

COVENANT — JESUS CHRIST

Raising Lazarus

LESSON 08

APRIL 26, 2026

LESSON TEXT

John 11:17–44

FOCUS VERSES

John 11:23–25

²³Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

²⁴Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

²⁵Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

The ultimate hope of covenant is resurrected life in Heaven.

MY RESPONSE TO COVENANT

I will have faith in Jesus for healing and resurrection.

COVENANT CONTEXT

We have seen that part of being in covenant with Jesus gives us access to miracles of healing. But our ultimate hope of covenant with God is a promise of a resurrected life in Heaven. In this story, Jesus demonstrated absolute authority over death when He raised a four-days-dead man from the grave with just the power of His spoken word.

TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: What do we do when God does not meet our expectations?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to the story of Jesus not meeting Lazarus's family's expectations.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. THE UNTHINKABLE

A. What They Expected

DISCUSS: *When you see someone go through something you wish they did not have to go through, how do you reach out to them?*

B. What Happened

C. I will trust Jesus, even when He does not do what I expect.

DISCUSS: *In your life when God delayed His answer, what did you do in the waiting? What would*

you do differently?

II. JESUS' ARRIVAL

- A. Two More Days
- B. The Sisters' Responses (V)

DISCUSS: *What do the different ways Jesus related to Mary and Martha tell us about how He knows us?*

- C. I will welcome Jesus into my desperate situation.

DISCUSS: *How has difficulty in your life brought you closer to Jesus?*

III. THE MIRACLE

- A. Raising Lazarus
- B. Responding to the Miracle
- C. I will have faith in Jesus for healing and resurrection.

DISCUSS: *How have you experienced resurrection power since coming to Christ?*

Internalizing the Message (I)

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us see His resurrection power even in broken situations
- For God to bring life and wholeness to every part of who we are

LESSON CONNECTION

One day a woman went looking for a couch to buy on Craigslist. As she searched, she found a gorgeous couch for only \$10. It had to be a typo. Nobody would sell a couch, especially *that* couch for \$10. Maybe the seller meant \$100 or even \$1,000. She messaged the seller to clarify, and the seller replied, “No, it’s \$10, I just need it gone today.”

The buyer was excited. She called around quickly to find someone with a truck to help her haul it. Once she found a truck and driver, she rushed to pick up her newfound \$10 couch. When her friends came over to visit, she would brag to them about the deal she got. When she and her friend arrived at the house, the seller was standing there, and the couch was just as perfect as described and portrayed in the picture.

But there was one issue: the couch was twelve feet long. It was too large for the truck, and even if they could rent a larger truck, it was too long for her living room. The seller was selling it quickly and cheap because it was custom made for a great room in a mansion. It was too long for nearly anywhere except a mansion.

They spent hours awkwardly moving it around to try to make it fit in the truck bed, but it would not. She called for a larger truck, and with the help of neighbors, she finally got it to her apartment. But it wouldn’t fit through her front door. She came to the embarrassing realization that she was going to have to sell it—for \$10.

She expected one thing; life delivered another. Missed or unrealized expectations are some of the ingredients that

make life difficult at times. We are not the first to battle with unrealized expectations, for we see that battle waged in the pages of Scripture in John 11 between a faithful family who needed a miracle and Jesus who was well able to work the miracle.

BIBLE LESSON

I. THE UNTHINKABLE

A. What They Expected

In John 11, two sisters whom Jesus loved sent word that their brother was sick. All of us have done that: we pray for a miracle, we send a text asking for prayer, post the need on social media, or call a minister we trust. Illness of any kind leaves those concerned with a feeling of helplessness. For a believer, it is intuitive to ask for prayer and expect those prayers to be answered.

How much truer it would have been for people intimately acquainted with Jesus. People like Lazarus and his family would have known firsthand of Jesus' miracle working power. No doubt Mary and Martha had been eyewitnesses to the accounts of miraculous power that still stir our hearts as we read them in the Gospels. Lazarus's sisters did what we would have done: they sent word to Jesus to let Him know His dear friend was very ill.

On the surface, the sisters' response may seem like an ordinary response. However, Jesus was no ordinary man. Mary and Martha knew this as well as anyone. With their news came no specific request for Jesus to come and heal Lazarus. Maybe they assumed He would. Mary and Martha no doubt had seen Jesus moved with compassion to heal strangers at random gatherings of people. Surely He would be more inclined to respond to the need of someone near and dear to His already tender heart. As readers of the New Testament, we know it would not have been out of character for Jesus to take a "holy detour" to Bethany, an area with which he was very familiar.

John, the only Gospel writer to include this marvelous event, articulated the closeness Jesus shared with this family. We see this clearly in the way they identified Lazarus: "He whom thou lovest is sick" (John 11:3). These words were weighty; we can feel the pain, concern, and urgency with which they sent this news to the Healer.

***DISCUSS:** When you see someone go through something you wish they did not have to go through, how do you reach out to them?*

B. What Happened

Think about it: Lazarus and Jesus were close; Lazarus was sick; Jesus heals the sick; Jesus will surely heal Lazarus. But that is not what happened. This reality, though painful to ponder, is something many of us have experienced in life and in our faith. John's retelling of these events seems...well, brutal. John wrote: "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was" (John 11:5-6).

That does not seem to make sense. Jesus loved Lazarus, so Jesus waited two days before coming to see him? Why would Jesus delay to heal their dear brother? He did not respond with the immediacy that seemed appropriate for such a dire situation. It is hard to fathom the disappointment the sisters must have felt as daylight slowly faded into

dusk the first day...and the second day...and the third day. They had sent word days ago with no response, no word back, no hope or word of His plans.

In the waiting, the worst imaginable outcome became their reality: Lazarus died. The only pain close to the loss of their dear brother was their deep disappointment in Jesus' delay. They had seen or heard of Jesus healing thousands of people. But bringing someone back from the dead, especially after they had been gone for a few days, was impossible. All hope was lost. Lazarus was dead, and Jesus hadn't come.

C. I will trust Jesus, even when He does not do what I expect.

We will never know why God does everything He does. And the good news is we don't have to know in order to be in covenant relationship with Him. That is where our faith must be strong that God knows what He's doing and He will do what is right, whether we understand or not. We just need to trust. He is God, and He is always good.

***DISCUSS:** In your life when God delayed His answer, what did you do in the waiting? What would you do differently?*

II. JESUS' ARRIVAL

A. Two More Days

A few verses later, Jesus told His disciples: "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him" (John 11:14–15). Again, John made it painfully clear that Jesus waited to go be with this family—not just until Lazarus died but until he had been dead for days. Imagine the intensity of the moment when Jesus arrived at the home of his friends. Everyone had said their goodbyes, the body had been removed, and the tomb was sealed. The details we read provide a dramatic backdrop for what must have been a hard moment in Jesus' life and ministry. Sure, He was divine and had arrived with every intention to help and to heal, but He was also human. He felt the tension in the air and the despair His friends felt. It seems reasonable to assume Mary and Martha would not have been the only ones with questions as word of Jesus' arrival spread.

B. The Sisters' Responses

The recorded responses of the sisters were as different as the sisters themselves. Martha, the one we know to be busy, ran out to meet Jesus. Mary, the one who sat at Jesus' feet, remained in the house. Martha's faith was shattered, but she pressed through her pain: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (John 11:21). If that was her way of expressing disappointment, it is understandable. She was heartbroken Jesus had not healed her brother. She knew it and so did Jesus.

But Martha continued with one of the most powerful, faith-filled statements in Scripture: "But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee" (John 11:22). Despite the disappointment, the trauma, the absolute exhaustion of the last few days, something in Martha said: Even now, Jesus, You can make a difference.

(V) Jesus responded theologically. He assured Martha that Lazarus would live again. And Martha assured Jesus that she knew Lazarus would live again in the resurrection. Then Jesus made a divine claim that set Him apart as the only one able to make such a statement: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). It was one of Jesus' seven

“I Am” statements that John recorded in his Gospel. One day Jesus Himself will raise the dead in the resurrection, for He is the resurrection and the life. Jesus was her hope right there in the midst of her pain.

Then at Martha’s prompt, Mary made her way to Jesus. Her quick obedience reflected her sincere faith, even in her sorrow. It is amazing to see that her greeting to Jesus was the same as Martha’s: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (John 11:32). But Jesus responded softer to Mary than to Martha. Jesus knew both sisters and knew what they needed to hear and how. Both sisters shared their heartbreak with Jesus, and He shared His heart with them. He met each one’s need with compassion and as an invitation to draw closer to Him in their sorrow so He could minister to them.

***DISCUSS:** What do the different ways Jesus related to Mary and Martha tell us about how He knows us?*

C. I will welcome Jesus into my desperate situation.

We have the same opportunity, no matter what we face or the outcome, to invite Jesus into our need. It’s okay to express our hurt and even our disappointment to Jesus. It’s even okay to ask Jesus questions. He may answer, He may not, but He already knows what we want to know. Our honesty gives Him the opportunity to show us He is still the resurrection and the life. No circumstance can change who He is or what He has promised to be.

***DISCUSS:** How has difficulty in your life brought you closer to Jesus?*

III. THE MIRACLE

After the crowd led Jesus to Lazarus’s tomb, Jesus responded in two noteworthy ways. He felt their sorrow and understood their grief. The audience even commented on how much Jesus must have loved Lazarus. It is amazing to realize God Himself feels our grief. Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead and turn their mourning into dancing, but when He stood at the tomb of His friend, He felt their pain as He wept.

Second, Jesus groaned. We don’t quite know what it sounded like, but the word denotes anger. Jesus’ anger appeared to be directed at death—the ultimate curse that sin brought into the world. If it were not for sin, we would not deal with death and the lasting pain it leaves in its wake. Freeing humanity from the “sting of death” was part of Jesus’ mission to fulfill what the Law required. When Jesus stood at the tomb of Lazarus, He confronted sin and death. This miracle would confirm beyond all doubt that Jesus was the Messiah. He had more than the ability to heal and forgive; Jesus did not just restore what was broken or compromised; He could bring back to life what was dead. His death on the cross would make this a reality, not just in the physical realm but in the spiritual realm as well.

A. Raising Lazarus

Jesus commanded the crowd to roll away the stone. They did and Jesus roared into the tomb: “Lazarus, come forth” (John 11:43). Jesus was commanding someone who was dead for four days to come back to life. Jewish tradition taught that the soul stayed near the body for three days, but by the fourth day, the body would begin to decompose. Lazarus was gone...but not for long. From across the gulf between life and death, Lazarus heard his friend call his name, and Lazarus started walking toward the mouth of the tomb, and death could not stop him. He came out of the grave still wearing his grave clothes. Jesus made one more command: “Loose him and let him go” (John 11:44).

B. Responding to the Miracle

This miracle, like many others, caused people to believe. They saw Jesus command death, death bowed, and they believed. Miracles are for that reason; they are so we believe Jesus is who He said He is. They are not just for us to have a better life or less pain in this one. Miracles are so we will see Jesus for who He is and worship Him as the Almighty.

C. I will have faith in Jesus for healing and resurrection.

While all of us may not share in the experience of having a loved one raised from the dead, we all share in the truth of what happened that unforgettable day in Bethany. Yes, Jesus is able to heal us, which is why we pray for Him to heal when we or others we love are sick. But He is able to do so much more. One day, Jesus will call all of us who are yet alive—or even have been laid in a grave—up in the resurrection. When He heals, we give Him glory. And when He calls us home, we will have all eternity to give Him glory.

***DISCUSS:** How have you experienced resurrection power since coming to Jesus Christ?*

***Teacher Option:** Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate how Jesus is still the resurrection and the life.*

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

(I) This young man had a common name but an altogether uncommon testimony. His name was John Smith, and this story starts when he was fourteen. John had spent the night at a friend's house because the next day was a Monday holiday. John's mom, Joyce, was getting ready to pick up her son when her phone rang.

Her friend Cindy said soberly, "There's been an accident."

Joyce learned that John and his friends had ventured across a frozen lake in St. Charles, Missouri. The ice was thinner than they thought, and it gave way beneath them. All the boys fell through the ice into the icy waters.

Thankfully John's friends were able to pull themselves out of the water and back to safety, but John could not. He was still missing.

They couldn't see him, and they couldn't hear him. They could only yell for him and hope he emerged, but he didn't. By the time first responders arrived, he had been submerged under the freezing water for fifteen minutes. The EMTs reached him and pulled him out, but he was lifeless. They transported him to a nearby hospital, but even after forty-five minutes of CPR, he had still not responded. The doctor's daughter was in John's grade. Dr. Sutterer tried everything he could to bring the fourteen-year-old back to life. He later told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* that he had never seen anyone survive without a pulse for more than twenty-five minutes.

On January 19, 2015, John Smith died at fourteen years old.

Joyce Smith entered his hospital room and began to pray—loudly, boldly. As she prayed to Jesus, she thought, *You're either who You say You are or You're not.* She prayed, "Please come and give me back my son!" Suddenly,

miraculously his heart beat again. He was in the hospital for two more weeks, and he left the hospital with no lasting damage. God had brought him back from the dead, showing him, his family, the doctors, and all who hear his story that Jesus is still the resurrection and the life.

No matter what you're dealing with, Jesus is the answer. He is able to heal and restore what sin and sickness have stolen. He is also able to command death and death obeys. Each time God commands death, it is just a glimpse into that great and glorious day when He will command death for the final time, and He will raise up everyone in covenant with Him to be with Him, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.