

Mount Olive Wednesday Night Bible Study and Prayer Meeting

April 28, 2021

John 11: 15 - 44

15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. **16** Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. **17** Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. **18** Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: **19** And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. **20** Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. **21** Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. **22** But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. **23** Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. **24** Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. **25** Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: **26** And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? **27** She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. **28** And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. **29** As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. **30** Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. **31** The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. **32** Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. **33** When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. **34** And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. **35** Jesus wept. **36** Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! **37** And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? **38** Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. **39** Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. **40** Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? **41** Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. **42** And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. **43** And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. **44** And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Pastor Jon began our study tonight by sharing his testimony. In August of 1963 he was a 15 year old camper at Wesley Woods. During a worship service at the Green Cathedral, he saw the sun shining through the trees in the shape of a cross and heard the call of God to go forward to the Mourner's Bench. There he gave his heart to Christ. But he went on to say that he is daily being sanctified by the Holy Spirit and being built up by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 15

And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

*In verse 14 Jesus has declared to His disciples that Lazarus was plainly dead. In verse 15 Jesus shares the reason for His delay.

*The disciples' belief system (faith) was still developing - the Peter of that day was not the Peter who preached boldly on Pentecost. The concept of who Jesus really was - The Messiah- was still challenging for the disciples. They were still undergoing spiritual growth.

Verse 16

Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

*Thomas, sometimes called the Twin, demonstrates that spiritual growth when we look at his response in verse 16 in comparison with his story in John 20:28 when he cries, 'My Lord, my God' when He sees the wounds on Jesus' hands and feet.

*Since going to Bethany to see Mary and Martha would mean that they would be closer to Jerusalem where the Jewish Leaders were plotting against Jesus. Thomas was dedicated and loyal to Jesus to the point that he would follow him at all costs, even death. But in John, Thomas moved to the point where he called Jesus his Lord and God.

Verse 17

Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

*There is no description of the journey itself - just that it had been 4 days since Lazarus died and was buried. We do not know the exact meeting place where Jesus found the mourners.

*As far back as the 3rd century, even some in the 1st century AD, there is evidence of a mystical rabbinic belief that the soul of the deceased hovered near the body for 3 days, hoping to be able to return to the body. But on the 4th day, it saw the body decomposing/decaying and finally departed. Therefore, the significance of the 4 days mentioned in verse 17. After this time, resurrection would be a first-order miracle, an unequivocal demonstration of the power of God.

Verse 18

Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:

*Bethany is only 1.8 to 2 miles away from Jerusalem. In fact, you can see Jerusalem from the higher parts of Bethany.

Verse 19

And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

*The Jews recorded here are NOT the Chief Priests or higher ranking Jewish religious leaders. These Jews were friends, neighbors, family/relatives of Mary, Martha and Lazarus who came to offer sympathy.

Verse 20

Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

*Notice the difference in the sisters' responses this time Jesus comes:

In Luke 10:38 - 42, Mary sits at Jesus' feet, listening to Him while Martha frets and fusses about the meal. In verse 20 here, Martha goes out to meet Jesus while Mary stays at home.

Verse 21

Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

*Note that this is the same response Mary has when she finally encounters Jesus in verse 32.

*When you invite friends to your home, you prepare or set the table for the event. Verses 15 through 21 have 'set the table' for the main event - the resurrection of Lazarus.

Verse 22

But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

*Martha wants a miracle - for her brother not to be dead. But she really doesn't understand what she is asking for.

*This verse then is a confession of her continuing faith in Jesus. She and her siblings had a close, intimate relationship with Jesus. They all had faith in Jesus and who He was. In effect Martha is saying that even though you were not here in time to help my brother, I still believe that God grants your requests. I have faith in you.

Verse 23

Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

*Jesus tells Martha what will take place. But His concept of 'rise again' is different in timing from that of Martha's idea of 'rise again'.

Verse 24

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

*She understands and agrees with the general idea of 'resurrection' that will come at the last day or end of age. But she isn't grasping the specific idea of a 'resurrection' in the present situation with her brother that Jesus is talking about.

Verse 25

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

*Jesus explains that He is ever the Resurrection and the Life, not just in the end or last days.

*When we accept/believe in Jesus, we not only have the future everlasting life promised in Heaven but also, because of dying to self in the present, we also have a spiritual resurrection in the here and now.

*Jesus took our sins on Calvary and still takes our daily sins to the Cross now. Paul's epistles carry this theme: We are crucified with Christ as soon as we accept Him into our hearts - we die spiritually but are born alive again as a new creation (resurrected, risen).

*Yes, the bodily resurrection will occur at the end of the age, this is reality. But we are also spiritually resurrected when we are born again.

*Lazarus will be bodily resurrected (very soon at this point in the passage) but he was already spiritually resurrected with his faith that Jesus was the Messiah. However, Lazarus will have to die a 2nd body death. This was the message that Jesus was trying to get across to Martha. Jesus has the power to both raise Lazarus from the dead that very day (I am the Resurrection) AND to give Lazarus (and us) Life everlasting (I am the Life) after the last death (bodily death).

Verse 26

And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

*This verse contains a simple yet powerful statement:

Before conversion: We are dead, still in sin, unsaved

After conversion: We are alive, resurrected, saved

There are only these 2 groups in the world. This is very deep, powerful, true and must be remembered.

Verse 27

She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

*In response to Jesus' question in verse 26, Mary confesses her faith, her belief.

Verse 28

And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

*Martha has to tell Mary secretly that Jesus has come because there are lots of people at their home, some believers and some not. Martha did not want to reveal Jesus' presence to those who would harm Him. (This is verified in verses 45 and 46 further into the story)

Verse 29

As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

Verse 30

Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

Verse 31

The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

*So Mary goes quickly to the place outside of Bethany where Martha had caught up with Jesus. Because she left so fast, the people at the house thought she was going to the grave to mourn.

Verse 32

Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

*Refer to verse 21...Martha's same words)

Verse 33 and 34

When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

*Jesus groaned, as any of us would, if we lost someone we loved like He loved Lazarus and his sisters.

Verse 35 and 36

Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

*Jesus may have been weeping for both dead Lazarus and those still living.

Verse 37

And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

*These were words of some of the skeptics/unbelievers .

Verse 38

Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

*Pastor Jon and Meade described the grave as a cave deep in the ground, accessible by a very narrow tunnel that wound down into the grave. It was a serene and surreal setting

Verse 39

Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

*Ever-practical Martha warns Jesus that Lazars would stink by now, since 4 days had passed and decay had probably begun.

Verse 40

Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

*Jesus says - didn't I tell you....

Verse 41 and 42

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

*Jesus looks up to His Father and thanks Him for hearing His prayer.

*Jesus prayed aloud so that those gathered around would believe in Him and truly know who He was.

Verse 43

And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

*Jesus actually shouted for Lazarus to come out of the tomb.

Verse 44

And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

*Pastor Jon concluded by returning to the Green Cathedral at Wesley Woods where, as a teenager, he asked Jesus into his heart and unwrapped the 'graveclothes' of sin and became alive in Jesus Christ.

*Lazarus' story will continue next week!

Good questions and good discussion followed.

How wonderful it was to see everyone again!

Goodnight, everybody!