:

- **Bethany:** A small village about two miles east of Jerusalem, a frequent stopping point for Jesus and his disciples. It was home to Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, whom Jesus deeply loved and visited often.
- **The Purpose of the Miracle:** From the outset, Jesus declares that Lazarus's sickness is "for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (v. 4). He also states his delay was "for your sake, I'm glad I wasn't there, so that you may believe" (v. 15). Finally, in his prayer before raising Lazarus, Jesus explicitly states he prayed aloud "so that they may believe you sent me" (v. 42). The entire event, culminating in Lazarus's resurrection, is designed to lead people to place their faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah.
- **Walking in the Light:** Jesus's statement about walking in the day without stumbling relates to his identity as the "light of the world" (John 8:12, 9:5). For the disciples, being with Jesus (the Light) meant they were safe and in God's will, even when facing danger. Their reluctance to go to Judea reveals their fear,

but Jesus's words reassure them that following Him means they are secure in God's divine purpose.

- **"Fallen Asleep" vs. Death:** In the Bible, "sleep" is often used as a euphemism for death, particularly for believers. While the Greek verb can mean both, the disciples' misunderstanding of Jesus's words about Lazarus "falling asleep" points to their literal interpretation, but it also subtly betrays their reluctance and fear about returning to Judea, as they hoped Lazarus would simply get better without them needing to face danger.
- **Jewish Mourning Customs:** After death, Jewish burial usually occurred within 24 hours. The period of intense mourning lasted for seven days (shiva), during which friends and family visited to comfort the bereaved. The belief was that the soul lingered near the body for three days, after which decomposition would begin, signifying irreversible death. Lazarus being dead for four days (v. 17) meant, to the people of that time, that there was absolutely no hope of revival.
- **The Tomb and Stench:** Lazarus was buried in a cave tomb with a stone rolled against its entrance, a common burial practice of the time for wealthier families. Martha's concern about the smell (v. 39) indicates the advanced state of decomposition, further emphasizing the impossibility of human intervention and the miraculous nature of what Jesus was about to do.

Questions from the Story:

- What was the sisters' initial message to Jesus about Lazarus's condition (v. 3)? What does this reveal about their relationship with Jesus?
- According to Jesus, what was the ultimate purpose of Lazarus's sickness and this entire event (vv. 4, 15, 42)? How does this show that even in suffering, God has a purpose to reveal His glory and lead people to faith in Jesus?
- Why did Jesus intentionally delay going to Bethany for two days (v. 6)? What was he hoping to achieve by this delay, specifically in relation to his disciples' and others' belief (v. 15)?
- How did the disciples react to Jesus's decision to return to Judea (vv. 8-10)? What can we learn from Jesus's response about walking in the light and trusting in His presence, even when our faith is challenged by fear?

- **What was the misunderstanding between Jesus and his disciples about Lazarus "falling asleep" (vv. 11-14)? How does this reveal their fear and reluctance, and how might it also show their limited understanding of Jesus's power over death?**
- **When Martha met Jesus, what was her initial statement (v. 21)? What does this reveal about the limits of her faith - that she believed Jesus could have prevented death, but not that He could reverse it?**
- **How did Jesus respond to Martha's statement (vv. 23-26)? When Martha speaks of resurrection "on the last day" (v. 24), what does this show about her head knowledge versus her heart belief in Jesus's immediate power over death?**
- **What did Mary say to Jesus when she finally met him (v. 32)? How was her reaction similar to and different from Martha's, and what does this reveal about struggling with faith when facing impossible circumstances?**
- **"Jesus wept" (v. 35). Given that Jesus knew he was about to raise Lazarus, what might have been the deeper reasons for his tears, especially considering the unbelief and despair he witnessed (vv. 33, 37)?**
- **What was Martha's concern when Jesus asked for the stone to be removed from the tomb (v. 39)? How does her reaction about the stench show that despite her confession of faith (v. 27), she still struggled to believe Jesus could actually raise the dead?**
- **What did Jesus say to Martha before commanding Lazarus to come out (v. 40)? What is the direct connection between belief and seeing God's glory in this passage?**
- **Describe the miracle that occurred in verses 43-44. What was the immediate impact of this miracle on those who had come to Mary (v. 45), particularly regarding their faith and belief in Jesus?**
- **How does this story encourage us to place our faith in Jesus even when we face situations that seem hopeless or irreversible? What does it teach us about His power over death and our need for complete trust?**