

Sermon

Feb 22, 2026

John 11:1-44 The raising of Lazarus

Over the past few weeks, we have been hearing about the signs that Jesus performed. The sign in today's reading was his last and most controversial at that time. Jesus loved Lazarus, but yet when his family summoned Jesus to come. . . he delayed his return. If Mary and Martha knew then that he was delaying his trip, they would have likely been angry because they believed that Jesus could heal their brother, and his friend. However, Jesus knew where his story was to end and that this new sign was needed for God to be glorified.

This last sign of raising Lazarus from the dead was very symbolic, but first of all, it set things in motion. The Pharisee's and other leaders were beginning to fear Jesus's power and the news of Him raising someone from the dead spread quickly, far and wide. How much power could someone like that wield??? Many thought some of his signs were magic tricks or not true stories of those healed, but raising someone from the dead? Have you ever watched one of the "crusades" on TV with an evangelist and when he supposedly heals someone of their affliction, we figure that it was staged in some way and not really real? Would we think different if someone walked into a funeral home and ordered someone out of a casket that we knew was dead? That would be very powerful. We'd probably either faint or head to a bar!!!! Or as Mike said, probably faint, then get up and go to the bar!!

I'm sure that many in attendance today have seen a person die. There can be traumatic events, but most witnessed deaths have probably occurred while watching a loved one die on hospice. Throughout my 40 year nursing career, I have had the privilege of being part of teams who have brought someone back from a situation that had temporarily cost them their life. Since I was a cardiac nurse, the causes were usually related to an acute cardiac event such as a myocardial infarction or heart attack, which caused their heart to go into a lethal heart rhythm abnormality. I was part of the team who identified loss of pulse and/or breath. We then used technology and research to follow steps to restore breath, a beating heart, and thus life. . . .physical life. I have renewed my CPR and Advance Cardiac Life Support training every 2 years, so I have had certain skills to use, but I never felt like I had power over death. In healthcare we often do everything we can, but a life just can't be saved.

Often during these "code" situations, I would make sure that someone was with or talking to the family. I've always had a lot of empathy and I would sense the family's anxiety and fear. It was hard for them to be outside the room not knowing what was happening. I could imagine them feeling like Mary and Martha as they prayed for healing and continued life for their loved one, but also calling out to Jesus/God and wondering where he was. Have there been times in your life when you called out to God, but wondered if he heard you? If he cared? Has a loved one had a serious diagnosis, but they still died even though you prayed for God to heal them? Maybe one reason why Jesus wept when he saw Mary and Martha weeping, was because he could feel their pain. He loved Lazarus and he loved Mary and Martha, but now Lazarus was dead and the sisters were in great pain because of their loss and what they perceived to be betrayal by Jesus. Jesus came to experience life. I'm sure he felt physical pain when he hit his finger with a hammer or got a blister on his foot and now he was feeling the emotional pain of loss as experienced by Mary and Martha; and also himself.

He might have also wept because he knew the end of his story on earth was coming soon. So he had to show this sign because of his death and resurrection and what he yet had to convey. Lazarus, had been “declared” dead, wrapped up completely, and placed in an airless cave. He was dead as Jesus would be when taken off the cross, wrapped up completely, and placed in an airless cave. Death is real, but Jesus also said “I am the resurrection and the life.”

We believe that we are resurrected to NEW life with Christ in Heaven, but Jesus also wants us to know that our current reality is God who is also our Eternal life. God is our source of life here on earth as well as thru eternity. It’s the whole Heaven on Earth thing we often refer to.

There are two depictions of Jesus that I absolutely love. One is a picture of Jesus standing in the room of healthcare providers trying to save a life. He is right in the midst of everything-just being present. There is also a picture of a nurse with Jesus’s hand resting on the nurse’s shoulder. These have given me great comfort and I often felt that God was working through me as I worked. I know a devote Catholic who is a nurse anesthetist and she tells her patients that “they” will take good care of them while they sleep through surgery. She is referring to “they” as her. . . . and God. What a beautiful sign of her faith!!!

Feeling God right there with us, during difficult times, is what God wants.

God dwells in us

God never leaves us, but sometimes we need to stop, breathe, and sense God’s presence with us.

When my dad was hanging on to this life by a fingertip, I knew in my mind what my dad's ultimate wish would be, but I also felt my wishes in my heart. I chose to feel God in my soul, so I prayed for God to just be present with me. God gave me strength, surrounded me with people who loved me, and a peace with the eventual outcome.

Death is real. . .but Jesus's life, death, and resurrection showed us that God is our true reality, our source of life. . .both now and eternally.