

Sermon Title: **Lazarus' Best Friend**

Written: March 23, 2017

Preached: March 26, 2017 at Waterville FBC

Vessel: Russ LaFlamme

Scripture Reference: **John 11:1-45**

Thesis: **In what first appeared to be indifference to the dying of Jesus' friend I turns out instead to be a great opportunity to build the faith of Jesus' disciples;**

Purpose: **We will see the importance of growing in our faith and trusting Jesus.**

Key Word: **"Jesus' Power"**

Key Points:

1. Jesus Has a Plan
 2. Jesus Has Compassion
 3. Jesus Has the Power
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I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **John 11:1:-45**

A) The Setting:

1) **Do you ever get discouraged?**

- (a) Do you ever feel like there is nothing you can do to change the circumstances you are facing?
- (b) Do you ever feel so defeated that a loss is so inevitable that you are ready to concede?
- (c) Have you ever felt that no one cares about your problems, even God?

2) **How about Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha?**

- (a) Do you think when Jesus failed to come and heal their brother that they felt that it was all over?
- (b) That it was too late to do anything except cry?
- (c) That Jesus the Son of God had let them down?
- (d) That maybe just a little they were angry at Jesus?

3) **This is another familiar story that many of you heard as children.**

- (a) So, what is there for us to learn or say that hasn't already been said?
- (b) Maybe nothing, maybe something that you never considered; but let's ask God to use His Spirit to open our minds and hearts to hear what He wants us to hear this morning.
- (c) This is a long reading; but necessary to grasp the full picture of what is happening.

4) **Let us see the story for ourselves with our scripture reading in John 11:1:-45.**

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

1) **Superbowl LI, Patriots vs the Atlanta Falcons was a game for the ages.**

- (a) People will be talking about this game for decades.
- (b) Halfway through the 3rd quarter down by a score of 28 to 3 no one in the real world thought they could come back to win.
- (c) I should mention that in 50 years of Superbowls no one team had come back from more than a 10-point deficit to win the game.
- (d) After deflategate, after a lengthy court battle, a Million dollar fine to the team and a loss of a first-round draft pick topped off by a 4-game suspension for Brady it all came down to a third of a football game down by 25 points.
- (e) In the first overtime Superbowl, the Patriots get the ball first and march down the field to score the winning touchdown.

2) **For the first two and a half quarters of the game, the Atlanta Falcons owned the Patriots.**

- (a) They were young, faster, executed plays with precision and seemingly at will.
- (b) What I believe this young inexperienced team forgot is that the game is a 60-minute game, more of a marathon than a sprint.
- (c) They came out fired up and burned up all their energy in the first half of the game.

- (d) In the end, they slowed down and tired unable to keep up with the older more disciplined and conditioned athletes on the field.
- 3) **There are so many lessons that can be taken from a game like this.**
 - (a) Don't give up until you have finished the game.
 - (b) Often those who persist the longest and who are the best prepared will win in the game.
- 4) **I can rewatch this game now without all the angst because I know how it will turn out.**
 - (a) Isn't that true for us as Christians?
 - (b) We have been given God's Word and we know how the story ends.
 - (c) We have no need for a lot of angst because we know where we are going and who is in charge.
- 5) **I think this is true for Jesus in our story today.**
 - (a) The events that were going on were not something that Jesus had no clue were happening.
 - (b) It did not take Him by surprise.
 - (c) In what first appears to be indifference to the dying of Jesus' friend it turns out instead to be a great opportunity to build the faith of Jesus' disciples.
 - (d) It is also a great lesson we use to see the importance of growing in our faith and trusting Jesus.

TS: **So, let's begin by first acknowledging that . . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **Jesus has a Plan**

- 1) **Mary, Martha and Lazarus were like family to Jesus.**
 - (a) They fully understood who Jesus was and worshipped Him as voiced by Martha in verse 27 saying, "**Yes Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.**"
 - (b) They had witnessed many of his miracles and heard much of His teaching.
 - (c) Mary had been the one to wipe Jesus' feet with expensive perfume wiping them off with her hair.
 - (d) Now word comes that one that Jesus loved was very ill.
- 2) **When word was sent to Jesus that Lazarus had fallen ill Jesus seemed to ignore the urgent request to come.**
 - (a) But Jesus shows that He knows what is happening stating that this had happened "**that this sickness would not lead to Lazarus' death, rather it was an opportunity to glorify God.**"
 - (b) And yet, Jesus waited 2 more days.
- 3) **Jesus was now a wanted man in Judea and the Jewish religious leaders were out to take Him down.**
 - (a) Was Jesus so out of touch that he did not know that Lazarus was dying?
 - (b) Did He not want to prevent the pain and suffering of His closest friends who were seeing their brother die?
- 4) **I have told you before that I think Lazarus was special.**
 - (a) He was the man of the house and would normally have assumed the head of household.
 - (b) Yet, we find him living with his two sisters who seem to be clearly in charge.
 - (c) We have no recorded words for Lazarus even after Jesus calls Him from the grave.
 - (d) Jesus loved Lazarus as He loves any of His children.
- 5) **Jesus clearly shows that He has a plan here.**
 - (a) It is a plan that will glorify God.
 - (b) It is a plan that will build the faith of His followers before they have to see Him executed on the cross.

TS: **The next thing I want us to see is that . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **Jesus has Compassion**

- 1) **Jesus shows great compassion.**
 - (a) Even facing the threat of death Jesus determines to make the trip.
 - (b) His disciples know this as voiced by Thomas who says, "**Let us go with Him that we might die with Him.**"
- 2) **When Jesus says, it is time to go he says that he needs to go and waken Lazarus.**
 - (a) His disciples say won't he just wake up on his own?
 - (b) And Jesus has to tell them plainly that Lazarus has now died.
- 3) **When Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been dead for 4 days.**
 - (a) The family is in mourning with Martha and Mary showing their disappointment that Jesus did not come before this happened.
 - (b) Mary didn't even leave her house to meet Jesus.
- 4) **When Jesus is taken to the tomb where they have laid the body of Lazarus he sees all the sadness and tears and begins to weep Himself.**
 - (a) Jesus knows what is going to happen and that Lazarus will be set free.
 - (b) So, why is he crying?
 - (c) I believe it is because of the compassion that Jesus felt towards the pain of all His friends.
- 5) **Jesus feels our pain and understands what we are going through.**
 - (a) But like a parent who has to sometime allow their child to experience a bad choice even though it is painful to see the suffering we know that they have to learn for themselves.
 - (b) But when the train wrecks and disaster strikes a loving parent is there to share their tears and offer their compassion and support.
- 6) **Jesus comforts Martha in verses 23-26 telling her that, "Your brother will rise again."**
 - (a) She thinks Jesus is talking about the general resurrection that will take place at the end of days when Jesus establishes His earthly kingdom.
 - (b) But Jesus reminds her that he, "**is the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?**"
 - (c) That is the million-dollar question.

TS: **We all have to ask ourselves do we believe that . . .**

C) Key Point #3: **Jesus has the Power**

- 1) **Do we really believe that Jesus can do what he says he can do?**
 - (a) Do we trust Him to keep His promises and Word?
 - (b) Are we willing to trust that God is in ALL our circumstances and cares about our hurts?
- 2) **Jesus makes sure that Mary and Martha and the disciples are all there to witness the power of this event.**
 - (a) He looks up to heaven and raises His voice so all can hear His prayer, saying,
 - (b) "**Father, I thank you for having heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.**"
- 3) **This even more than any other up to this time in Jesus' ministry will show that He has the POWER over death.**
 - (a) The grave is no match for him.
 - (b) Our enemy, DEATH is the penalty of SIN; but Jesus came to defeat our enemy and grant eternal life.

- 4) **Jesus raises His voice even louder and cries out, "Lazarus, come out!"** (Vs 43)
 - (a) I am sure with the tomb opened that it took Lazarus a few minutes to appear at the entrance.
 - (b) After all he had been wrapped almost like a mummy in grave clothes.
- 5) **I bet you could have heard a pin drop as the crowd looked on in horror!**
 - (a) What was this mad man doing?
 - (b) Calling a decayed body from the grave?
 - (c) I am sure this would have been a camp fire story used for centuries.
- 6) **I heard this passage being discussed on the radio one day and I remember that one of the commentators asked the others on the program why Jesus called forth Lazarus by name?**
 - (a) He said that had Jesus not have specified that all the dead bodies would have come forth . . .
 - (b) Jesus has that kind of power.
 - (c) And Jesus has the power to raise all those who have died in the past before us as well as anyone who will die in the future.

TS: **So, what is for us to learn here this morning?**

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

A) **Jesus has a plan**

- 1) God has a plan for everyone and wants to work out that plan if we will let him.
- 2) **"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."** (Philippians 1:6)
- 3) **It may seem like time is running out and that it is too late to win the game.**
 - (a) But with God it is never too late as long as you are breathing on this side of eternity.
 - (b) Sometimes we think God is taking too long to answer our request; but God has a plan.
 - (c) **"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."** (2 Peter 3:9)

B) **Jesus cares**

- 1) Jesus knows when you are hurting and feels your pain.
- 2) **"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you"** (1 Peter 5:7-9)
- 3) **"Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him."** (Psalm 103:13)

C) **Jesus has the power**

- 1) We need to remember that God has the power to meet all our needs when we need it and when he doesn't seem to meet a need, we need to trust that He is working it out.
- 2) **"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; ⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct^[a] your paths."** (Proverbs 3:5-6)
- 3) **Jesus has the POWER over death and offers eternal life to all those who will allow HIM to become the Lord of your life.**
 - (a) All we need to do is acknowledge that Jesus died in our place for our sins and therefore owns the rights to our will.
 - (b) If we confess our need to change and ask, He will send His Spirit to begin the process of preparing us for the next life.
 - (c) It may mean a little suffering in this life; but nothing compared to the glory of the next life.
 - (d) Have you put your faith and trust in Jesus?

IV) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**

Zondervan 2005 Pastor's Annual, T.T. Crabtree, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984,2004, pp. 333-335