

Summary

In this sermon, Pastor Chris preaches from John 11, the account of the raising of Lazarus, to challenge believers about the nature of their faith. He identifies three types of faith present in the story: circumstantial faith (faith controlled and paralyzed by circumstances), conservative faith (faith that is biblically sound but limited to past or future promises), and present tense faith (faith that trusts Jesus to act right now, in the middle of the current problem). Using Martha and Mary as examples, he shows how easy it is to believe what Jesus did in the past or what He will do in the future, while failing to trust Him for what He can do in the present moment. Pastor Chris uses the image of the covered tomb to illustrate how people hide the stinking, painful, and broken areas of their lives rather than inviting Jesus into those places. He calls the congregation to roll back the stone, to stop covering up what is broken, and to trust Jesus with a conquering, present tense faith. He closes with a personal testimony about praying over a woman who was told she could not have children, and how God moved powerfully in that moment, confirming that with Jesus it is never too late and that all things are possible to those who believe.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today grateful for the gift of Your Word and the truth it holds for our lives. As we gather together, we ask that You open our hearts and minds to receive exactly what You have for each of us in this time. Remove any distractions, any doubts, and any walls we have built around the broken places in our lives. Lord, we do not want to simply discuss ideas today. We want to encounter You. Give us the courage to be honest with one another and with You. May Your Holy Spirit lead this conversation and draw each person closer to a living, present tense faith in Jesus Christ. In His name we pray, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What is one thing you were really looking forward to this past week that did not go the way you planned?

Key Verses

- John 11:25-26
- John 11:21

- John 11:35
- John 11:40
- John 11:43

Questions

- Pastor Chris described three kinds of faith in this sermon: circumstantial faith, conservative faith, and present tense faith. Which of these do you most identify with in your own life right now, and why?
- Martha said in John 11:21, 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.' Have you ever found yourself saying 'if' to God, placing conditions on your trust in Him? What did that look like?
- The sermon pointed out that Martha had a solid, biblical faith in the resurrection at the last day, but she was missing a present tense faith. How can someone be theologically correct and still lack the faith to trust God in their current situation?
- Pastor Chris said there are things that die while we wait on Jesus, including hopes and dreams. How do you personally handle seasons of waiting when God does not seem to be moving as quickly as you need Him to?
- The image of the covered tomb was used to describe how we hide the broken, painful, or shameful areas of our lives. Is there something in your life right now that you have covered up rather than bringing it to Jesus? What makes it hard to uncover those things?
- Jesus told the people to roll away the stone even though He had the power to move it Himself. Why do you think God sometimes asks us to take an active step of obedience before He moves on our behalf?
- The pastor shared a personal story about releasing his financial situation to God and choosing to praise instead of worry. What does it practically look like for you to release something to God rather than just saying the words?
- Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus even though He knew He was about to raise Him from the dead. What does this tell us about how God views our pain and grief, and how does that affect the way you approach Him with your struggles?

Life Application

This week, identify one area of your life that you have covered up, avoided, or stopped trusting God to work in. It may be a broken relationship, a health concern, a financial burden, a past failure, or a lost hope. Take a specific and intentional step to bring that thing before the Lord in prayer each day this week.

Ask Him to give you a present tense faith, trusting not only in what He has done or what He will do, but in what He is able to do right now. Consider sharing that area with one trusted person in your group so they can pray with you and hold you accountable.

Key Takeaways

- Circumstantial faith is faith that is controlled and paralyzed by our circumstances, and the word 'if' has no place in genuine, biblical faith.
- Conservative faith that is grounded in Scripture is valuable, but God calls us beyond creedal belief to a living, present tense trust in His power to act right now.
- Just as Mary and Martha covered the tomb with a stone, we often cover the broken and painful areas of our lives rather than inviting Jesus into them. True faith requires us to roll back the stone.
- Jesus is never too late. What looks like a hopeless, four-days-dead situation is never beyond His power to restore and redeem.
- A conquering faith is one that takes God at His word in the present moment, releases control to Him, and expects Him to move even when the circumstances say it is impossible.

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank You for the truth of Your Word and for the reminder today that You are the resurrection and the life. We confess that too often our faith is tied to our circumstances, or it lives only in the past and the future while we struggle to trust You right now. Forgive us for covering up the broken places and trying to manage on our own what only You can heal. We ask You now to give each person in this group a present tense faith, a faith that believes You are able and willing to move in the middle of our mess. Roll back the stones in our lives, Lord. Call forth what has been dead. Restore what has been lost. And remind us that it is never too late for You. We release every burden, every fear, and every covered-up hurt into Your hands right now. Thank You that You weep with us, that You love us, and that You have all power. We trust You. In the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.