

Jesus Unleashed

Session 6: Lazarus Lessons

Edited Transcript

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Good morning, gentlemen. It is great to see you. We are here. We're concluding the series Jesus Unleashed. We're talking about another miracle that Jesus accomplished in the book of John. If you have your Bible, turn to John chapter 11. Today, we are going to talk about Lazarus. We're going to talk about Lazarus. Before we do that, let's give a shout out to a group of guys in Memphis, Tennessee led by Raj Patil, a bunch of young guys that meet on Wednesday nights. They call their group Man in the Mirror. How awesome is that? Raj and the guys in Memphis, let's give those guys a big greeting. Welcome, guys. One, two, three, hoorah. All right.

John chapter 11 and we're going to talk about Lazarus and Mary and Martha and Jesus and the disciples. There's a ton of people involved in this story. As we talk about Lazarus lessons, here's our outline. We're going to talk about the fact that Jesus loves his friends. Then we're going to talk about the fact that Jesus has power over death. Then we're going to talk about what about Lazarus. This whole miracle involves Lazarus rising from the dead so what is it about Lazarus that caused Jesus to raise him from the dead. Let's pray and then we're going to jump into John chapter 11. Lord, we just pray that you would be with us as we study your word, that you would speak through the power of your Spirit, Lord, into our hearts, into our minds, Lord, that the things that we learn, the things that you show us would come out in the way that we live our lives, Lord, that we would bring you glory, that we would build your kingdom. In Jesus's name, amen.

You've heard the saying there's two things that you can be sure of in life: death and taxes. Jesus interacts a lot with both of these things, with death and taxes. We're going to talk today about death. I don't know about you guys, but the older I get, the more I feel like I'm interacting with death. Just in the last week, I've had an extended family member on each side of my family has passed away, somebody that was close to my wife, somebody that I grew up with, my cousin. It's hard. It's hard to lose somebody. It's agonizing. It brings up these feelings of grief and despair sometimes and anger and depression, all of these feelings that can come up around death. We see all of this in this passage in John 11 sort of really compressed into this narrative of what happened with Jesus and the disciples, with Mary and Martha, with their friends, and then with Lazarus.

In John chapter 11, this is a long chapter so I'm going to read it and then we're going go through it and look through this outline. John chapter 11 verse one, "Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it he said, 'This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and you're going to go there again?'"

This happened right in the previous chapter. Jesus is out there teaching. The Pharisees are challenging him. He says, "I and the Father are one," which to the Jews was blasphemy. He's claiming equality with God. They pick up stones to stone him and they can't do it. Then he challenges them again and they threaten to stone him again. It says he walked away. He got away. Right in the three or four paragraphs before this chapter, all of this happens. Jesus finds out that Lazarus is ill. Mary and Martha send for him. We know that Jesus loves Mary and Martha and Lazarus because in verse five it says it. "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus." We know that he loved them. He says, "Let us go." The disciples say, "Whoa. Hang on. It's dangerous." Bethany, where they live, is just a little bit outside of Jerusalem. Bethany, it's in Mary and Martha and Lazarus's house that Jesus stays the week of the crucifixion. The scriptures say he walked into Jerusalem every day to teach in the temple courts to keep stirring things up throughout the week. Then, he walks home in the evening back to Mary and Martha and Lazarus's house. These are close friends that he loves.

"Jesus says, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.'" That's a whole sermon. We're not even going to talk about it. "After saying these things, he said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.' The disciples," still a little freaked out about going to Jerusalem," say, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.' Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'" By the way, on a little aside, I like talking about Thomas because he gets a bum rep. We all call him doubting Thomas. We should call him like brave Thomas, courageous Thomas because when all the other disciples were saying, "Hang on a second. They're going to throw rocks at us again if we go there," Thomas goes, "Well, we might as well all go die together."

JESUS LOVES HIS FRIENDS

When you look how much Jesus loves his friends, you have to recognize that the risk was real. He had just been there. They had just threatened to kill him, but he loved his friends so much that he was willing to take the risk. He loves us so much that he's willing to take the risk, to walk on earth for us, knowing full and well what the outcome was going to be. Jesus loves his friends. He loves Mary and Martha and Lazarus. He loves the disciples we see throughout the gospels. He loves us, his friends. Verse 17, "Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'"

Martha shows here that she understands the gospel. You see, one of the sort of secularizations of religion that had happened among the Jewish people at this time was you've heard of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Well, the Pharisees were the evangelicals and the Sadducees were sort of the secular moralists. They were like, "You know, the Old Testament's good. It's got a lot of good moral teaching. Let's follow the 10 commandments, but you know what? When you die, you're done. That's it." Martha is in this culture where there's this growing secularization of religion and she says, "No, no, no. I get it. We're eternal beings. There is life after death. I know that whoever believes in is going to rise again. I get it." In this moment of like theological certainty on Martha's part, Jesus goes, "Actually, you don't get

it, at least not in what I'm talking about." He says to her, "Yes, your brother will rise again." Then she says, "I know he'll rise again in a resurrection of the last day," but Jesus says to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I believe you are the Christ. You are the Son of God who is coming into the world."

JESUS HAS POWER OVER DEATH

What we see here is that Jesus is saying, "I have power over death. I am the resurrection. I am the life." Martha gets it. She totally gets it. Verse 28, "When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, 'The Teacher is here and he is calling for you.' And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'" Again, Martha says, "If you'd been here," and Mary says, "If he'd been here." You got to wonder if the disciples aren't thinking, "Why did we delay? Why didn't we go there? I mean, we got there four days late. He's already been in the tomb four days."

"Jesus sees her weeping and the Jews who had come with her also weeping and he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?'" They're questioning it. Jesus says, "I'm the resurrection and the life." Martha says, "If you'd been here, he wouldn't have died. You have power over death." Mary says, "If you had been here, he wouldn't have died. You have power over death. We know he's going to rise in the last days, but if you had been here, he wouldn't have died because you have power over death." They get it. Jesus is about to say, "You don't really get it. I'm going to give you one more level of understanding. I'm going to give you one more example of my power. I'm going to come into your life and I'm going to change something that you thought was unchangeable. I'm going to help you recover from something that you thought was unrecoverable." He raises Lazarus from the dead.

"Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, ever the practical one, "the sister of the dead man, says, 'Lord, by this time he's going to stink, for he has been dead four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out.' The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'"

No matter who you are, if you're like Martha, which probably more guys would identify with Martha than Mary. Martha's like the task-oriented one that wants to get things done and keep things in order. Martha's the relational one. Martha hears Jesus is coming. She's got to go out and meet him and get everything situated. Mary just stays in the house and cries and all the people are around Mary. It's a wake basically. All the people are around Mary and they're consoling her. Then Martha goes back and gets her and says, "Go see Jesus." Then she goes out. No matter how you are, Jesus is ready to step into

those situations and meet the need that we have and help us overcome the grief and the despair and the difficulties of this world even all the way, in this case, to death. What about Lazarus? See, the story of Lazarus teaches this. When Martha met Jesus, she said, "I understand he's going to rise in the last day." When Mary went to Jesus, she said, "You could have kept him from dying." The people looking at Jesus said, "You could have kept him from dying." Jesus goes, "Watch this." This is the Big Idea. **Jesus's power will always exceed our wildest expectations.** Jesus's power will always exceed our wildest expectations.

WHAT ABOUT LAZARUS?

What about Lazarus? Well, here's the interesting thing about Lazarus. There's no recorded words of Lazarus. Mary and Martha, we hear stuff that they said. We get insights into their relationship with Jesus. We don't get that with Lazarus. He's like a dude. You know, was he there? I have a friend that played golf with a guy, he used to play golf once a week. He went to this course. For six weeks in a row, the same guy showed up the same time and so they shared a cart and played a round of golf together. Six weeks later, his wife said, "So who'd you play golf with?" He's like, "Frank." She said, "Oh, Frank who?" "Oh, I don't know." "Really?" "Yeah." "Well, how many times you play golf with him?" Like, "Six times." Six times 18 holes, what's that? 20, 25 hours, 40 if you're me. "Well, what does he do?" "I don't know." "Is he married?" "I don't know." "Did he have a ring on?" "I don't know." That's guys. It's Lazarus. He's just there.

In fact, here's a comprehensive list of all the reasons, of all the things that Lazarus did that qualified him for Jesus to save him. He didn't do anything. That's not why Jesus saved him. Jesus does not save us because of stuff that we do. Jesus saves us because that's what Jesus does. Jesus brings glory to the Father by saving his friends. That's what Jesus does. We walk around thinking we're not good enough or we've done too much that's wrong or one really big thing that's wrong and we don't deserve for Jesus to save us, but Jesus calls us his friends and Jesus saves his friends to bring glory to the Father. It doesn't matter the situation we're in because Jesus's power always exceeds our wildest expectations.

It's funny. When I think of my son, sometimes I think of how different he is from me and yet he's going into full-time ministry and he even got a Biblical language tattoo on his left forearm like his dad. I got mine first, just for the record. He has the word in Hebrew Eleazar, the name Eleazar tattooed on his forearm. Eleazar is the Hebrew form of the name Lazarus. I said to him, "Why did you get Lazarus's name tattooed?" We were talking about it. I'm like, "Why did you pick that?" He says, "Because Lazarus did nothing for Jesus to save him and I have to remember that I don't have to do anything for Jesus to save me. Jesus chooses to save me. It's good for me to remember that, Dad, that I don't have to strive, I don't have to meet some expectations, I don't have to be good enough."

Even more than that, for him and me, is that we have to realize that even thinking that, "If I just do these things, Jesus will save me," that's hubris. That's my pride thinking that I could do something that would somehow obligate God, the most sovereign God, the most omnipotent, almighty, powerful being ever, that I could somehow obligate him to do something for me. I can't obligate him to do. Only he can obligate himself. It brings the Father glory for Jesus to save us. Jesus even gives that example by bringing the Father glory. This is what God does for us. Lazarus didn't do anything to deserve what Jesus did for him. You might say, "That's Jesus." Let me give you a modern example of how this works because this is maybe a unique ... I don't know if it's unique to men, but I know men do this really well. When you're a guy and you decide that somebody's going to be your friend, they're going to be your friend. You can even have a time with your friends where you don't even like them, but they're still your friend.

When I was in college, I experienced this kind of friendship in my fraternity. Trust me, there were a lot of guys in my fraternity that I couldn't stand and there were a lot of guys in my fraternity I'm pretty sure that couldn't stand me, but I went through a couple of different times, one in particular, that I was really, really struggling, really, really suffering and my brothers who didn't even like me, they came around me and they took care of me and made sure I was okay because we were friends. It's a great example of the relationship that Jesus had with the disciples, for instance. He calls them his friends. I mean, even when they're arguing about who's going to sit next to him in heaven, even when they're arguing about who's the greatest, even when they're going, "Uh, could you explain that lesson that you just taught again because we didn't get it?" They're his friends. He loves them. This is what Christ offers to us too.

Lazarus did nothing to qualify him for this incredible miracle. He was dead. He wasn't asleep. He wasn't faint. He wasn't in a coma. He was dead, four days in a tomb. Jesus waited to make sure everybody knew that he was good and dead because even if he was in a coma, he would have died of thirst in those four days. D-E-A-D, dead. Jesus shows up, has them roll away the rock, and now here's the interesting thing. When Jesus prays, I just got this this week, Jesus prays, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me." Do you know why he's praying that? Because guess who's sitting in the tomb waiting for Jesus to call him out. God had already raised him from the dead, but Jesus had to show up to get the rock rolled away and give him a voice to follow because he's all bound up for him to come out of the tomb. This is what Jesus does for us. Jesus's power will always exceed our wildest expectations through the power of the Father and the action of the Holy Spirit.

Let's pray and then let's take some time at our tables to talk about these things. Then we'll come back and wrap up at the end. Father, thank you so much that you have given us this narrative, that you have given us this history book that shows us your power so that we could believe. Lord, every miracle that you did was real and it illustrates to us the amazing power, Lord, but also the amazing love that you have for us as you heal sickness, as you cast out demons, as you even raised a dead man back to life again. Lord, we pray that for us here as well, that you would help us to realize that you've raised us back to life as well. It may not be physical death that we're recovering from, Lord, but we know that we are spiritually dead, that sometimes our lives themselves feel like all the meaning has been taken out of them, all the purpose that we had, all the motivation that we had, but, Lord, you step into that mess and you bring life, you bring power. Help us to experience that every day, Lord. Help us to realize how much you love us. Bless these guys, Lord, as they talk through these questions. In Jesus's name, amen. All right, we'll see you in about 20 minutes.

Guys, this is what I want to end with, when Lazarus walked out of the tomb. Verse 44, "The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'" Guys, let me tell you. We all walk around with bindings on. We all walk around with strips wrapped around areas of our lives that don't allow us to move, that don't allow us to live the life that God has for us. We all walk around with a cloth over our face sometimes, unwilling or unable to see the life that God has for us. Jesus comes into those situations and he says, "Unbind the bindings. Take the covering off your face. I'm the resurrection. I'm the life." Let me ask you this question. Do you believe? Are you living the life of a believer? Do you want to? If you're not, I want to invite you this morning to make that decision to tell God that you will allow him to unbind you, that you will allow him to take the cloth off your face.

You may be sitting there going, "I don't even know what that means." Don't worry about not knowing what it means. Just tell him and he'll help you day by day learn what it means. I don't even know what it

means. It means this much and I get this much of it. Every day, you get a little bit more. Every guy you interact with that's a believer helps you understand a little bit more, but every time you pray, every time you read the scriptures, you understand just a little bit more of it. The great thing about the Christian life is that you never stop learning, you never stop discovering what God's power is capable of in your life. If you've not to this point told God that you believe and made that choice to believe, will you please make that this morning? If you realize that you've allowed some of those bindings to come back into your life and the cloth is back over your face again, why not take some time this morning and just pray that God would remove those bindings and take that cloth back off, that he would send men in your life to help you do that, that he would send you places in his word that remind you and help deepen your belief in him?

I'm going to pray right now for us and if you're in one of these situations where you've really never told God, you've never made that decision to believe in him, why don't you pray with us right now to yourself? If you need for Jesus to remove some bindings in your life that you had sort of let bind you back up again, why don't you pray for that? Let's pray together. You just pray these prayers to yourself and then I'm going to really encourage you to talk to your table leader or me afterwards if you prayed these prayers. Father, thank you so much for these guys, but thank you more, Lord, for this scripture. Thank you that you inspired all of these people to write the word of God, to put it down on paper for us so that we would have something to show us what your power looks like, to show us what your love looks like. Father, there's guys in this room that have been just trying to figure out how life is supposed to work for a long time. Maybe they've even been in the Bible study for a long time but they've never truly decided to believe. Lord, would you through the power of your Holy Spirit draw them to yourself this morning?

Guys, if that's you this morning, just tell Jesus, "Jesus, I believe that you came to earth. I believe that you are the Son of God. I believe that I'm a sinner and that I can't live up even to my own expectations, much less yours. I believe that your power is greater than that, that your death on the cross paid for that, that your resurrection shows me what life is going to be like. It gives me power to live the life that you have for me. Lord, take me as your son. Jesus, take me as your friend." Lord, I know that even for me, there's areas of my life that have bindings around them still. Lord, would you remove those bindings from my life and the lives of the guys that are praying that you would do that now? Would you take the cloth away from our eyes so we can see truth clearly? Lord, help us to all recognize the amazing power you have that exceeds every expectation we could possibly have. Help us to walk with you, to trust you, and to take care of each other so that we can bring you glory, Lord, and build your kingdom. In Jesus's name, amen. All right, guys. Pray at your tables if you still want to. If you prayed a prayer, please come talk to me. I'd love to hear about it.