

# When God Shows Up Late

Text: John 11:1-44

Good morning, church! I'm honored to be able to share the word with you today. For those of you who may not know who I am, my name is Alyse, and I am the worship director here at Newsong Church. I want to take this time to welcome our first-time guests in the room, and those who may be watching online (let us know where you are watching from).

Now we are in a church-wide Bible study (sermon series) following through the book of John. Hasn't it been an amazing church? I mean, some may be thinking, "yeah, it would've been amazing if it ended a few weeks ago, just like the other sermon series, like how much can I really get from staying in the same book". But this book has been a blessing. Every week I'm following along and just amazed by how the word constantly continues to speak and be applicable in our daily lives. Aren't you?

Aren't you thankful for a God who continues to give us a spirit filled and spirit empowered book that speaks to us today, that spoke to you yesterday, that speaks to you on the mountain, that speaks to you in the valley, that speaks to you in the fire, that speaks in the quiet, that speaks to you in the storm, that speaks to you on what you think is "just another day, no big deal". NO! It's not just another day. It's a day that the Lord gave you breath in your lung's, "This is the day that the Lord has made, and I will be glad and rejoice in it! (Psalm 118:24).

Today we'll be reading most of John chapter 11. I promise not to keep you here all day, but a lot is happening in this chapter, and I don't want us to miss out on what the Lord wants to speak and do in this time.

## PRAY

Now, have you ever had a situation in your life that felt sealed shut? A prayer that seemed unanswered. A relationship that seemed beyond repair. A dream that appeared buried. A loss that feels unbearable. A season where you kept asking, "God, where are You? I need you to do something, I need a miracle..." but instead of what you wanted or felt you needed God to do, doesn't end up happening.

Most of us don't struggle to believe God can do miracles. We struggle when God doesn't do them according to our timeline. We know God is able. The question is: Will we trust Him when He seems absent? Or when He doesn't do what we wanted Him to do.

John 11 introduces us to a family that faced that same predicament. A family that Jesus loved deeply: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They weren't strangers, they were friends. When Lazarus became sick, they did what many of us would do. They called for Jesus. Surely He would come. Surely He would heal. Surely He would arrive before it was too late. But what happened next challenged everything they thought they knew about God's timing. Today, I will spend less focus on the triumphant "Lazarus come forth" and more on what to the of .

## **The Death of Lazarus**

**11** Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one

who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

<sup>4</sup> When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” <sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

Now, we read some important information in these first couple of verses, let’s break it down.

1) Jesus loved Lazarus, Mary and Martha. John, the writer of this book, made sure that everyone knew Jesus loved these siblings, so much so that it’s forever written here. Jesus loves you and me and I know that “because the bible tells me so”. **John 3:16** “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall have everlasting life”. Jesus died on the cross for you, for me, and for the world.

2) The Mary that John is talking about here is the same Mary that wiped Jesus’s feet with her hair and poured out her oil for him. (We’re going to come back to this).

3) We see that when Jesus heard about Lazarus, he made a statement that this sickness would not end in death but that God’s glory would be shown through it.

4) And my next favorite part, **<sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.**

Excuse what? Excuse me, Jesus, I think you misunderstood me. The one you love is sick, and if you haven’t caught it through my subtle language... he’s DYING (cough cough). Excuse me, Jesus, the one you love is lying in a hospital bed, the one you love is in an ugly situation, the one you love is having (blank...) slip through their fingers... **So when he heard, he stayed where he was for two more days.**

The choice to use the word “SO” changes things, because if it had been said “but he couldn’t or didn’t come for two more days,” it could have meant he was busy, maybe he

got the message too late, he wanted to but couldn't. However, "SO" means he did it on purpose; it follows directly after verse 5.

<sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, <sup>7</sup> and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

<sup>8</sup> "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"

<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. <sup>10</sup> It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

Reading this part just makes me laugh because the disciples are confused... Jesus, you want to go back to where they tried to stone you?... and Jesus in all his wisdom, gives this poetic, philosophical statement.

Okay, Jesus, that did not answer my question. Don't you love it when you ask someone a question and they don't answer it but give some vague response? Or even better, answer it with another question.

And this same type of scenario happened before in John chapter 9 with the healing of the blind man. The disciples ask Jesus "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" And Jesus makes a similar statement "*Neither this man nor his parents sinned,*" said Jesus, "*but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*"  
...

Then Jesus continues in verse 11-12

<sup>11</sup> After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

<sup>12</sup> His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” <sup>13</sup> Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

<sup>14</sup> So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.

Thank you, Jesus... KISS (keep it simple, silly).

<sup>14</sup> So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

<sup>16</sup> Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

Love this. Thomas, who people may also know as doubting Thomas because of what happens later with Jesus’s resurrection, is still a ride or die guy. He’s like “welp, this is not going to end in glory, but hey, if we die, we all die together”.

### **(we’ll continue on) Jesus Comforts the Sisters of Lazarus**

<sup>17</sup> On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was less than two miles<sup>[b]</sup> from Jerusalem, <sup>19</sup> and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.

John is giving all the details in this passage. And Jesus is not getting a good wrap here. The family that he loves is asking for help as their brother, Jesus’s friend, is dying, and he decides to stay away for two more days. But not only that... he was about less than two miles away! And now, when Jesus had finally shown up, Lazarus was already dead for four days.

Now, this timeline is significant because many Jewish traditions held that a person’s soul lingered near the body for up to three days after death. Jesus is just doubling down on his lateness. He chose to wait two more days, then he arrived after Lazarus had been dead for four days, meaning any hope of revival

was considered gone, and the reality of death was undeniable, as decomposition had begun.

## **Point 1: What Looks Hopeless to Man Is Not Hopeless to God**

Jesus intentionally arrived when the situation appeared completely hopeless—but hopeless by whose standards? Human standards.

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days. The funeral was over. The tomb was sealed. The body was decomposing. The mourners had accepted the outcome. Everyone around the situation had reached the same conclusion: “It’s over” But what they called hopeless, Jesus called an opportunity for God's glory.

The problem wasn't that the situation was impossible for God. The problem was that people were measuring God's possibilities by human limitations and their timeframe. We serve a God who is not intimidated by what intimidates us. God has never looked at a situation and said, "I didn't see that coming." What is a dead end to man is often a starting point for God.

## **Point 2: Disappointment Is Often the Crossroad of Faith**

<sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

<sup>21</sup> “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

"Lord, if you had been here..." reveals Martha's disappointment but not her unbelief. "If only..." If only that door had opened. If only that person had stayed. If only that prayer had been answered. If only things had turned out differently. If only you had been here sooner...then this wouldn't have happened.

Listen, church faithful people experience disappointment. Sometimes we think faith means pretending you are not feeling those emotions or having those questions. Look at Job. In the book of Job we get to see all that he was thinking, feeling, and expressing towards God, but in all his messy, ugly feelings, he still had faith in the Lord. You can have great faith and still be disappointed or frustrated.

Disappointment is a crossroads—it will either push you closer to God in faith or pull you away from Him in fear.

Church, who are you bringing your disappointment to? Who are you bringing your frustration to? Because let me tell you, God can handle your honest prayers. He is not intimidated by your questions. He is not threatened by your frustrations. He would rather hear your honest struggle than your religious performance. And we see the same here with Martha. She brought her disappointment directly to Jesus.

<sup>21</sup> "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

<sup>24</sup> Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

<sup>27</sup> “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

This declaration affirms His power over death and His role as the giver of eternal life. And what Mary, Martha, and all those who were there didn't know is that when Jesus called Lazarus from the tomb after four days (spoiler alert), Jesus removed any doubt that this was a genuine miracle.

His timing highlighted the finality of death and revealed His authority over what seemed impossible. This was more than a display of supernatural power—it was a declaration that Jesus is Lord even over death itself. Through this miracle, He strengthened faith in God's power to bring life where there is no life, offering a glimpse of the resurrection hope and eternal life available to all who believe in Him. He is the great I am!

Martha's response is powerful and her faith is profound here because she is saying, God, You didn't answer the way I expected or wanted. You didn't move according to my timeline. But Your delay did not change my understanding of who You are. When Jesus stayed two more days, He was still the Son of God. He was still sovereign. He was still in control. And if His delay didn't change who He was then, His delay doesn't change who He is now. Don't let a delay in His response cause you to doubt His character.

Martha may have started with “if you had been here my brother wouldn't have died but she finishes with “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God...”

Martha's disappointment could have turned into fear and hopelessness, but instead it became an opportunity for her faith to encounter a greater revelation of who Jesus is.

They wanted Jesus the healer, but Jesus wanted to show the resurrection and the life. He wanted another side of himself revealed. Sometimes God will not

show up the way he did for you before, or the way he showed up for someone else. You need to ask yourself when you are in this place, what does God want to reveal and show me about Himself? And he could not do that for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus if he had shown up at the sickbed instead of the gravesite.

<sup>27</sup> “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

<sup>28</sup> After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” <sup>29</sup> When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

<sup>32</sup> When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

<sup>34</sup> “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept.

Before Jesus displayed His power, He revealed His heart. Before He demonstrated His authority over death, He demonstrated His compassion for those experiencing it. The God who has the power to change your situation also has the heart to sit with you in your pain. Before He spoke life into Lazarus, He wept with those who were hurting. Jesus doesn't rush past our pain to get to the

miracle. He steps into it. He is with you in the waiting, with you in the sorrow, and with you in every unanswered question.

<sup>36</sup> Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

<sup>37</sup> But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

Jesus is polarizing. The same people who shout “Hosanna in the highest” also shout “crucify him”.

### **Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead**

<sup>38</sup> Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. <sup>39</sup> “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

## **Point 3: Never place a period where God may still be writing the sentence.**

<sup>40</sup> Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

Martha warns Jesus about the condition of the body. In other words: "It's too late."

How many times have we said that? It's too late to change. It's too late to start over. It's too late to save the marriage. It's too late to restore the relationship. It's too late for the dream. Or like Martha says, “by this time there is a bad odor...” it's too ugly and messy, it's rotten. But Jesus challenges her as he challenges us (Verse 40).

Move the stone and you will see the glory of God. Because there are things only God can do. And there are things God calls us to do. God raises the dead. People move stones. Many believers are waiting for God to do something while ignoring the stone He told them to move.

<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Darkness gave way to life. Death surrendered. Hope returned. The grave lost. The same Jesus who spoke then still speaks today. Sometimes God doesn't resurrect what you lost, but His presence never leaves you empty-handed. You may not get Lazarus back, but when Jesus speaks, something is always being called forth. If it's not the miracle you wanted, it may be the faith you need. If it's not restoration in the way you thought, it may be the revelation you required.

## Conclusion

I would like us to return to verse 2. <sup>2</sup> (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.)

Now these parentheses are here to let us know something special. In case you don't realize the book of John is written differently than the other 3 gospels which are the synoptic gospels. The word "**synoptic**" means "**seen together**" or

**"same view."** These three Gospels tell many of the same stories, often in a similar order, but with some different details. But John is written not as it's happening but with the whole story unfolded. John has beginning to end with all the details in between.

Yes, this is the same Mary who washed Jesus's feet with her oil and hair, but that doesn't happen till chapter 12. This is monumental because we get to see that the same Mary who is mourning in chapter 11 will be worshipping at the feet of Jesus in chapter 12. She doesn't know that, but this extra detail is not for Mary; it's for us. As we face our own Lazarus, we can have hope that despite our mourning now, despite not knowing how things are going to turn out, despite the loss, despite being right in the middle of the mess and storm, despite our chapter 11 moment, we can see ourselves worshipping at the feet of Jesus in our chapter 12.

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## **Altar Call: What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?**

Today, there may be people carrying disappointment. You've prayed. You've waited. You've wondered if God forgot about you. And you are facing the harsh realities in life. But God brought you here to hear this: Your story is not over. The stone is not permanent. The grave is not final. The delay is not denial. Jesus is still calling people out of darkness, out of fear, out of hopelessness, and into life. It may not be according to your timeline. Or happen on this side of heaven but I pray that this message can help you hold on to who God is.

If you've been waiting on God, trust Him again.

If you've lost hope, believe again.

If you've stopped praying, start again.

Because the God who called Lazarus out of the tomb is still speaking life today. It may sound like cliches, but we are reminded today by real people that faced real loss that our God is the resurrection and the life. He is the Great I Am. Let's pray.