

BELIEVE IN MIRACLES, BUT TRUST IN JESUS

John 11: 1-44

In recent weeks we have been in a series of messages looking at various miracles performed by our Lord Jesus Christ. Today we are going to look at one of His last recorded miracles, when he raised Lazarus from the dead. And I want to give credit for much of what I will say this morning to one of my heroes in the faith, Adrian Rogers.

The miracle of Lazarus' resurrection was the one that pushed the Pharisees and Sadducees over the edge, the one that sealed it in their minds that there was only one solution to the plague from Nazareth, Jesus, son of Joseph, who claimed to be the Messiah. Jesus simply had to die. For they were losing their grip in the people and as long as Jesus was around they were afraid that they couldn't get it back. And truly, in Lazarus' resurrection Jesus proves that there is no power in heaven, hell, or earth that can hold a candle to His infinite power, and that there is no need of man that Jesus cannot meet. And if you truly need a miracle today, Jesus wants you to know that He truly has the power to give it to you.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to John 11:1-27. John writes that Jesus' good friend Lazarus was sick in Bethany, and that Mary and Martha had sent word asking for Jesus to come and heal him. But.....he waited two days. **Sometimes God delays responding to our prayers, but always for a high and holy purpose.** And what is that purpose? One reason is **the glory of God.** Beloved, that is what God is all about in this world, bringing glory to His marvelous name. The psalmist says, "The Heavens declare the glory of God..." Isaiah writes that Israel was created

for the glory of God. Paul writes to the Corinthian believers, “Whether you eat, drink, or whatever you do... (1 Cor. 10:31). And sometimes if God answered our prayer the moment we prayed them it would not bring Him the glory that He would receive if He answered them some time later. Sometimes He receives glory in our standing firm while we wait. Sometimes He receives glory because the answer appears to be a greater miracle. The fact is, a miracle is a miracle, and no one miracle is more difficult for God to perform than another. But some miracles are more profound to human eyes than others.

That was the case with the raising of Lazarus. It was Jewish belief that after death the spirit of the dead would hover around the body trying to regain entrance. But after four days it was believed that the spirit quit trying and departed, because the face of the dead man would be too decomposed by then to warrant a resurrection. That’s the reason that Martha resisted when Jesus asked her to have the stone removed from Lazarus’ tomb. She and everyone else knew that the stench coming from Lazarus’ tomb would be unbearable. But you see, Jesus waited two days before He went to raise up Lazarus because He knew that after he had been dead four days, there could be no refuting of the miracle and there could be no robbing God of the glory.

A second reason for Jesus’ delay. Not only the glory of God, but also for **the growth of the disciples** . Jesus is always working in our lives for the purpose of growing our faith (“This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him” (John 2:11). They believed when Jesus turned the water into wine, but their faith was not as strong then as it needed to be now. And so He gave them another lesson to grow their faith some more.

Christian parents are always teaching their children more and more about Jesus in order to help them to grow. Many of you

remember doing this when your kids were young and some of you are doing it now. Just this week when my oldest grandson Andrew got home from Bible School his mother asked him what he learned that day, and he told her about an incident in the life of Paul and Barnabas, but he didn't quite get all of his information right. When Rebekah asked him who Paul's missionary partner was, Andrew said he thought his name was Barbeque. And Rebekah said, "No....." Growing kids up in the faith is a process, and one day a parent's window do to this closes. But God is continuing to grow us until we go to be with Him in Heaven, and sometimes the method is a delay in answering our prayers.

Well, sometimes God **delays** responding to our prayers, but **sometimes God denies responding to our prayers**. But just as with His delays, **it is always for a high and holy purpose**. You can be sure the church would have been praying for James, the leader of the Jerusalem church if they knew he was arrested for preaching about Jesus. But James was run through with a sword. If the church knew that Stephen had been arrested and was going to trial, you can be sure they were praying, but Stephen was stoned. But what does the Bible say about the way that Stephen died? As with the face shown like an angel. And who was standing there witnessing that? A young, zealous Pharisee named Saul. And so God was glorified by Stephen's death, just like He was glorified by Lazarus' resurrection. Joni Erikson Tada prayed and prayed and prayed for God to heal her from her paralysis and God never did. And at 63 life is a struggle for her as a quadriplegic. But she has brought more glory to God from her wheelchair for 45 years than anyone could ever imagine.

So one lesson God is teaching us in the raising of Lazarus is, "Trust Me when the answers to your prayers don't come like you think they should. I am at work for My glory and for your growth". But I want to move on to the **main message** that God

would have us learn from Lazarus being raised from the dead. And that is, **Jesus came to give us eternal life, and to give it to us more abundantly**. And that's what Jesus said Himself, did He not? "I have come...." (John. 10:10).

We've said this many times, but it bears repeating often – death is an enemy. Paul calls it the "last enemy" (1 Cor. 15: 26). Job calls death the king of terrors (Job 18:14). The writer of Hebrews says that men are in bondage to the fear of death all of their lives (Heb. 2:15). Death rips beautiful relationships apart, it breaks hearts that sometimes take years to mend, but still leaves empty black holes that are never filled.

But as painful as death can be, for some life can be just as bad. Listen to these statements about life. 19th century British leader Benjamin Disraeli: "Youth is a blunder, manhood a struggle, and old age is a regret". Samuel Butler, "Life is one long process of getting tired". One college student: "Life is a joke that isn't even funny". But now listen to William Shakespeare, "Life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing". Now how's that for motivation to get up and go to work every day, considering it comes from one of the most brilliant minds in history?

But do you see the point? According to all of these, most people in this world are clueless to what life is all about. They live from paycheck to paycheck, or from weekend to weekend, or from fix to fix, or affair to affair, or in Tide Nation from season to season. And when they come to old age, if they have the courage enough to reflect back on their life they have to admit, "What was that all about?" For you see, Jesus said, follow Me and live. L I V E. Live eternally. But they said "NO, I'm going to travel my road". And they got life all backwards. For when you spell L I V E backwards what do you get? E V I L. Friends, that's what a backward life, a life without Jesus, produces. It produces evil.

And the sad thing about the whole thing is that for most people, Shakespeare was right. Life signifies nothing.

But now I want us take a look at the conversation that Jesus had with Martha and consider this life that William Shakespeare knew nothing about. Martha was a good woman, she really was. She was one of God's children. She loved Jesus. She opened up her home to Him, she ministered to Him. But Martha needed to grow in her faith just like the disciples. She believed that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God. She believed that He would fulfill all of the promises to the Jews to give them everlasting life one day in the future. But she just didn't understand the almighty power of Jesus to give life in the here and now. So let me share with you briefly four aspects of the life that Jesus came to give each and every one of us this very day.

First of all, Jesus came to give us bodies and spirits that will never die. The Bible teaches that every man who is born of woman is a dead man who is relentlessly sprinting to the land of death. Eph. 2:1 – Before any man is saved he is dead in trespasses and sins, and 1 Tim. 5:6 - that those who are pleasure seekers are dead while they live. Walking dead men, dead spiritually and dying physically. And even after the souls of the saints have been redeemed their old bodies of flesh keep on dying until they finally give up their spirits and go back to dust, Sheol, the land of the dead.

Oh, friends, if you don't have any hope of the next life, the end of the ride for you in this life is pretty depressing. One preacher sarcastically put it this way, "What do aged atheists have to talk about, as they sit around waiting to die? Do they discuss the legacy of morality, decency, integrity, and spiritual sensitivity they have given to their children? Or the good that atheists have done the world: the hospitals, orphanages, and the elevation of women? And when the sun is sinking low, and when the

conversation for the wheelchair atheist begins to lull, they can joyously contemplate their future. There is so much for and aged atheist to look forward to”. And if there is a closet atheist here today, then friend, you’d do well to contemplate those words.

But you would do better to also contemplate Jesus’ words. Jesus said in verse 25, “I am the Resurrection. I am the One Who can rescue your body from the land of death.” And He expounds on being the Resurrection at the end of verse 25. Look at it. “He who believes in Me.....” He shall be resurrected one day.

But Jesus also said in verse 25, “I am the life”. This means that Jesus does more than just resurrect the body, Jesus gives a spiritual life that never ends. And that life begins the moment we receive Him as our Savior and Lord. Look at verse 26. If you live and believe in Jesus you **presently have** eternal life and that life in you will never die. And instead of being a dead man sprinting toward the land of the dead, you are a living man sprinting toward the land of the living. Oh, friends, how much more of a contrast could there be, than between the one who has received Jesus and the one who has not? Between the one who is saved and the one who is lost? One is on the fast track to death, one on the fast track to life. One is on the fast track to hell, one on the fast track to Heaven.

But before we close I want us to see briefly three precious gifts that come with spiritual life.

1. cleansing – v. 44

2. companionship – 12:1-2

3. courage – 12:9-10