

John's Gospel is a selective, Spirit-led narrative written with an intentional purpose: "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31, NKJV). Chapter 11 is one of the most profound sign-miracles John includes—a preview of resurrection power that affirms Jesus' divine authority and His personal love for people. The raising of Lazarus is not only a testimony of Jesus' power over death, but it also reveals His deep empathy, His timing, and the call to believe in the midst of sorrow.

1. The Setting: Love in the Waiting (John 11:1–6)

"Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha." (John 11:1)

Bethany, a village near Jerusalem, was home to a family deeply loved by Jesus. John notes that this was "the town of Mary," giving us a glimpse into her influence and character. Mary was the worshiper, Martha the server, and Lazarus the friend—each had a personal relationship with Christ.

"Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, 'Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.'" (John 11:3)

The request is tender, not demanding. They didn't tell Jesus what to do; they simply informed Him of the need. This is faith—not trying to control God, but trusting in His care. When we pray, we are not informing an unaware God, nor do we manipulate Him; we appeal to the One who already loves and knows.

"When Jesus heard that, He said, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God...'" (v. 4)

Jesus immediately frames this event with purpose. The delay was not indifference but design. He stayed two more days, not out of negligence, but because a greater glory would come. Love sometimes waits. Jesus' delay was not a denial, but part of a greater plan to reveal God's glory through resurrection.

Application: When God delays, don't misinterpret His timing as lack of care. Sometimes His love withholds the immediate to prepare for the miraculous.

2. The Journey and the Call to Believe (John 11:7–16)

"Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to Him, 'Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?'" (vv. 7–8)

The disciples respond with fear. Going back to Judea was dangerous. But Jesus walks with confidence in the Father's timing—He says there are "twelve hours in the day" (v. 9). He is not reckless, but He will not cower before opposition.

"Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.'" (v. 11)

Death for a believer is called "sleep" not because of soul sleep—a doctrine Scripture does not support—but because the physical body lies in rest, awaiting resurrection. The spirit of the believer is immediately with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8).

"Then Jesus said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe.'" (vv. 14–15)

Jesus frames this tragedy as a training ground for belief. He doesn't rejoice in death, but in what God will reveal through it. God uses even loss to deepen our faith.

Application: What seems like an unanswered prayer may actually be an invitation to witness a deeper revelation of Christ.

3. The Encounter with Martha and Mary (John 11:17–37)

"Now Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.'" (v. 21)

Martha expresses her pain, not in disbelief, but in sorrow. Like many of us, she believed Jesus could have prevented the crisis—but she wasn't yet ready for what He was about to do.

"Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said... 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'" (vv. 23–24)

Martha believed in a future resurrection. But Jesus brings that future hope into the present moment:

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life... Do you believe this?'" (vv. 25–26)

This is the heart of John 11. Jesus is not merely a teacher of truth—He is the resurrection itself. He offers not just a doctrine, but Himself. Life—eternal, spiritual, and unending—is found in Him alone.

"She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God...'" (v. 27)

This confession is powerful. Martha believed, even before the miracle. Her faith was in the person of Jesus, not just in what He could do.

Application: In suffering, Jesus draws near to reveal more of Himself. He does not always remove our pain, but He meets us in it with truth and compassion.

4. The Grief of Jesus and the Love of God (John 11:28–37)

"Jesus wept." (v. 35)

These two words reveal His heart. Jesus didn't weep because Lazarus was gone—He knew He would raise him. He wept because He was moved by the sorrow of those He loved. He feels our grief. The Creator of life stood before the tomb and cried—not in weakness, but in love.

Hebrews 4:15 tells us we have a High Priest who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Jesus is not distant from our suffering. He is present, emotional, and moved by our tears.

Application: We don't grieve alone. Jesus shares in our sorrows and walks with us in our most broken places.

5. The Miracle: Resurrection Power (John 11:38–44)

"'Take away the stone.' Martha... said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.'" (v. 39)

Even after her confession of faith, Martha hesitated. This reminds us that faith is not the absence of doubts, but the decision to trust despite them.

"'Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?'" (v. 40)

The condition is clear: belief precedes sight. Faith is the key to seeing God's glory. Jesus prayed aloud—not for His own sake—but that others might believe.

"Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!'" (v. 43)

And Lazarus obeyed. The power of Christ's word reached into death and called forth life. This is the same power that raises us from spiritual death today (Eph. 2:1).

"Loose him, and let him go." (v. 44)

Jesus not only raises us from death—He also frees us from the graveclothes of sin, fear, and condemnation. The Christian life is both resurrection and release.

Application: Jesus doesn't only want to save us from death—He wants to set us free to live.

6. The Response: Belief and Opposition (John 11:45–57)

Some believed. Others went to report Jesus to the religious leaders, who saw His miracles as a threat to their power:

"If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him..." (v. 48)

They feared the loss of influence more than they loved the truth. Caiaphas, the high priest, unknowingly prophesied:

"...It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people..." (v. 50)

This statement, meant politically, was fulfilled prophetically. Jesus did die for the nation—yet not for Israel only, "but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad" (v. 52). Jesus' death would purchase salvation for all who respond to Him in faith.

Conclusion: Eternal Life is in Christ

John 11 is not just about Lazarus. It's about Jesus. It's about the power of life in the midst of death, and the invitation to believe in the One who is the Resurrection and the Life. It teaches us:

- Jesus may delay, but He is never late.
- Jesus cares deeply and personally.
- Jesus is the source of eternal life, and that life begins now.
- We are called to trust even before we see the outcome.

Personal Reflection Questions

1. Do I trust God's timing, even when He delays?
2. In my sorrow, do I believe that Jesus is present and compassionate?
3. Have I placed my faith in Jesus not just as a teacher, but as the Resurrection and the Life?
4. Am I still bound in "graveclothes" that Jesus wants to remove?
5. Will I respond to His call today and live free?