

John 11 34-57

Good morning and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to John 11 please?

We've camped out the last few weeks in John 11 as we've been studying the details of this incredible chapter. Last week we left off in verse 33, so this morning we'll pick up in verse 34 as we finish John 11.

You remember the scene-Jesus' friend Lazarus has died. And Jesus has now made it to Bethany, and both sisters, Mary and Martha exclaimed-"Lord if you had been here Lazarus wouldn't have died."

This morning we conclude this dramatic scene as Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, and the most powerful men in Jerusalem pronounce a death sentence upon Jesus because of it.

The title of our message this morning is MOVING THE STONE.

Let's read verses 32-37 and then we'll pray

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."

33 Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. 34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"

37 And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"

LET'S PRAY

The greatest enemy of life is death. Yet death is also the greatest offense to God's creation. God didn't create our bodies to die, nor did He intend for our bodies to decay in a grave.

We're told in **Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned**—

All of humanity has inherited the penalty of Adams rebellion, which is death. Each of us, as individuals, deserve death because we've endorsed Adams decision by adding our own sin to his.

Yet God in His grace has promised something wonderful, despite our sin nature and sinful tendencies. And Jesus will take an impossible situation in our text this morning as an opportunity to reveal it.

34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." I want to encourage you in your personal bible studies, as you read at home, whenever you see Jesus ask a question, to stop reading and reflect on why Jesus asked that question.

Very often the Lord asks questions so that we drop our defenses, and allow Him to get to the root of our hearts.

Boxing story?

And now verse 35, at a total of 9 letters, the shortest verse in the Bible...

35 Jesus wept. Just like a snow globe is violently shaken, our Lords emotions were stirred as He confronted the death of Lazarus.

As you study the Bible, you'll see it is a book that is full of tears.

- Abraham wept when he buried Sarah
- Jacob wept when he wrestled the Angel
- David and Jonathan wept together
- Hezekiah wept over his sickness
- Josiah wept over the sin of the nation
- Jeremiah was the weeping prophet

Now it's not really all that surprising that sinful mankind should weep. With all the sin and sorrow that surrounds our lives, it's no wonder that there are times that we weep. That's not surprising.

What is astonishing is that in the days of His flesh the sinless Son of God experienced the meaning of strong crying and tears.

Jesus' weeping reveals many things about our Lord that so often we overlook.

Jesus' weeping reveals that Jesus had deep human friendships. We have many acquaintances, but likely very few whom we deeply love. Jesus wept at the grave of a loved one like you and I have done, and will do again.

Jesus' weeping reveals the fact that Jesus did not hide His grief. He could have, but He chose not to, because Jesus was never unnatural. Tears may not be thought very manly, but tears are natural to man, and Jesus is not unnatural.

Notice that Jesus was so free from pride and fear of the opinion of others that He wore His heart where others could see it clearly.

Jesus' weeping reveals Jesus had genuine sympathy and was deeply stirred with human emotions. We see this throughout the Bible. **Mark 3:5 And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to**

the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.[fn]

There's not an emotion that's ever moved us that Jesus did not experience Himself.

All this points to what the Bible tells us in **Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**

God became flesh and dwelt among us, and experienced every emotion that you and I face. I pray you take great comfort in that this morning.

36 Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" 37 And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" Jesus wept even though His tears were misunderstood and misrepresented.

You can picture the crowd-'see, He weeps-the miracle worker weeps!'

or

'He calls himself the son of God, and yet He stands there weeping like any ordinary man!'

Through His tears, Jesus was opening Himself up to further criticism and blasphemy. Yet He allowed His true feelings to be seen.

Let's read verse 37 again **37 And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"**

In my bible I've circled 'some of them' and put next to it-'me'.

Because haven't we all said this regarding the hardships in our lives? 'Lord, I've seen you work, Lord I believe in you, but why won't You deliver me?'

We mentioned it last week-surrendering to the sovereign will of God in our trials is one of the hardest things we have to do.

38 Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus again felt the same angry emotion as He approached Lazarus' tomb that we saw back in verse 33.

SHOW PIC When you travel to Israel today its very commonplace to see these tombs. Normally a large round "stone" sealed the entrance against animals and curious individuals **CLOSE PIC**

39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Pause here. Isn't it interesting that Jesus told the people move the stone-that He didn't do it Himself?

We see something similar in **Matthew 14 18 He said, "Bring them here to Me." 19 Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes.**

The Lord today still works miracles, but most often He wants to use us as servants and willing participants. I pray you're ready for the Lord to use you.

Meijer story?

Let's read all of 39

39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." Lazarus didn't have a near death experience, he'd been dead for 4 days. With the warm

climate, the aridness of the area, the decomposition would have already been in full swing, causing a distinct smell.

For 4 days, Lazarus was dead, which means he would have been in Abraham's bosom. If you're not familiar with that, you can read Luke 16 where Jesus describes it. Before Jesus went to heaven, paradise was called Abraham's bosom, which is where the faithful went when they died.

Point being, Lazarus was there for 4 days, and he experienced what you and I can hardly imagine.

But then Lazarus gets a tap on the shoulder. 'Bad news brother. There's been a recall. You gotta go back'

So Martha says Lord- its been 4 days, surely it stinks....

40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" 41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying.[fn]

Pause here... This was a remarkable step of faith. Martha and Mary to acted on their faith by having the stone covering removed.

But notice the sisters had to act on their faith. Let's read verses 41-43

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.

42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" Lazarus is not the only person whom Jesus resurrected. Jesus' earthly ministry lasted 3 years, and each year was marked by Him raising someone from

the dead. First was Jairus' daughter, who had just recently died when Jesus arrived on the scene..

Mark 5:36-42 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe." 37 And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. 38 Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. 39 When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."

40 And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those *who were* with Him, and entered where the child was lying. 41 Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." 42 Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.

In His second year of ministry, Jesus went on to raise the young man at the gates of Nain, who was dead and on his way to his burial Luke 7:11-15 11 Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. 12 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. 13 When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." 14 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." 15 So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.

And now, with the cross of Calvary looming in the distance, Jesus consummates His glory by raising Lazarus, who had been dead 4 days.

Why did Jesus cry out with a loud voice?

He didn't cry out with Jairus' daughter.

He didn't scream at the widow of Nains son

Is it harder to hear when you've been dead 4 days?

He wasn't just talking to Lazarus, Jesus was saying it loud enough for everyone there and for us this morning that He is the resurrection and the life.

Now back in John 5, Jesus had said that a time would come when all who were in their graves would hear his voice **John 5:28 "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice"** This moment was a single demonstration of Jesus' authority.

44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

In those days a corpse was customarily laid on a sheet of linen, so that the feet were at one end, and then the sheet was drawn over the head and back down to the feet.

The feet were also bound at the ankles, and the arms were tied to the body with linen strips. Then the face was bound with another cloth

With these graveclothes, a person bound could hop and shuffle, but not walk. You can picture the scene-Lazarus shuffling out of the tomb.

I wonder what was it like for Mary and Martha to loosen Lazarus from his graveclothes. What was it like for them as they looked in into his eyes again?

Nowhere does the Bible describe the emotion, and I don't think human words can do it justice.

And did you see that Jesus assigns the responsibility of removing the graveclothes to other people? Again we see Jesus looked for man's cooperation for the completion of the miracle.

Now in verse 44 we see that Lazarus was alive, but bound.

He had new life, but still wore grave clothes.

And this is the predicament of every believer. We're resurrected spiritually by faith in Jesus Christ. We're a recipient of new life, but the attitudes, tendencies, and thought patterns of the past remain.

We're alive but still wearing grave clothes.

Today, it's the job of every Christian to help a new believer shake free from bondage. Our role is to help them to see themselves in Christ, and shed their sinful habits, and renew their mind in Christ.

In the past we've talked about how Jesus used many different methods to perform His miracles of healing, yet his method of raising the dead was always the same. He called to the deceased and spoke to them as if they heard Him. Do you know why Jesus did that?

Because they did hear Him!

I think when Jesus returns with a shout, every believer who has died will hear their own name. **1 Thess. 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an**

archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Now it's important to know that while there are similarities between Lazarus and Jesus' resurrections, we must also remember their significant differences.

Lazarus came to life only to die again later, as a mortal, whereas Jesus arose never to die again.

Lazarus arose with the same physical body that went into his tomb, but Jesus arose with a spiritual body that could pass through solid objects.

45 Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. All in attendance saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, I bet many did believe in Him!

It's fascinating we never hear a word from Lazarus.

Imagine Lazarus seeing Jesus' face, knowing better than all of us where Jesus came from. Lazarus knew what Jesus left behind to come here, and be born of a woman.

But some still refused to recognize Jesus...

46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. Even this most powerful miracle failed to convince some that Jesus is God's Son. So, they run and tattle on Jesus to the religious leaders!

47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. Just about the time the jealous Jews had tried to discredit one miracle, Jesus worked another. And we saw in John 10 why Jesus worked miracles. John 10:25 Jesus answered them, "I told

you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.

The leaders admit here in verse 47 that miracles occurred, the proof was undeniable.

Verse 48 is one of the saddest verses in all the Bible...

48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

Here's why the Jewish leaders hated Jesus.

He was a threat to their power, their profits, and their positions.

The Jewish leaders had an arrangement with the Romans. The Jews grudgingly cooperated with Rome, while Rome propped up the Jews to keep the peace and minimize revolts.

As Jesus attracted more and more followers, the religious leaders feared that the Romans would regard it as a significant threat, which would be a violation of the pax romana-the forced peace of Rome that they mandated on every conquered nation.

49-52

49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." 51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Caiaphas was a wicked high priest, yet he is prophesying of God's will even though he didn't realize he was doing it.

Caiaphas' motive here was selfish and evil, yet God used it to accomplish His will through the high priest's selfish advice.

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD,

Like the rivers of water;

He turns it wherever He wishes. I want to encourage you to pray for our president and leaders, whether you agree with their policies or not. Pray the Lord would be glorified through them!

And so as this council is meeting about Jesus, and Caiaphas unknowingly gives this prophecy, a chilling decision is reached by the highest rank of religious leaders....

53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.

Before this, it was mostly lesser religious officials who wanted Jesus dead. But now the men with real political power, the Sanhedrin, decided to murder Jesus.

This is important because when we read of Jesus' arrest and speedy trials before the high priest and the Sanhedrin, those trials were really for show, they were simply formalities designed to give the appearance of justice. All that really remained was to decide when and how to execute Jesus' sentence.

54 Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples. Again, Jesus didn't do this out of fear, but because His hour had not yet come—we've seen this before **John 7:30 Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.**

The hour had not yet come, but it was coming soon.

Let's finish the chapter...

55 And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. 56 Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among

themselves as they stood in the temple, “What do you think—that He will not come to the feast?” 57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him. This gives you the mental picture of water cooler gossip doesn't it? ‘Hey where's Jesus-oh I don't think He's coming!’

Or

‘He can't come, He has an outstanding arrest warrant.’

You get the picture.

But Jesus will attend, and He has much more to teach us in the coming months as we continue our study in John's Gospel.

An incredible chapter. John 11 is foreshadowing, it's a picture of what will happen when Christ returns

1 Corinthians 15:20 20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.

Death is not the end. eternity is real.

But while we're here on earth, the Lord has work for us to do doesn't He.

And so often before the HS empowers us to do His will, first, He has to deal with us first.

As we close would you look at verse 39 with me one final time?

39 Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of him

who was dead, said to Him, “Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.”

Whenever I read verse 39, and Jesus commanding the stone to be removed, I think about all the times the Lord has asked me to remove the stone that is hiding something in my heart.

Jesus says to all of us this morning ‘move the stone, lets expose the problem.’

Yet how quickly we say ‘Oh Lord, not that, do we have to deal with that? I’m embarrassed about it. I’m ashamed of it. It’s rotten and it stinks and I just want to keep it hidden, and I definitely don’t want other people to see it.’

If the Lord wants to expose something in your heart this morning and He’s telling you to move the stone, I just want to encourage you to do it. No matter how much it may stink!