

# Jesus Wept:

## *Setting our Minds on Eternal Things*

*John 11:1-37*

**John 11:1** Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

<sup>2</sup> It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill.

<sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love (*phileo*) is ill."

<sup>4</sup> But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

<sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved (*agapao*) Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

<sup>6</sup> So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

<sup>7</sup> Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

<sup>8</sup> The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?"

<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. KEY

<sup>10</sup> But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

<sup>11</sup> After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him."

<sup>12</sup> The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."

<sup>13</sup> Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep.

<sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died,

<sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

<sup>16</sup> So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

<sup>17</sup> Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

<sup>18</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off,

<sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.

<sup>20</sup> So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.

<sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. grief and of faith

<sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

<sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

<sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

<sup>27</sup> She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

<sup>28</sup> When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you."

<sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him.

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.

<sup>31</sup> When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep (*klaiō*) there.

<sup>32</sup> Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

<sup>34</sup> And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."

<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept (*dakruō*).

<sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, "See how he loved (*phileo*) him!"

<sup>37</sup> But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

## **The Worst Thing that Could Happen?**

What is the worst thing that can happen to a person? Answers given might depend on who you ask. If you could ask Elianna (my one year old), assuming she would talk to you (she doesn't yet want to say anything), she might say it is not being able to have my bottle of milk when I want it. Such is the world of an infant. An older kid might say it is being picked on by bullies at school. Children don't tend to think very far into the future; all that matters is right here and right now. A person exasperated by the present political climate might tell you it would be to be kidnapped and forced at gunpoint to watch every political advertisement repeatedly for a month. This may actually be close to the truth. A more contemplative answer might be being tortured or watching your loved ones die a brutal death.

Is there such a thing as the worst thing that can happen to a person? The answer is, yes. Is the answer purely subjective? The answer is, no. There is one thing that can happen to you that is not a joke, lasts much longer than torture, and which directly affects not only your mind (as in when a loved one dies), but your body as well. It is death, but I'm not talking about physical death, which is what most people are afraid of. I'm talking about **spiritual death**, a second death, a kind of torment of body and soul that lasts forever and ever. Keep this idea tucked away as I tell you the following story.

## **Rich Man and Lazarus**

In **Luke 16:19-31**, Jesus tells the curious story of two men that die. One is an unnamed rich man who had everything he wanted in this life. The other is a poor man, covered in sores whose only desire was to be fed the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. This man's name is Lazarus. The story is famous.

One day the poor man Lazarus dies. He is carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom (*kolpos*).<sup>1</sup> Abraham's

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<sup>1</sup> This word appears six times in the NT. Two are in this parable. One instance refers to a bay of water (**Acts 27:39**). One refers to someone's lap (**Luke 6:38**). One refers to Jesus

bosom is a metaphor of being close to Abraham, as a child on the lap/bosom (**Luke 6:38**) of the father is close to his daddy. When they died, Abraham was supposed to take care of his children. Jews conceived of the reward of the righteous dead as a sharing in a banquet given by Abraham. The expression goes back to the ancient practice of reclining and eating meals in proximity to other guests, the closest of whom physically was said to lie on the bosom (chest) of the host. This is curious in light of story where Lazarus wants only to eat the crumbs from the table of the rich man.<sup>2</sup>

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at the bosom of the Father (**John 1:18**). And one refers to the “disciple whom Jesus loved” being at the bosom of Jesus (**John 13:23**). Early conceptions of this bosom of Abraham are in **4 Macc 13:17**; **ApocZeph 9:2, 11:1-2**; **TAb A 20:14**.

<sup>2</sup> In the NT, other than Jesus, there are only two people said to be in the bosom of another in the NT: Lazarus here, and “disciple whom Jesus loved” being in the bosom of Jesus at the meal before the Passover in **John 13**. Curiously, many have made a compelling case that the disciple whom Jesus loved is none other than the Lazarus Jesus raised from the dead in John 11. Lists of those who take this view are found in Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple*, 185–92 and Culpepper, n. 32. See also Ben Witherington, *What Have They Done with Jesus?* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006), 141–56; “Was Lazarus the Beloved Disciple,” presented at the SBL 2006, <http://benwitherington.blogspot.com/2007/01/was-lazarus-beloved-disciple.html>. (Cited in Köstenberger here: <http://www.biblicalfoundations.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/40-Disciple-Jesus-Loved.pdf>); J. Phillips, *The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 2010). [https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:ei\\_pGJCTz8UJ:www.tshuva.us/PDF/the-disciple-whom-jesus-loved.pdf+&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESjMIW17GZQ\\_ug\\_8nPoJusfSX39OYe4W6BpCwDAvubqeoWXbJUCO-yx7EBIRc3p0fQ9ZEppNBvvr8uJRVaDQlpvk-NrdAAFVAm2xUcQMhDP1dvsQXt1Z1DM1MakYpbeo3KMhCxt&sig=AHIEtbSTBxBI9BXN5aERAQecb2NyZtg-BQ](https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:ei_pGJCTz8UJ:www.tshuva.us/PDF/the-disciple-whom-jesus-loved.pdf+&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESjMIW17GZQ_ug_8nPoJusfSX39OYe4W6BpCwDAvubqeoWXbJUCO-yx7EBIRc3p0fQ9ZEppNBvvr8uJRVaDQlpvk-NrdAAFVAm2xUcQMhDP1dvsQXt1Z1DM1MakYpbeo3KMhCxt&sig=AHIEtbSTBxBI9BXN5aERAQecb2NyZtg-BQ)

At any rate, the rich man also dies and goes to **Hades** where he finds himself in torment. The torment is described as “**anguish in flame**” (**Luke 16:24**). Hades is often confused with **Gehenna** (the lake of fire, named after the Valley of Hinnom, which empties into the Valley of Rephaim). Perhaps this is because here, Hades is said to have **flames**. There were a lot of speculations about the place of the dead by the Jews, but basically Hades boils down to being a place of waiting for final judgment. The righteous were said to be refreshed with a spring of water while they await the joys of paradise.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, the wicked were not so fortunate.

The rich man sees Abraham far off across a great chasm, yet he is able to speak to him. Curiously, he asks Abraham to send Lazarus over to dip the end of his finger in **water** to cool his tongue. Abraham tells him that he already received good things and Lazarus received bad thing. Lazarus is now comforted, but you are in anguish. Besides, Lazarus is no more able to cross this chasm than is anyone else in this mysterious place of the dead.

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Bauckham, "Hades, Hell" in vol. 3, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 14.

This is where the story gets very interesting. The rich man asks Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house where his five brothers are so that he can **warn them**, lest they also come into this place of torment (**Luke 16:27**). If Lazarus is dead and the man's brothers are *not* dead, then he is asking Abraham to somehow bring Lazarus back from the dead, which he actually says at the end of the story (**vs. 30**). While it is rightly pointed out that Abraham's response foreshadows Jesus' resurrection, it is rarely notice that it may also foreshadow (prophecy) the resurrection of someone else in the Bible. Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them ... if they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (**vv. 29, 31**). Who else might this someone be? Let us turn to our story in John 11.

## Signs and Faith

John 2-11 could rightly be called *The Book of Signs*. There are **seven signs** in this section of the Gospel of John. These signs are all performed by Jesus. He changes water into wine (**2:11**); heals the royal official's son (**4:54**); heals a paralytic (**5:1-18**); feeds 5000 (**6:14**); walks on

water (6:16-24); heals a blind man (9:1-7), and finally, raises his beloved friend Lazarus from the dead (11:47). In light of our previous discussion, how curious is it that the only named person to be raised to life other than Jesus is Lazarus?

John's Gospel is also characterized by seven sayings usually called the "I AM" sayings of Jesus: I am the Bread of Life (6:35); the Light of the World (8:12); the Gate or Door (10:9); the Good Shepherd (10:11); the Resurrection and the Life (11:25); the Way the Truth and the Life (14:6), and the True Vine (15:1). We have seen four of these. John 11 introduces us to the fifth, which revolves around this whole idea of death and life and resurrection of Lazarus. How does a person get life? As we have seen many times now, it is through faith in Jesus Christ.

Consider then the curious relationship to what Abraham tells the rich man regarding belief/faith and the function of signs in relation to belief in the Gospel of John (cf. 2:23; 4:48; 6:30; 7:31; 12:37). Though the word "believe" is not in the *Rich Man and Lazarus* story, all of the elements of it are present: hearing (especially a warning), listening and being persuaded (of the good



news), and **repenting** (of sin). In John's gospel, sometimes belief is spurious (false). Other times it seems quite real. Whatever the response of the people was, we are told explicitly at the very end of the book that these signs were in fact performed so that people **might believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Then it adds these important words, "that believing you may have **life in His Name**" (John 20:30-31).

## **Jesus and his Beloved Friends**

All of this leads us now to consider the story of Lazarus in John 11. We will not look at the entire story today, but will go through **vs. 37**, just before the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus begins. The focus will be on Lazarus' death and the response that the people have to death and to Jesus in relation to life and death in it. I will call special attention to the brilliant way John brings you the reader into the story to make you feel as if you were there.

I asked you about the worst thing that can happen to a person because of how the people and Jesus react to Lazarus' death and Jesus' teaching on resurrection. As we make our way through this, I hope to make one thing

abundantly clear: Jesus is concerned about our inability or unwillingness to think beyond the temporary to that which is eternal. In fact, it caused him deep angst and indeed outrage in his spirit. It caused him to weep silent tears, even as he wept over Jerusalem and those who killed the prophets. Americans and American Christians are simply not concerned about the things they ought to be concerned about. We are obsessed about almost everything *but* this. It is likely that to some degree, this includes you as well. If you are not moved by the things you hear and see today from our Lord, if it does not cause you to reconsider that which is important in life, then your soul is in peril.

The story introduces us to a family of three siblings: Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. It tells us of all three that Jesus “loved” them. The story uses the word *agapaō* (unconditional love) for the three together (5) and *phileō* (brotherly love) for Lazarus specifically (3, 36). In other words, this is not a story of Jesus merely showing unconditional love to random people, as he does throughout his ministry. This is a story of Jesus’ beloved friends. Indeed, when the news comes to him about Lazarus, he isn’t even introduced by name, but simply as

“he whom you love” (3). This (young?) man was an extremely close friend of our Lord, so close that he needs no introduction to Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

**Vs. 2** introduces us to a story that will be told in the next chapter, but which seems to be so familiar to the readers that it needs no introduction. Indeed, it appears to be told in all four gospels (**Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-50<sup>5</sup>; John 12:1-8**). It is the story of **Mary anointing the LORD with ointment** and wiping his feet with her hair. The purpose of mentioning it here is to instill a deeper sympathy for just how important these friends were to our Lord. He loved them, all three of them! Mary will talk to Jesus later.

Next comes the twist in the story. **Lazarus is ill**. The news reaches Jesus who has returned to the place of his baptism, north of Jerusalem, in Galilee, east of the Sea

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<sup>4</sup> It is this comparison between “he whom you love is sick” and the introduction of “the disciple Jesus loved” later in the book that is a key link in the idea that Lazarus is the original author of these stories that in all likelihood his comrade and friend the Apostle John later edited, added to, and put into book form. I find this theory extremely interesting. See note 6 for bibliography.

<sup>5</sup> Luke’s story appears to be a different story, but it is possible Luke has simply rearranged his material to fit some theological point he is trying to make. Perhaps because Luke knows he has taken the story out of its chronological place is the reason he skips telling it between Luke 22:2 and 3 where it belonged chronologically. It should be pointed out that Luke does not actually tell us where the story took place (some assume it was in the city of Nain, but this is merely an assumption).

(John 10:40). This is about 75 miles from Bethany and Jerusalem, where Lazarus is ill or to put it another way, about a four day journey. We will see the importance of this in a moment.

## The Purpose of Lazarus' Illness and the Use of Ambiguous Language

After Jesus is told that the one whom he loves is ill, Jesus makes the astonishing claim, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God so that the Son of God may be glorified through it” (11:4). The statement “This illness does not lead to death” is pivotal. It allows Jesus to introduce the purpose of the illness, the purpose of the miracle. It also allows for John to introduce the reason why there ends up being a lot of miscommunication on the part of those Jesus talks to, which itself is a way of showing the complete lack of a correct stance towards Lazarus' death. To that end, it is a well crafted, timely statement for you the reader, for it pulls you in and helps you identify with the confusion they all had when Jesus spoke. Let's think on a couple of these for a moment.

### *The Glory of God*

The purpose of the illness: Why did Lazarus get sick? Jesus is interested in something it will teach you about God, namely his glory. Jesus says it is **for the glory of God**. Then he says it is so that the Son of God may be glorified through it. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. As **John Piper** has noticed, we best glorify God **when we enjoy him**, for it is not two ends in mind (to glorify and then to enjoy), but one end. To give glory to God and to Jesus is to **honor him**, to praise him, to worship him because it is due him. He deserves it. So the chief function, according to Jesus, of this illness and what happens here is so that you might honor and praise the Son for his mighty works. If you think that is impractical, then you simply fail to grasp the essence of your existence. This is what you were created to do. You need to stop thinking about yourself, and start thinking about Jesus. Or better, you need to think about yourself in relation to Jesus. **I'll have more to say about this later on.**

But there is something else here. It isn't just us glorifying God. It is **God glorifying himself**. I said this earlier in the book, but it needs to be said again here. God's chief end is to glorify himself. Now, this is not a

selfish thing, when you understand this glory that God gives himself to be relating to the persons in the Godhead. It is not that the Father is glorifying himself, but that the Father is glorifying *the Son* and that the Son is glorifying *the Father* and the Spirit glorifies them *both* and so on (**John 1:14; 5:23; 17:14**, etc). In **John 9:3** another sign was given so that “**the works of God might be displayed**” in Christ. This is God’s glory, his self-revelation and exaltation. It is the Father glorifying his Son through the works. When the Father honors the Son, God is gaining great glory for himself. He is displaying his glory through the Son (and later, the Spirit). What an amazing relationship they have together. What treasures are there for you to discover, secrets that will help you fulfill your very purpose in life. See the way the triune persons interact and treat one another, and you will discover the secret to living with others and the secret to worship. For when God does this, then you are able to respond appropriately by also honoring that which God is honoring and glorifying.

### *Ambiguous Language*

Let us focus now on the statement “**This illness does not lead to death.**” Confusion arises here in the minds of

the hearers, because Jesus is **intentionally ambiguous**, and he will continue to be so for several verses. What does this mean? Does Jesus mean not to worry because Lazarus will not die? As you read the story, a tension comes in your own mind. Lazarus does in fact die. Does Jesus not know the future? Could Jesus possibly be mistaken? In getting you to ask these questions, you are drawn in deeper to help you identify personally with the confusion that existed in the minds of Jesus' apostles, disciples, and friends in the story. It is a tricky but helpful way of keeping you from saying to yourself, "**I'm not as dense as they are**," because you yourself end up coming to the wrong conclusion, at least as the story unfolds. A sensitive soul will recognize how true this is of himself. You are no different than the disciples.

The fact that Lazarus dies brings yet more conflict to the reader. After reading that Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (5), the very next thing we are told is that when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he **stayed two days longer where he was** (6)! What kind of love is that? **Why does Jesus delay** in going to Lazarus' aid? Is he calloused, aloof, and detached from the suffering of his friends? How foolish! How irresponsible! How self-centered!

How many people when reading this verse have concluded just this, just what Mary and Martha will later tell Jesus, that if he would have come, Lazarus would not be dead. Oh how we fail to grasp the purposes of God.

Even more tension is introduced in **vs. 7**. After this he said to the disciples, “**Let us go to Judea again.**” You want us to go where? The Jews are trying to stone you, and you want to go back there (**8**)? I’ll explain the problem in a moment. Skipping over Jesus’ answer for a moment (**vv. 9-10**), we see even more ambiguity. He tells them that Lazarus has fallen asleep, but that Jesus will go and awaken him (**11**). You the reader may be thinking like the disciples, “**Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover**” (**12**). In other words, he must not be *that* sick if he is resting comfortably, so why risk your life to go all the way back there? Can’t one of his sisters wake him up?

Jesus’ desire to go back there is made all the more strange when they discover that Jesus knows that Lazarus has in fact died (**13-14**; he explains that “sleep” here means “death”, a common enough way of speaking). If Lazarus is dead, then they can’t possibly get back in time to help him, so why risk your life? And by the way, Jesus’ delay was not responsible for Lazarus’ death. If it took



four days to get there, and Lazarus was dead somewhere during Jesus' two day stay, they could have left the minute Jesus heard the news and Lazarus would still have been dead anyway. So why the delay? Not because Jesus is aloof, but so that Lazarus would be dead a full four days, so that no one would possibly mistake the miracle as anything other than a true resurrection, thus making faith all the more reasonable and faithlessness all the more culpable.

But Jesus *has* told them he will **wake the sleeper**—the dead ma—up, but they don't seem to understand what he is talking about. Dead men don't wake up. Who can raise the dead (but see **1 Kings 17:17-24; Kings 4:18-37**)? So they take him literally rather than understanding the common figure of speech. Thomas enters the picture and becomes the paragon/model of bravery and faithlessness. **“Let us also go, that we may die with him” (16).** **“This is all a fool's errand, but we'll go and die with you, Jesus. We're loyal.”** Loyal, but also severely lacking in their faith.

## **Jesus' Deep Angish**

In vs. 17 they arrive in Bethany. Lazarus has been dead for four days. The Jewish funeral is in full swing. Many of the Jews have come to Martha and Mary to console them (19).<sup>6</sup> Martha and Mary hear that Jesus has arrived. Martha is the first to go out. Mary remains in her house (20). Martha asks Jesus the exact same question that Mary will soon ask (compare vs. 21 and 32). “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” She shows great faith in Jesus’ ability to heal the living, but faithlessness in his timing. She adds, “Even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you” (22). Does she know about the resurrections of dead people in the OT? Jesus tells her that Lazarus will rise again (23). Martha affirms her belief (one shared by the Pharisees but not the Saducees) that there will be a resurrection on the last day (24). Jesus’ answers her with another statement that I will skip for a moment (vv. 25-26). In response, Martha confesses “you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world” (27).

Let us now compare this to Mary. Martha calls for Mary (28). Mary rises and comes out to her (29-30).

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<sup>6</sup> This probably means the family was prominent in the community, but it doesn’t necessarily have to mean that.

This is clever and intentional language that we can compare with Lazarus rising and coming out of the tomb next week. The Jews, and this is important, also go with her, for it was their duty to go with her to mourn for her brother at the tomb (31). Mary sees Jesus and makes the identical statement that Martha made, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (32). Next comes the all important verse for today.

“When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled” (33). This same language is used again in vs. 38 after the Jews respond to Jesus with these words, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?” (37). Most of the commentaries say that “deeply moved” is a terrible translation, yet many of the translations have something like this. D.A. Carson translates it this way, “He was outraged in spirit and troubled.”<sup>7</sup> The word “deeply moved” can refer to the snorting of horses<sup>8</sup>, and when applied to humans, almost always suggests anger, outrage, or emotional indignation. But people can’t seem

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<sup>7</sup> The NLT probably comes closest to this, “A deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled.”

<sup>8</sup> The Wycliffe Translation of 1388 has “He made noise in spirit and troblide him silf.”

to figure out what Jesus might be indignant about, so they soften the translation.

Those who offer suggestions think that maybe Jesus is angry over the corrupting, destructive nature of sin. Sin creates death, neither of which were originally present in the Garden of Eden. This is possible. But perhaps it is better to look at the statements of all three (Martha, Mary, and the Jews) “**He would not have died.**” Consider why Jesus would be upset by this. He has been telling people that he will raise Lazarus from the dead, and all anyone wants to talk about is the fact that Jesus could have *kept him* from dying.

I believe this is what Jesus is so angry about. They do not have in mind the glory of God. They do not understand why he delayed. They do not really believe that he can raise dead people. They are focused on the here and now, and not on eternal life. At this point, we need to bring in the two declarations that Jesus made earlier that we have skipped. I skipped them just so we could talk about them in this context of Jesus’ being so upset.

First, **vv. 9-10**. Jesus says, “**Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not**

stumble, because he sees the light of this world.” What is the light of the world? Jesus is (John 8:12). “If anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” Jesus is using the metaphor of daytime to teach a spiritual lesson. “Believe what I say,” he is saying. “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him” (11:11). If you do not, then you are walking in darkness. To be in the light is to understand the light and to believe that it is light. To doubt Jesus’ words or power or ability or desire is to be in darkness. Who among the disciples seems to understand any of this? Instead, they get tripped up in his language, they stumble over the temporary, their eye sight is darkened by their own inability to see beyond the moment.

Second, vv. 25-26. Jesus says to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” This is exactly what the last part of the book explains. Jesus did these things so that you might believe and have life. Martha confesses that she does believe, but Mary has not understood it, I doubt Martha has understood it very well, and the Jews do not yet understand it, and many of

them will reject it. All of this is blindness to the reality of eternal life and eternal death. They are so focused on Lazarus' first death that they think nothing about eternal life and eternal death. They are not rejoicing, as the angels do, over the sinner who turned and followed Christ and is now in Abraham's bosom. They are mourning like pagans. And this makes our Lord indignant. He is absolutely, positively angry like a snorting horse over the human being's failure to grasp the most important things in life: Their own eternal well being which comes through faith in his words and deeds.

In response to these things, our Lord with utter compassion says, "Where have you laid him?" So they showed him (11:34). I say "compassion" because that is exactly what it is. Remember again, these are his beloved friends! And ...

Jesus wept (35).

**John 11:35** is the shortest verse in the Bible, and one of the most profound. Rather than the snorting of a horse, or the mourning of Mary (*klaiō*, vs. 31), this weeping (*dakryō*) of Jesus is the silent flooding of tears of

a man profoundly moved by the things around him. It is emotion combined with mind. Feeling combined with thought.

Why is Jesus weeping? Is he weeping for Lazarus? Probably not. He is about to raise him from the dead. Rather, he is **weeping for the same reason that he is angry**. Perhaps about the effects of sin on the world, perhaps because of Satan's tyranny in the present evil age, because of the very idea of death,<sup>9</sup> but most importantly, because people just aren't moved to consider eternal realities: eternal life and eternal death. These are Jesus' friends, his beloved friends, and even they don't seem to care about such things. As one person has said, **"They have completely misunderstood the nature of death and that of the Person of the Son."**<sup>10</sup> Their thoughts are firmly fixed on earth, not on heaven.

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<sup>9</sup> B. B. Warfield: "It is death that is the object of his wrath, and behind death him who has the power of death, and whom he has come into the world to destroy. Tears of sympathy may fill his eyes, but this is incidental. His soul is held by rage: and he advances to the tomb, in Calvin's words again, 'as a champion who prepares for conflict.' The raising of Lazarus thus becomes, not an isolated marvel, but—as indeed it is presented throughout the whole narrative ...—a decisive instance and open symbol of Jesus' conquest of death and hell. What John does for us in this particular statement is to uncover to us the heart of Jesus, as he wins for us our salvation. Not in cold unconcern, but in flaming wrath against the foe, Jesus smites in our behalf" (*The Person and Work of Christ* [Philadelphia, 1950], p. 117).

<sup>10</sup> Leon Morris, *Gospel of John*, 494.

Jesus' weeping is not some sentimental feeling apart from objective moral outrage, nor is it outrage apart from genuine love which turns only into self-righteous arrogance and irascibility. Our Lord combines both. His is a proper weeping. He is concerned about people and concerned about their station in life. He has not come here to lead a eulogy service to help the people remember all the good things about Lazarus. He has come to raise him from the dead in order to teach people that they can have life through Him. He loves them and feels deeply about them, and yet hates their short-sightedness and lack of care even for their own souls. The fact that people, especially his friends and disciples, are not concerned about the deeper matters of eternal death causes the Lord great consternation. He loves them and does not delight in the eternal death of the wicked, even if he ordains it.

This, then, is what you are confronted with in this part of the story. So I return to the question I posed at the start. What is the worst thing that can happen to a person? The story of the rich man and Lazarus is fascinating for two reasons in this regard. First, **once you die, then you will in fact care about this question. But**



then it will be too late. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day to care about your soul. You must believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and the he holds the keys of death and hades. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, for the keys she holds are able to unlock the very pit of hell, releasing those prisoners within her walls. She does this as the gospel, the good news of Jesus, is proclaimed that he has died for your sins and been raised to life for your justification. He alone holds the power over life and death. Lazarus' resurrection foreshadows a Greater Resurrection soon to come. Do not be like the rich man **in life**, caring only about what you get here and now. Be like him **in death**, caring about your soul today, for you do not want to end up in burning fire with no water to wet your tongue.

Second, it is remarkable to me that **the rich man's counterpart is named Lazarus**. Surely this is not a coincidence. Our Lazarus became a celebrity of sorts, so much so that the Jews sought to kill him (again) after the miracle, because, ironically enough, Abraham did send him back, or rather, Jesus did when he spoke to him and called him back to the realm of matter and flesh. In all probability Lazarus did warn many about that place. **And**

many Jews believed in Jesus because of the sign and Lazarus' testimony. Beloved, consider your souls this hour. Be not carried away by the thrills and delights that this world has to offer if it means you perish in everlasting torment tomorrow. Jesus has conquered death, so that you might have eternal life. Believe in him and confess him with Martha, that you might have eternal life.

May this faith forever go before you, and help to wean you from the things which so easily entangle us here. May your thoughts be on things that are above, and not on things that are below, on things that will last, and not on things that perish. Know that when you do not, your Lord weeps. But know also that he is not changed in his being by you or I and our fickle sins and blindnesses. Rather, it is his **unchangeable being** that provides a way for you to be saved in spite of your continuing persistence in sin as you struggle through this life looking forward to the age to come.