

The Gospel of John Four Days Late

John 11:25-36

INTRODUCTION:

I would like to open by honoring all the mothers who are here this morning. **(Have all mothers stand and be recognized.)** Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do for your children. They were not able to choose you or you them. Some would say that your mother/child relationship was just an act of chance, but I am sure that many would say that they would not exchange their mom for anyone else in the world. You changed our diapers, cared for us when we were sick, fed us, comforted us when we were sad, and taught us how to live. For this we will always be thankful.

This will be the weakest Mother's Day theme ever presented. But if Mary and Martha **were** mothers, (the scriptures do not tell us if they were) chapter 11 of the Gospel of John is going to present one of the greatest Mother's Day gifts ever given: the resurrection of their brother from the dead.

If you remember, Mary and Martha sent messengers to Jesus while He was beyond the Jordan where John the Baptist began his ministry. They told him that the one whom you love, Lazarus, is sick unto death. Instead of immediately running to the aid of Lazarus, Jesus delayed His return. When He finally arrived, he was **four days late**. Lazarus was already dead and buried.

But that is not the end. Jesus had told his disciples in verse 4 that "**This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.**"

Four Days Late - Karen Peck.

The news came to Jesus, please come fast.

Lazarus is sick and without your help he will not last.

Mary and Martha watched their brother die.

They waited for Jesus. He did not come and they wondered why.

The death watch was over, buried four days.

Somebody said He'll soon be here, the Lord's on his way.

Martha ran to him and then she cried,

"Lord if you had been here you could have healed him. He'd still be alive."

But you're four days late and all hope is gone.

Lord we don't understand why you've waited so long.

But His way is God's way not yours or mine.

And isn't it great, when He's four days late, He's still on time.

Jesus said "Martha show me the grave."

But she said "Lord, you don't understand he's been there four days!"

The grave stone was rolled back, then Jesus cried,

"Lazarus come forth!" Then somebody said "He's alive! He's alive!"

You may be fighting a battle of fear.

You've cried to the Lord, "I need you now!" But He has not appeared.

Friend don't be discouraged cause He's still the same.

He'll soon be here. He'll roll back the stone and He'll call out your name.

But you're four days late and all hope is gone.

Lord we don't understand why you've waited so long.

But his way is God's way not yours or mine.

And isn't it great, when he's four days late, He's still on time.

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 11:25-36 (NASB)

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world."

²⁸ When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹ And when she heard it, she *got up quickly and was coming to Him.

³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. ³¹ Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³ When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her *also* weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, ³⁴ and said, "Where have you laid him?" They *said to Him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!"

Prayer

BODY:

I. PROCLAIMING HIS DEITY.

In our passage this morning, Jesus has finally arrived. He is first met by Martha who tells him "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died".

Then Jesus told Martha, "**Your brother will rise again.**" She did not understand that he was going to raise Lazarus before their eyes.

John 11:24 (NASB)

24 Martha *said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

Jesus was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. And He is also going to confirm that what Mary said was true by explaining the source of resurrection of life. This resurrection would be a very important experience, not only for Mary and Martha, but also for the disciples. When Jesus would raise from the dead, they would remember this event and understand that He indeed had the power to resurrect from the dead.

That gift extends to all of us today. Not only did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, but he also rose from the dead himself and defeated death. Thus we are promised that we will also "**rise again in the resurrection on the last day**".

John 11:25 (NASB)

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,

Jesus does not say "I have the **ability** to resurrect." He says I, what? ..."**I am.**"...He says "**I am** the resurrection and the life".

So here is this great claim, this claim to be the **I am**, to be the one who is the source of life. I am the embodiment of life. **I am life.**

With that in mind, however, the next verse presents somewhat of a problem.

John 11:26 (NASB)

26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Lazarus had believed in Jesus, yet he had died, as countless of believers in Christ have died since. Clearly when Jesus spoke of believers never dying, he was not referring to physical death. Jesus was speaking of our spiritual life that we enjoy in this life as well as the next. We receive that spiritual life when we are reborn in Jesus and receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Death, then, represents living without God's spirit. In other words, even if we die physically, those of us who are alive in Christ will never spiritually die.

The story of raising of Lazarus thus not only points us towards the resurrection by which Jesus conquered **physical death**, it also symbolizes his victory over **spiritual death** that separates unbelievers from God in this life and the next.

John 11:27 (NASB)

27 She *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."

She believed. That is the path to salvation. She didn't even know about the cross yet because He hadn't died. She didn't know about His resurrection yet because it hadn't happened, but she believed everything that had been revealed up to that point. She is an Old Testament believer. I do believe! I do believe!

The purpose for sharing this miracle with us was to confirm the claim of Jesus in verse 25. **"I am the resurrection and the life"**.

I don't know if you have made this connection yet, but Jesus often made statements of spiritual reality, and then illustrated them in a physical way. **"I am the resurrection"**. Here is a resurrection to prove it." On another occasion in the gospel of John, He said, **"I am the bread of life"** and then He created a meal from fish and loaves to prove it. On another occasion, He said, **"I am the light of the world"** and then healed blind eyes to prove it. Here He says, **"I am the resurrection and the life"**. and He proves it by resurrecting Lazarus from the dead and bringing Him back to life.

II. GATHERING THE CROWD.

John 11:28-29 (NASB)

28 When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." **29** And when she heard it, she *got up quickly and was coming to Him.

After Martha's confession that she believed, she went back and whispers secretly in Mary's ear that Jesus is there.

John 11:30-31 (NASB)

30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. **31** Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Mary was in grief. Lazarus had been dead for four days. Friends were still there around her consoling her. But Mary quickly jumps up and rushes to meet Jesus. The crowd believes that she is just transferring her sadness to the tomb, like people visiting a grave, and rushes behind her.

This was the plan of God. Get all the eyewitnesses that you can. Get them out of the house! Get everybody to the grave. Don't leave anybody behind. Let's get everybody there to see this miracle.

John 11:32 (NASB)

32 Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

Where had she hear that? This was the same thing that Martha had told Jesus. **You are four days late.** Lazarus is dead and in the tomb. **"If you had been here, my brother would not have died."** You could have prevented all of this. This whole event needed not to happen. But you see, Jesus knew that it was very **important** that it happen.

III. THE COMPASSION OF JESUS.

John 11:33 (NASB)

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her *also* weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled,

This is quite a scene. This is kind of a strong weeping, wailing. "He was deeply moved," Literally weeping is *klaiō* in the Greek. It means to sob. And when He sees all this sobbing, He was deeply moved. This is a word that sort of grabs everything. There is sorrow, sadness, anger, suffering. It is like every emotion grips Him in His spirit.

This is as the author of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 4:15 (NASB)

15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

He is deeply moved because He has lost a very close friend. He loved Lazarus. His close friend is dead.

He also loved Mary and Martha. There is no question that He loved them. Everybody recognized how much He loved them. But His sorrow was much more than that. It is not just the pain that He feels in the loss of a friend. It is not just the pain that He feels as He identifies with these two sisters. He feels a far more reaching pain. He understands that He is surrounded by unbelievers, who are representative of a nation of unbelievers who are all being led into eternal judgment because they will not receive Him. He understands the pain and suffering of all humanity who face death of their loved ones. He understands how severe this loss is when you know you are losing one to hell forever.

This is a massive moment of agony. Maybe a little bit like His agony in the garden as He anticipates the sin-bearing. He deeply enters in, not only to the wounded hearts and sorrows of people who are broken because they have lost the one they love; but He sees way more than that. He understands what sin has done to the world and what unbelief has done to these people who are gathered around Him.

He felt every pain, not only the pain of the loss of His own dear friend; not only the pain of Mary and Martha, not only the pain of all the rest of the people who had lost their friend, but the pain that will literally be imposed on every human family yet to live on this planet that faces the same reality. And worse, the pain of unbelief and its horrendous result. He feels it all.

John 11:34-35 (NASB)

34 and said, "Where have you laid him?" Where is the tomb? They *said to Him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept.

Shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept." This is not the word for weeping and sobbing. This is another word. This is a verb that means a sudden outburst into open tears, open crying. He literally can't hold it in. This is the "**man of sorrows acquainted with grief**," as Isaiah said, and He cannot contain it because He sees what is going on. He is experiencing His own loss, the loss of the sisters, the unbelief of the crowd, and in the coming generations of people who will feel the same agonizing separations that sin has produced.

These are not sentimental tears. These are not professional tears. These are not prolonged mourners tears. This is literally a shocking outburst of our sympathetic High Priest.

John 11:36 (NASB)

³⁶ So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!"

They were right. His tears stood out from everybody else's. "See how He loved him!" That was true. They used *phileō*, brotherly love. "See how He loved him!" but they didn't see the whole picture. They didn't know that what led to that outburst was far more than His affection for Lazarus. It was all the reality of sin and death and unbelief and judgment in hell that was behind that scene. So there He stands at the edge of the tomb, sobbing.

What happens next is astounding! Stay tuned for the rest of the story.

CONCLUSION:

Throughout the text of John's gospel, we repeatedly discover that the intention of everything that he records is to demonstrate the deity of Jesus Christ. And John points to His works as the proof.

John 10:37-38 (NASB)

³⁷ If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; ³⁸ but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."

So I ask you the same question that Jesus asked Martha..."**Do you believe!**"

John 11:25-26 (NASB)

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. **Do you believe this?**"

I do not know the problems that you are facing in your life. You may have sent word to Jesus **many** times in prayer and told Him that you are in need of Him right now! And yet He has not appeared. And you say "I don't understand! **Why are you are waiting so long?**"

Then Jesus quietly reminds us what He told His disciples concerning Lazarus.

John 11:4 (NASB)

⁴ But when Jesus heard *this*, He said, "This sickness (this situation that you are in) is **not** to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

You must understand. **His way is God's way. Not yours or mine.**

Jesus is the resurrection and the life. No matter **what** happens in your life, if you continue to **live and believe in Christ**, He will give you new life and you will rise again on the last day.

He will roll back the stone and He will call out **your** name.

Isn't that what really matters?

Isn't it great, even if, from your perspective, He's four days late, He's still on time!

This is the Day.