



Turning Water into Wine

John 11:1-57

February 26, 2025, Sugar Land Baptist Church

The Death of Lazarus (11:1-16)

- Word reaches Jesus that Lazarus, “The one you love,” is sick.
 - Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha (see Luke 10:38-41).
 - They lived in Bethany, a town on the east side of the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem.
 - The sisters are counting on Jesus’ love for Lazarus to compel him to action.
- Upon hearing the news, Jesus waits two days before heading to Bethany (v 6-7).
 - He stays where he is not because he is uncaring (v 5) or fearful of the Jewish leaders (v 8), but in accordance with the Father’s plan.
 - Jesus makes a prediction that Lazarus’s sickness will not end in death, but will result in the glorification of God and God’s son (v 4).
 - The glorification of the Son will involve his death (17:1), which this sign will lead to (11:50-53).
- Jesus converses with the disciples (vv 8-16).
 - The disciples are fearful of returning to Jerusalem (v 8).
 - Jesus again speaks of acting while it is daytime (see also 9:4). He has come to do the will of the Father, which includes waking Lazarus from his sleep (v 11).
 - They misunderstand the nature of Lazarus’s condition, so Jesus clarifies that he is dead.
 - Jesus speaks of being glad that they were not there before Lazarus died, so that the disciples may believe – that is grow in their faith and understanding of Jesus’s power.
 - When Jesus says its time to go to Bethany (v 15), Thomas notes that this is likely a journey to their deaths (v 16).

Jesus Comforts Martha and Mary (11:17-37)

- When they arrive in Bethany, they discover that Lazarus has already been in the tomb for four days (v 17).
 - This means that Lazarus died shortly after the messengers departed for Jesus and before Jesus received the news of Lazarus’s sickness.
 - People were buried within 24 hours of their dying.
- The proximity of Bethany to Jerusalem means many Jews from that city had come to comfort Mary and Martha, a pious duty, and will bear witness to this great miracle (vv 45-46).
- Martha, the activist, went to meet Jesus, while Mary, the contemplative, waited at home (v 20).
- Martha’s words to Jesus are probably not critical, merely factual.
 - She knew and trusted Jesus had the ability to heal.
 - Her assertion that God would do whatever Jesus wanted may hint at a belief in Jesus’s ability to resuscitate, but her protest at the tomb (v 39) and her words (v 24) indicate otherwise.
- Martha greets Jesus’s assertion that her brother would rise again with an orthodox response. She, like other Jews of her day, believed in a resurrection on the last day (vv 23-24).
- In response, Jesus utters his fifth “I am” revelation: “I am the resurrection and the life” (v 25).
 - Jesus speaks paradoxically, the one who believes in him will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in him will never die (vv 25-26).

- Jesus's words assure us that there is life beyond death for the believer, and that the eternal life we shall one day know is in a real way ours even before we die.
- When asked if she believes Jesus, Martha gives one of the great confessions of faith in Jesus, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world" (v 27).
- Martha then lets Mary know that Jesus is on the outskirts at the village.
 - The crowd of mourners follows Mary out to Jesus.
 - Mary falls at Jesus's feet and repeats Martha's lament, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."
- Jesus is deeply moved by Mary's grief and the grief of the crowd and he asks to see the tomb (vv 33-34) and joins them in their weeping (v 35).
 - The Greek for "deeply moved" has connotations of anger associated with it.
 - Jesus weeps and is angered over the tyranny of sin in a world that was made good.
 - Jesus's soul is troubled/stirred like the pool of water in John 5:7.
 - The people see Jesus's tears as a sign of Jesus's love for Lazarus, but also question whether Jesus could have done something to prevent Lazarus's death.

Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead (11:38-44)

- Lazarus's tomb prefigures that of Jesus.
- Jesus asks for the stone to be moved away, but Martha protested because of the odor.
- Jesus challenges her to have faith in him so that they may see the glory of God. While no words of trust are uttered, the stone would not have been removed without the sisters' permission.
- Jesus offers a word of public thanksgiving to the Father for hearing his prayer and then commands Lazarus to come out (vv 41-43).
 - Jesus had prophesied that men would hear his voice and come out of their graves (5:28).
 - Augustine once commented that if Jesus had not said Lazarus's name all would have come out of their graves.
 - Immediately, Lazarus came forth, still wrapped in his grave clothes (v 44).
- Jesus commands Lazarus to be freed from the trappings of death (a nice metaphor for those who have been made spiritually alive by Christ and are no longer to be bound by the sins that so easily entangle us).

The Plot to Kill Jesus (11:45-57)

- This last of the seven signs leads many to believe in Jesus (v 45), but also leads the Pharisees and chief priests to call a meeting of the Sanhedrin and begin plotting to kill Jesus.
- These leaders recognize that Jesus is performing "many signs" and that soon enough, "everyone will believe in him" unless they do something.
 - Their concern is not just that he will usurp their leadership.
 - They also fear his power will threaten Rome who will then crack down on them all taking away "both our temple and our nation" (v 48).
- The high priest, Caiaphas, spoke up, repeating a prophecy he had previously made, that Jesus would die, and that his death would serve to bring together the scattered children of God (vv 49-52).
- The Jewish leaders begin looking for a way to kill Jesus. Jesus removes himself from public view into the wilderness. This brings the "Book of Signs" to a close. The rest of the book focuses on the passion of Christ.