

## ***JOHN 11: Life Triumphant***

### **1. Introduction.**

- a. Have you ever been miffed that God did not stop your suffering, or the suffering of someone close to you? Have you ever felt like telling God off saying, “God, if you have the power to heal, why don’t you?” “If you did miracles in the Bible, why aren’t you doing them now?”
- b. Let’s say you were in your final hours at the Dunedin hospital, in Room 405c. You’d just had a heart-to-heart with the doctor, and he told you you had one a few hours to live. So you ask your mum to text your best friend and ask her to come see you to say goodbye. But after a few minutes, your friend replies in a text, “I’m busy at the moment, but I’ll get there eventually.” You end up dying, and your friend shows up too late to see you off. How would you feel toward that friend? Is this how you feel toward God? If he’s God, why doesn’t he just stop the pain? Why didn’t he stop my loved one from dying? “Lord, if you really loved me you wouldn’t let me go through this!”
- c. The existence of suffering, illness, and death in our lives and in our world often causes us to doubt that God exists, that Jesus can help, and that the Bible is true. But here we are in a church, so we must believe God, Jesus, and the Bible. Otherwise, we wouldn’t be here. So how do we deal with the co-existence of God, Jesus, and the Bible on the one hand, and the suffering, illness, disability, and death we experience in our lives?
- d. Our text, John 11, helps us answer these tough questions. The answer I want you to remember is this one simple statement:

**Because of Jesus, life triumphs over death.**

- e. In our time together, we’re going to watch an eight-minute apologetics video about the Christian answer to the problem of evil.
- f. Then we’re going to seek answers about the problem of evil in John 11.
- g. The goal is for everyone in this room to be convinced that:

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### **Video**

RightNowMedia, William Lane Craig, Defenders, Apologetics

## 2. John 11.

- a. In John 10, Jesus claimed to be the good shepherd (Jn 10:11). He said that he came that his sheep may have life and have it abundantly (Jn 10:10). He said that he gives his sheep eternal life, that they will never perish, and that no one will snatch them out of his hand (Jn 10:28) and the Father's hand (Jn 10:29).
- b. But if that's so, how can he permit those he loves (Jn 11:3, 5, 36), his sheep, to die. He must not be a very good shepherd after all! Sure, Jesus can give sight to a blind beggar (Jn 9:7). But he can't seem to defeat the ultimate enemy, death. But what we're going to see is:

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## 3. Lazarus' Illness (Jn 1:1-4).

- a. Mary and Martha send to Jesus (v. 3) because Lazarus is still alive. He is ill (vv. 1-3), but there is still a chance for him to recover. Surely Jesus will heal him. They'd seen him do it many times before. And because Jesus loved Lazarus, surely he would come and heal Lazarus now, or at least heal him from a distance, like the nobleman's son (Jn 4:49-51).
- b. But Jesus has greater situational awareness than do Mary and Martha. He sees what they don't see. He knows the Father will use Lazarus' illness to glorify him. He knows that Lazarus' illness will not ultimately lead to his death (v. 4).
- c. It's the same for us in our suffering. When it comes to suffering, Jesus sees what we can't see. He sees the purpose we can't see.

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## 4. Jesus Goes to Awaken Lazarus (Jn 11:5-16).

- a. Jesus loves Lazarus and his sisters and knows Lazarus is ill (v. 5). So why does he intentionally delay (v. 6)?
  - (1) How would you like it if your physician came to you and said, "We know what to do keep you alive, and we've got all the supplies we need in stock. But we'd rather just wait. It's God's will for you to die."
  - (2) Or what if your best friend knew you were in hospital and had only a few hours left to live, but he purposely avoided visiting you, even though you asked for her by name? What is Jesus doing here?
  - (3) Believer, have you ever asked, why doesn't God heal me now, if he has the power to do so? Is Jesus delaying in your case, just as he did in the case of Lazarus? Are you frustrated at Jesus' delay?
- b. At the right time, Jesus begins to approach our suffering to finally deal with it. He may deal with it before the grave, or after, but he will deal with it. We can count on it.
  - (1) Here a great sign of Jesus' identity, the seventh sign of John's gospel, is being set up. The pause has a purpose. The purpose is that faith may increase (v. 15).

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## 5. Jesus' Encounter with Martha (John 11:17-27).

- a. There are generally two responses to the problem of illness, suffering, and death—the Martha response, and the Mary response.
  - (1) Martha is proactive (v. 20), objective, and rational.
  - (2) Mary is reactive (v. 20), subjective, and emotional.
  - (3) They both place a bit of blame on Jesus for not coming sooner and preventing their brother's death. They both say, "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died" (vv. 21, 32).
  - (4) Martha, though, still believes Jesus may want to do something special in the situation. She believes in the power of Jesus' words and his close connection to the Father (v. 22).
    - (a) May we say along with her, "But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you" (v. 22).
- b. Like Martha, we are to firmly believe in the final resurrection on the last day. With Lazarus, all believers will rise again in the resurrection on the last day (vv. 23-24). This belief is central to Christianity (Da 12:1-2).
- c. But even more, we are to believe that the resurrection and the life is not just something that happens to us. It is a person. Jesus himself is the resurrection and life (v. 25). It is because Jesus is the resurrection and the life that there is no other way to God. The Christian faith is not a philosophy or programme, but a person.
- d. Jesus says to us, as he did to Martha: "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?" (vv. 25-26).
  - (1) Will you answer as Martha answered? "Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is coming into the world" (v. 27). This is exactly why the gospel of John was written (Jn 20:30-31).

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## 6. Jesus' Encounter with Mary (Jn 11:28-37).

- a. In our grief and sorrow, the Teacher calls for us, just as he did for Mary (v. 28).
- b. Like Mary, when we hear the Teacher's call, we are to rise quickly and go (v. 29).
- c. Like Mary, when we see Jesus in our grief, we are to fall at his feet and invited to pour out our emotions, feelings, complaints, questions, doubts to him (v. 32).
- d. Jesus sees our weeping and is deeply moved by it (v. 33, 38).
  - (1) He is greatly troubled by the evil and suffering in our fallen world. If you are greatly troubled by the evil and suffering you see in our world, know that Jesus is greatly troubled by it a thousand times more. Jesus weeps for our fallen world (v. 35).
  - (2) That's rather remote, though. He is also greatly troubled specifically at our suffering. Are you suffering right now? Is something keeping you up at night? Has your outlook darkened because of some suffering you are experiencing, or something that has happened to a family member or close friend?
  - (3) Share about Jamie, Aizada, and Abigail.
- e. In our grief, we are tempted to doubt Jesus' power (v. 37), even if we don't doubt his love (v. 36). But we called to trust in both Jesus' love and his power.

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#### **7. Jesus' Encounter with Lazarus (Jn 11:38-46).**

- a. As in the case of Lazarus, Jesus asks us to “take away the stone” (v. 39). We do this today by totally trusting in Jesus in the midst of our suffering.
- b. We are conditioned to think naturally, like Martha: “Lord, by this time there will be an odour” (v. 39).
- c. But Jesus asks us to recondition ourselves to think supernaturally. Jesus invites to believe and see the glory of God (v. 40).
- d. Our experience of illness, death, grief, and pain is an opportunity for us to see the glory of God (v. 40). This includes not only us but also the “people standing around” (v. 42).
- e. At the right time, Jesus cries out with a loud voice in our lives, “\_\_\_\_\_”, come out!” (v. 43). Note the power in Jesus’ voice. He is the Word (Jn 1:1, 14), and he calls his own by name (Jn 10:3).

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- f. If you are not yet a Christian, is now the time? Are you ready to take away the stone? Are you ready to hear Jesus’ loud voice today? “\_\_\_\_\_”, come out!” Is it time for out to come out of the tomb (v. 44)? Are your hands and feet bound with linen strips? Is your face wrapped with a death cloth? Is it time for those to be unbound? If you are willing to hear Jesus’ voice today, you will be unbound and let go. As Jesus said:
  - (1) **Jn 10:9-10** 9 I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 ...I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.
  - (2) Join in the triumph of life over death. Believe in Jesus!
- g. Jesus’ operating in the circumstances of our suffering, illness, or death is a catalyst for many to believe in him (v. 45). May we all be of those who believe and are among his sheep.
- h. So remember:

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Let’s sing the hymn, “Because He Lives....”