

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “A Peculiar Eulogy” (from the “Cross Culture” Lenten sermon series)

Scripture: John 11:1-45

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of the Book of John, we read about the story of Lazarus who Jesus, being moved by grief, raises from the dead. The other Gospels share a story of Jesus raising someone from the dead, but John is the only one to recount the story of Lazarus. This story is the last miracle that the Gospel of John records and presents one of the most important aspects of Christ’s divine nature...authority over death.
- In verses 1-16, Lazarus’ sisters, Mary and Martha, sent word to Jesus that their brother Lazarus was very ill. When Jesus heard this, He said, “This sickness will not end in death...”. Jesus then stayed where He was for two more days before travelling to Bethany (near Jerusalem) to see Lazarus, but the disciples urged Him to stay. In verse 16, Thomas (known as Didymus and “Doubting Thomas”) remained committed to Jesus and told the other disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”
- Beginning with verse 17, we see a shift in location from the region of Bethany of Perea (in the final part of chapter 10) to the region of Bethany in Judea. In vv. 18-19, Bethany of Judea is about two miles from Jerusalem and “...many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother.” In verse 20, Martha tells Jesus, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus replies to her (v. 25) “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”. Martha affirms that she does in verse 27.
- In verses 28-37, the emphasis is on Jesus’ compassion from witnessing the pain and sorrow of Martha, Mary and the others that were there to console them in their grief. Verse 33 says, “When Jesus saw her [Mary] weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved” and in verse 35, Jesus began to weep.
- In verses 38-45, Jesus commands the stone in Lazarus’ tomb to be removed (he had already been dead for four days at this point). In vv. 41-42, Jesus prays to God and then calls out to Lazarus to “come out!”. Still bound in burial cloth, Lazarus comes out of the tomb upon Jesus’ command.

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- In lieu of the miracle of the raising up of Lazarus in today's Scripture, the religious authority saw a potential predicament with the Roman government that would threaten the Jewish community. If word gets out that there is a Messianic king on the rise, the Jewish leaders would be responsible and there would be trouble!
- The story begins with a crisis pastoral call and the need to help a good friend. Most of John's gospel highlights Jesus' divinity, so the reference to friends highlights His humanity. Also, see John 15:12 to highlight this point of Jesus and friendship.
- Jesus was friends with sisters Mary and Martha, and their brother Lazarus. He would frequently visit them and in Luke 10, Jesus used their house as a place of worship.
- Word got to Jesus that His friend Lazarus was sick, however, Jesus does not leave to see him for two days after getting the message! The ethos in this text is that there are times when we feel that Jesus is unaware of our need.
- Not everything that we think is a crisis turns out to be a crisis. In Luke 10, Martha was so stressed about dinner that she missed the message, or the story of the storm at sea and Jesus being asleep. Our storms can become a venue to our revelation.
- Martha confronts Jesus when He arrives and tells Him that He is late in helping.
- Jesus does not get upset with Martha but *listens* to her lamenting. In the same breath she is fussing at Jesus, she is also professing her faith in Him.
- When we are hurting, it is not the time to run away from Jesus but to run toward Him. He will always be there waiting for us with open arms.
- Jesus tells Martha that her brother will rise again. Martha agreed with Jesus (thinking of his resurrection in the biblical sense), but Jesus tells her, "I am the resurrection..." He asks her if she believes this, and she does. Mary then comes to Jesus and falls at His feet. We can see two forms of prayer in the grieving of the two sisters: lamentation (Martha) and adoration (Mary). Verse 35 is a key verse in the New Testament: Jesus *wept*.
- When they get to the tomb, Jesus has the stone removed (Lazarus was dead for four days). Jesus begins to pray and cry out "Lazarus, come out!". Lazarus came out, wearing the bandages and clothes he was buried in.
- What's true of Lazarus is true for all friends of Jesus: the life He makes possible begins here and now when we trust in His name.
- As important as it is to *have* a friend like Jesus is in this story, it is important to *be* a friend like this, on behalf of Jesus.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- What do you think is the significance of Jesus weeping in verse 35?
- Reflect on each of the emotions and characteristics of Jesus in these verses. How does this help to better understand the nature of God?
- Read Hebrews 2:14-15. What does this passage, along with John 11, teach us about life and our mortality?
- Why did Jesus wait two days to see Lazarus, after word got to Him that Lazarus was sick?



NOTES

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