

Joel 1:17-27

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[0 : 00] A few days ago I read in the newspapers about the attempt to introduce a movie. It's a movie that had to do with the zombies.

! I noticed the effort to make zombies now look more likeable. The movie presented this zombie as one that is not a flesh eater, not a very gory, scary being, but one that actually is lovable.

And the intention is so that we would not be scared at the prospect of death, or maybe to comfort people and say there is a life after this death, and you don't have to be scared about it.

In the passage we've read today, we are confronting another instance where a dead person is raised, but in a very different context. Not the same context as that of the movies.

Jesus gets the information via the message sent to him by the sisters of Lazarus, that his friend Lazarus has died, or is sick.

[1 : 16] And we see that in verse 3. He says, so the sisters sent to him saying, Lord, he whom you love is sick. And one would expect that on hearing the news of one whom you love as being sick, the natural thing would be to respond speedily.

Maybe the sisters expected that Jesus would drop whatever he was doing, and quickly rush. After all, they were careful to say, one whom you love.

They were mindful of the relationship between Jesus and them. So they expected that he would come and heal Lazarus.

And Jesus gives a very curious response. He behaves in a very funny way. Verse 4 tells us, but when Jesus heard it, he took time to lecture to his disciples.

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. And I think that's important for us to know. Jesus did not show lack of care in not responding. Instead, he took time to bring the attention of the disciples to the fact that this death shouldn't be something that we should be worried about or scared about as those who believe.

[2 : 42] He said, instead, in this death, something is going to happen. The glory of God would be revealed. I am not sure the disciples understood. Because there was nothing, and there still to many people is nothing glorious about death.

People fear the prospect of death. And because we don't see anything glorious about it, many who are sick would do everything to be to get well. Many spend thousands of pounds to get well. Many spend thousands of pounds to get well. Because we don't see anything glorious in death.

So Jesus told his disciples, this particular sickness is intended to bring the glory of God. Why?

Because maybe the disciples were expecting that as normal, Jesus would go and they would witness another miracle.

Maybe they would see something more exciting than they had seen in the past. But Jesus prepared their minds for something greater.

If I was his disciple, I would have expected, okay, let me pack my bag so that we will go, so that I will see the manifestation of this glory of God. Yet, the Bible goes on to tell us in this story. Verse 5, 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.

[4 : 21] What an odd way to behave. What an odd way to behave. And to respond to an invitation to help out one in love. Jesus doesn't pack his bag and rush off to Bethany to heal Lazarus.

And we are affirmed that Jesus actually did love Martha and Lazarus. Yet, love restrained him. Love constrained him.

And I'm sure his disciples would have been as confused as I am. Why would you delay in rushing to the help of one that you love?

But the story doesn't end there. Jesus finally gets to Bethany. We are told that when he arrived, Martha heard he had come. And then she went out to meet him. And she met him and, after greeting him, kind of accused Jesus. In verse 21, she said, Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Because by the time Jesus arrived, he had already died.

[5 : 49] And so as though to say, there's no need for you to bother coming. Well, you can come and join the group of mourners. The one whom you love, my brother is dead. So she took time to tell him, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

As though to comfort him and express some spiritual knowledge, he said, however I know, whatever you ask the Father, he will do for you.

And sometimes we cover up our complaints with spiritual responses. We make excuses for the tendencies to even accuse God.

We cover it up with a garment of spirituality. And I'm sure Martha didn't know that she was in a position to receive a revelation of love that she didn't know.

So she said to him, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. If only you had come earlier, things would have been different. And sometimes we think God steps into our situation late.

[7 : 06] We think if he had come only a little earlier, if God had a reason to respond to our needs only a little earlier, things would have changed. Because we conclude that there are some things that we think God would not be able to take care of.

Such as death. But Jesus goes on to talk to her. Jesus goes on to explain to her.

In verse 24, 23, sorry. He said, your brother will rise again. And that's supposed to give her hope. And she displayed spiritual knowledge again.

Oh, common theological knowledge. And she said, yes, I know. He will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. But she was missing the point.

At this point, Jesus began to prepare her for what he had told the disciples. I love Lazarus. I love Mary.

[8 : 14] I love Martha. But I'm not going now. Because the illness of this man is to reveal the glory of God. So Jesus delayed his going out of love.

Because he loved this family. He wanted to reveal himself and to reveal the glory of God to them. In a way they did not know.

But she said, I know. Yes, my brother will rise again. I will see him again. Not today though. Not immediately. But when the end comes. And all who believe are resurrected. And Jesus takes time now.

To say this profound truth. That is the theme or the topic for our study today. Verse 25. Jesus said to her.

[9 : 13] I am the resurrection. I am the life. Whoever believes in me. Though he die. Yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me.

Shall never die. Do you believe this? In response. To the seeming accusation.

Of Martha here. And if you not. Martha is not the only one that accused Jesus. Of coming a little late. Mary also. In verse 32.

Brought the same accusation. Says now when Mary came to where Jesus was. She saw him and fell at his feet. Saying Lord. If you had been here. My brother would not have died.

Then the Jews. Who had come to mourn with her. Also raised the same condemnation. Or accusation. In verse 36. When he. They said so. The Jews said.

[10 : 10] 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. So three people.

Three groups. Made Jesus feel he was led. And Jesus. Responded. To this. First in his response to Martha.

With a very profound truth. I am the resurrection. And the life. I'm going to respond to. The claim of Martha. In saying.

Yes. I know what will happen to my brother. He's not going to remain in the tomb forever. He's going to resurrect. He's coming back to life. As though to say. Yes.

You see Jesus. I believe. That the Messiah will come. In the end. The Messiah will raise all who believe. And then. I will see my brother. And Jesus responds to that.

[11:06] He said. That which you are expecting. That which you are looking forward to. That which you know.

Will come in the end. Is here now. It's as though Jesus was saying. You don't have to wait. For the final resurrection. Here and now.

You will see. And experience resurrection. Why? Because I am. I am. The life. I am. The resurrection. And the life.

And since I am here. Resurrection. Is here. And your brother. Will come to life. He can come to life. Now. But.

When Jesus said that. He said it in reference. To her brother. Then he goes beyond. Referring to Lazarus. So. I am here. At the resurrection.

[12:02] Not only for those. Who are dead. Not only for your brother. Who is dead. Look at what he says. I am the resurrection. And the life.

Whoever believes in me. Though he die. Yet. Shall he live. In reference to Lazarus. Did Lazarus believe in me?

Yes. Lazarus loved me. So. I want to let you know. Martha. Because he believed in me. Though. He has died. Yet. He shall live.

But the good news. Is not only for Lazarus. Verse 26. Jesus goes on to say. And everyone. Who believes in me. Shall never die.

Thereby. Bringing. Martha. Bringing. Mary. Bringing. All of the other Jews. Who are around. Into this glorious. Revelation.

[12:58] Into this great truth. Do you believe in me? I have power. To raise. Those who believe in me. And have died. I am the resurrection.

I am the reality of life. For those who are dead. But. For those who are alive. If you believe in me. You. Will never die.

That was. Awesome. For Martha. That was a huge revelation. That must have gone against. Everything.

She had believed in. And that's a claim. By Jesus. That is so awesome. That it becomes.

A source of joy. And comfort. For those of us. Who believe. That constitutes. The heart. Of the joy. And the hope.

[13:55] Of the Christian. That. Because. The basis. For which. As a Christian. You live. With joy. And fear. Death. Loses. Its threat.

That death. Loses. Its power. Why? Because you know. Since you believe. In Jesus. You already. Have transited. From life.

To life. That is eternal. Now. Oh. Does that mean. The Christian. Will not die. On earth. Oh. Now. Sure. It means. The Christian.

Will die. On earth. But it will just be. A suppression. Of this earthly body. Such that. There will be. A continuation. Of this life. That is found.

Only in. Jesus. The Christian. Who believes. In Jesus. Therefore. Does not die. But he lives. From life.

[14:52] To eternal life. So. At the prospect of death. We only change. From one life. From one reality. Of life. This earthly reality.

And we continue. Into. The greater reality. Of a life. That starts. While we are alive. Now. Yet it continues.

Forever. Because we have. Placed. Our faith. In Jesus Christ. So Jesus. Asked. Mother.

Do you believe this? Because. Though she knew him. She knew him. Only in one. Perspective. She had not.

Understood him. As. Life. As resurrection. She had not. Understood him. As one. Who could give her. Life. Beyond this life. Jesus.

[15:50] Was. Drawing her. To understand. There is a reality. That is beyond. Here. And fear. Death. Should no longer. Be a thing.

Of fear. To us. No wonder. The apostle. Paul. Would say. I'd rather. In Philippians 1. He says. I'd rather. Leave this earth. And be with Jesus Christ. Which is by far. More preferable. Why? Because. He understood. That real life.

Is found. In Jesus Christ. What we have. Is temporary. But belief. In Jesus. Translates. This temporary life.

Into something. Great. And awesome. That continues. And death. Therefore. Becomes. A happy. Occasion. Because.

[16:44] It becomes. The moment. By which. We shed. This earthly body. That yes. It will die. Doesn't matter. The sophistication. Of medical. Advances.

Medicine. Has not yet found. The answer. To eternal life. At best. With all the wonderful meals. And wonderful dishes. Are found. In this.

In this country. The different. Different sorts of people. Some are vegetarians. Some are one kind of. I don't know the names. But. All intended. To give. Long life.

Wonderful. As that is. All life. Must end. But. Christ. Christ. Gives us something. That goes beyond. What. This earth. Can give. He gives us the assurance. Of eternal life. So mother. Do you believe this?

[17:43] How I wish. Mother. Had just thought. That saying. I believe. So I know you. As the resurrection. And that will be all. But mother.

Though she said. She believed. Demonstrated. Unbelief. Later. Mary was now told. That. Jesus had come. And she rose. And went. And met him. And it is a. Same accusation. And. And Jesus. Would not. Take time. To explain.

What he had explained. To Mary. Because. At this point. He decided. Let me just. Show you. I am. The resurrection. I am. Life. I am not.

Only making a claim. I am going to prove. That claim. By my action. So Jesus. Took them. And they went.

[18:38] He said. Show me. Where you have buried him. From verse 38. 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. The sister. Of the dead man. Said to him. Lord. By this time. There will be an order.

For he had been dead. Four days. How often. Our knowledge. Our sinning wisdom. Comes in between us. And a visitation.

From God. To bring change. How often. Our. Our. Our. Our. Understanding. Our experience. Hinders us. From experiencing.

The visitation. Of God. Jesus. Had revealed himself. Profoundly. To Martha. But. She still. Did not believe him. Lord. May. Let's not bother.

[19:34] He would have been. Smelling. So Jesus. Turned 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 he. Called forth Lazarus. Lazarus. Come forth. Lazarus. Came forth.

Was untied. And he went away. No smell. But alive. Here is. The great hope.

For us. It doesn't matter. The knowledge. That we have acquired. It doesn't matter. The things. That have. Bound. Us.

If we will only. Believe. In the offer. Of life. That God. Is making available. For us. In Christ. Jesus. We will. Experience.

[20:29] Resurrection. And in. The resurrection. Of Lazarus. Jesus. Was not trying. To prove. That he is. A miracle worker. But he is. Trying to prove.

I am the embodiment. Of the love. Of God. John 3. 16. Says. For God. So loved the world. That he gave his one. And only son. That whosoever. Believes in him.

Shall have life. Jesus. Is the resurrection. And the life. Because. That is. The fullness. Of the love. Of God.

Brought to us. It is the intention. Of God. That all. Will have life. And have it. More abundantly. And this abundant life. Is found.

Only in Jesus Christ. So. If you would place. Your faith. In Jesus. If you would. Dare. To go. Beyond. Beliefs.

[21:22] Of the world. Beyond the wisdom. Of the world. And in the simplicity. Of faith. Believe. In Jesus. Put your faith. In Jesus Christ. A life.

Will begin. To well up. In you. Now. Yeah. It may not. Change. Your outward appearance. But it would be. A life. That begins. Now. And would continue.

Into all. Of eternity. Jesus. Is presenting. Himself. To us. As the answer. To death. If you are scared. Of dying. As I am.

You will bless. Your faith. In Jesus. Because in Christ. Jesus. We have the victory. That overcomes death. We move. From life.

To life. Jesus said. Whoever lives. And believes. In me. Will never. Die. And he does not. Live. But live. Do you believe.

[22 : 18] In Jesus. Do you have. This life. At work. In you. But maybe. You have not. Dare. To place your faith.

In Jesus. I tell you. It's the best thing. You can do. Submit. To the lordship. Of Jesus. Yield your life. To him. And.

True life. True life. Will begin. In you. And it will. Well up. For all of eternity. Let us pray.

Let us pray.