

“He whom You Love is Sick”

I. **INTRO:**

- A. **Death**, the last thing we want to talk about. It makes us uncomfortable, awkward, painful, so emotional. We’ve medically learned to **postpone** it, even **tame** its violence, but death is still there waiting for us. Death always waits.
1. It comes after **Celebrities**: as it did Farrah Facett & Michael Jackson this week.
 2. It comes after **Christian Relief Workers** persecuted for their faith: as it did German nurses in training in Yemen. (Rita Stump; Anita Gruenwald; & Eom Young-sun)
 3. It comes after **Family & Friends**: as it did...
- B. **This morning**, let’s try to pull back the veil & look at this mystery in the account of a man *raised from the dead*, the man *back from beyond* - by the only One who has conquered death, Jesus Christ.
1. Let’s watch & learn from Jesus as He tenderly ministers to His grieving friends

II. **TIMING IS EVERYTHING!**

- A. **TIMING!** (1-16)
- B. This is Jesus **7th & last & most spectacular sign** in the gospel of John.
1. It is climatic because it illustrates beyond doubt Jesus’ power to **give life & triumph over death**.
- C. Jesus **gives life** only by **giving His life!**
1. The **raising** of Lazarus leads directly to the **death** of Jesus (see vs.53)
 2. It is only at **the cost of life** that He **gives life**.
 3. **It is in this sense that the illness of lazarus is for the glory of God** (4).
 - a) Jonathan Edwards said, “The object of all things is **God’s glory**; & when God gets His glory - God’s people get their joy!”
- D. **The Setting:** In a *sleepy little hamlet* named Bethany 2 miles outside of Jerusalem, where Jesus loved to get R&R at his friends house: *Mary, Martha, & their brother Lazarus*.
1. It was His surrogate home for him in the south.
- E. (6) **God waits** - Was he too busy? - Was He attending to other matters of greater importance? No!
1. **In times of crisis** its essential we understand some important facts about **time & perspective**.

2. Because if you've been a Christian any amount of time you know, w/o a shadow of a doubt "**God is always late!**...according to our standards!"
 - a) Regarding **Time** - Our Lord is never late. He often delays His response, but is never late. His watch is merely set to a different timetable, calibrated to matters of **eternal** rather than *temporal* consequence.¹ [God's delays are not His denials!]
 - b) Regarding **Perspective** - We can adopt either a human or a divine outlook.
 - (1) **Human perspective** focuses on the **urgent** & blurs the **important**.
 - (a) It concentrates on our **immediate** rather than our **ultimate** welfare.
 - (b) It aims at **our temporary good** instead of **God's eternal glory**.
 - (2) **Divine perspective** factors **eternity** into the mysterious equations of life.
 - c) The **Human perspective** pleads "*My will be done, now!*"
 - d) The **Divine perspective** makes its request, then patiently adds, "*Nevertheless, not my will be done, but Yours!*"
- F. Q: Have you checked your *spiritual watch* lately? Q: Is it synchronized with *eternity*?
Q: Is it keeping *His* time - or *your own*?
- G. **God's timing** - God was orchestrating an incredible moment & needed to set the stage!
 1. And since the **corpse** must be **center stage** before this drama can begin, **Jesus must wait** until Lazarus dies before He can make His entrance.
 2. But Mary & Martha can't see backstage in heaven.
 - a) All they can see is an expansive, **black curtain** drawn across their lives.
 - b) They sit at home, despondent, as in an **empty theater**.
- H. **MARTHA & MARY!** (17-37)
 - l. Christ's arrival sparks some reactions in Mary & Martha. We note some similarities & some contrasts.
 1. In verse 20 we see the **contrasts**: **Martha** ran to meet; **Mary** sat in the house.
 2. Every family seems to have an **activist** & a **contemplative**!
 - a) The **Activist** has to do something. He's coming, I'll run to him. "I'll do all the house work, you just sit there Mary", says **Martha Stewart**.
 - b) The **Contemplative** says, I'll just sit here & pray, ponder, think, cry, study, journal, I'll just *feel* this for awhile, says **Mary**.
 - c) **Important** --> *They grieve & mourn differently*...& that's perfectly ok by Jesus! He meets them right where their personality takes them.

¹ Chuck Swindoll; John; pg.60

3. In verse 21 & 32 we see the **similarity** of their initial greetings.
 - a) Although their **words** are the same, their *posture* is not.
 - b) **Martha** runs to him, active & erect; **Mary** falls at His feet, passive & prostrate.
 - c) **Martha** said them to His face; **Mary** cried them at His feet.

4. Here's the noted difference...**Martha** needed *Intellectual* propping up; **Mary** needed *emotional* support!
 - a) **Martha** needed to know **that Jesus was in control**.
 - b) **Mary** needed to know **that Jesus cared**.

5. **How did Jesus handle both of these friends?** Without rebukes or reservations.
 - a) He met each sister where she was, **whether standing or prostrate**; **whether needing intellectual or emotional** support.
 - b) **One evoked theological truths & promises; the other evoked tears!**

6. When my **mother** died when I was 21, & still had 2 younger sisters at home, I approached Jesus like *Martha*, desiring **intellectual** answers, "Why???"

7. When my **father** died I just needed **emotional** support from Jesus.
 - a) **God is in control & He cares!!!**

- J. Many Christians often feel that *bringing glory to God* means putting on a happy face no matter what is happening in our lives.
 1. If we're **sad, angry, confused, or hurting**, we somehow feel that if we don't have these difficult feelings wrapped up neatly in a moments time, we've **betrayed** the faith & put a **blot** on our testimony to Jesus.
 2. **But, not once** did he tell anyone, "**Stop crying!**" Or "**How dare you question Me!**"
 3. When you **grieve**, when you're **confused**, even when you're **angry**, don't try to hide your feelings from God & pretend every thing's alright.
 - a) **He knows you better than that.**
 - b) And since **He is the Truth**...He can handle the truth!!!

- K. (21) We also learn to take our "if's" to Jesus.
 1. How broad the blame we place on "if's" little shoulders!
 - a) "If only we hadn't moved here!" "If only I hadn't married him/her!"
"If only I hadn't listen to her/him!" "If only we had more money!"
 - b) What are your "if only's"? - Take them to Jesus, like Mary & Martha did.
 - (1) **God is in control & He cares!!!**

- L. (24) The **problem** the Jews had with **Jesus resurrection**, **wasn't** because they didn't believe in a resurrection(they did), just not an "*individual*" one.
- M. (25) The plague on George Washington's tomb at his Mount Vernon estate has this verse.
- N. (26) **Shall never die** - for the believer death is no longer death. It introduces him into a new state of life. [**Unbelievers** view death, **it's over!** **Believers** see it, **its only just begun!**]
- O. (27) We must move from "**Lord if**"(21,32) to "**Lord I believe**"(27).
- P. **JESUS!** (33-44)
- Q. Twice Scripture wipes the eyes of Jesus' tears!
1. On a hill looking over Jerusalem, as He weeps **for** the nation. **And**, On the way to a friend's grave, as He weeps with those who grieve.
 2. **What an incredible Savior**. Weeping not just **for** us in our sin, **but with** us in our suffering.
 3. **So strange**, One with **absolute power** would surrender to so small an army as **tears?** But He does!²
 - a) (Ken Gire) **And**, for a beautifully tender moment, we are given the privilege to glimpse one of the most provocative embraces between **deity & humanity** in all the Scriptures.
 4. Thank you Jesus, for giving **dignity** to our grief & **freedom** to our emotions!
 5. Thank you Jesus, for the **beautiful tribute** that tears are to the dead, telling them they were **loved & will be missed!**
 6. Thank you Jesus, you know what it's like to **lose someone you love**.
 7. Thank you Jesus, you know **how I feel!**
 8. Thank you Jesus, you've enabled me to **weep** with **those who weep**.
 - a) *Help me to feel the **pain** they feel, the **uncertainty**, the **fear**, the **heaviness**, the **regret**, the **despondency**.*
 - b) *Help me to share with those who cry out, "**Lord, if You had been there...**" & help them to see that you **were** there, **weeping with them!***
- R. (33) **Weep** = the wailing of mourners.
- S. (35) **Jesus wept** = implies the silent tears of sympathy.
1. But note vs.33 **He groaned in the spirit** - *lit.* **He was enraged in spirit & troubled Himself!!!** (prof. Tasker; Stibbs; Search the Scriptures)
 - a) *I hate **death**. I hate what **sin** has done to My creation. I hate the **distress** to mankind. I hate to watch my children **grieve** so intensely.*

² Ken Gire; Incredible Moments with the Savior; pg.96.

- b) His **anger** was **roused** against the **evil powers of death**, which caused such distress to mankind, & which he was about to conquer here by a mighty display of divine power, & finally on the cross by His own death & resurrection.

T. (38) Jesus comes to the tomb, *that stone testimony of a creation gone tragically awry!*³

1. Again He **grieves**(38)

U. (44) Then, like an eerie scene from the mummy's Tomb, lazarus comes forth - back from beyond. *Kinda creepy!* But what stories he could tell.

V. **Lessons:**

W. When **delay** occurs, God has a **better time** & a **better way**.

X. When **death** occurs, God has a **better plan** & a **better purpose**.

Y. It revealed Jesus is who He said He was - **the Resurrection & the life!** But it revealed something else. **The Tears of God!**

1. **Now which do you say is more incredible?**

a) **A man who raises the dead...or a God who weeps?**

2. **What do you find more amazing?**

a) **The power of Jesus or the emotions of Jesus?**

Z. **End:**

AA. **God** warned **Adam** that disobedience would bring death, **physical death** (the separation of the soul from the body) **and spiritual death** (the separation of the soul from God).

1. Revelation 20:14 calls **hell** *the second death*, that is **eternal death**.

BB. **What sinners dead to God's ways need is not: education, medicine, morality, or religion; they need new life** in Jesus Christ.

CC. When dead sinners hear the voice of the Son of God (the Word) and believe, they are given eternal life. To reject that Word is to be dead forever.

DD. **Keep in mind that salvation is not a set of rules; it is life. This life is a Person - J.C.**

³ Chuck Swindoll; John; pg.61