
MIRACLES | “Come Forth!”

Rob Rogers May 9, 2021

Introduction

Over the last two months, we’ve been digging into many of the miracles that Jesus performed throughout the gospels and hearing stories of individuals, right here in our GC family... where ***the God has intervened into impossible situations and turned it into a miracle.***

Today, we’re going to be looking at one of the most famous miracles Jesus performed, and some of the absolutely befuddling details around the story of the resurrection of Lazarus in **John 11**.

**THE GOD WHO WAITS
THE GOD WHO WEEPS
THE GOD WHO WORKS**

The God Who Waits

In the beginning of John 11, sisters Mary and Martha are deeply concerned for their brother Lazarus who was severely sick, so they send a message to Jesus pleading for help. Interestingly enough the name Lazarus literally means, “God helps.”

Have you ever had that moment where life stops making sense? Where something happens, or what you wanted to happen doesn’t happen, and you start to wonder “What in the world IS happening? God, what are you doing? Where are you?”

The sisters of Lazarus send a message to Jesus asking for immediate help... and the messenger comes back without Jesus. Mary and Martha had to have been thinking what we think when God doesn’t show you when we need him to...

- “Maybe Jesus is too busy?” or “Maybe He doesn’t care?”

When Jesus hears of Lazarus’ condition, it doesn’t say he was too busy helping other people. It doesn’t say he doesn’t care...it says...

John 11:5-6

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. **6 So**, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Jesus loved them SO much, that when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he dropped everything in order to help them....

No, he didn’t do that... he loves them so much... that he just stayed put for two extra days.

That doesn’t make any sense.

How many of you have ever had a moment where you needed Jesus to move right away?

“Jesus, I’m in a crisis, I need you to come fix this situation, come solve this problem right this second, come deal with that person, do something! I need you to show up and fix this!”

- We expect Him to stop whatever He’s doing to come solve our issue...
- Sometimes Jesus says, “I hear you and I’m going to do something about that problem.” “Oh thank you.” “In a couple of days.”

Why in the world would he stay there and do nothing for two extra days when the people that He loved were in a crisis and needed His help?

John 11:11-15

“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” ¹² The disciples said to Him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” ¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He meant taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there...”

- “Mary and Martha plead for help with Lazarus, whom You apparently love... and You weren’t busy, and instead of going to help him... You just did nothing for two extra days?”
- “Then You tell us that Lazarus is dead and that You’re glad about it!?”

Why in the world would Jesus wait? He wasn’t too busy. And the text tells that He loved them so much THAT he waited.

John 11:15

and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe.

Sometimes in life, before something gets whole lot better, it has to get a whole lot worse

**Sometimes God allows things in life
to get to the point of death
so that at the moment of the miracle,
you might believe in the giver of life.**

Mary and Martha had a plan. “We’ll tell Jesus that the “one He loves” is ill. He’ll have to come then... how could he say no to that!?”

- Have you ever tried to manipulate God into to doing something for you?? We already know how that turned out.
- They had their plan...

But God had a different plan. Jesus knew that a miracle was coming... He knew what He was going to do... He had a different plan.

**So often we think that just because things
aren’t going according to “our plan”
means that there isn’t “A Plan.”**

- Maybe right now you’re in a spot where God is waiting to act.
- Don’t think that what’s going on in your life is outside of His knowledge.
- Just maybe God is waiting to act, to bring a miracle in your life, until just the right moment...
- Why?
- So that you may believe.
- So that you might gain greater insight as to who He is and the greatness of His power...

Sometimes God waits to act, in order to bring us into a greater revelation of who He is.

This Mary in John 11 is the same Mary who after the miracle, worships Jesus with the fragrant oil and wipes His feet with her hair in John 12. Why? Because she saw the miracle and believed.

The God Who Weeps

John 11:17-21

Now when Jesus came, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met Him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”

Look what Mary says 11 verses later...

John 11:32

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.”

Mary and Martha, same situation, same level of grief at the death of their brother, and their complaint against Jesus, they even use the same exact words.

But Jesus responds to both of them in RADICALLY different ways.

John 11:23

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴ Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die.

You know what He’s saying to Martha? He almost argues with her... *“Martha, I’m God. I’m the author of life itself. It’s never too late when I’m involved. And I’m here now. I’m involved now.”*

But look at how radically different His response is to Mary! He doesn’t argue with her. He doesn’t correct her. He doesn’t say, “Calm down, I’m God!”

What does He do?

John 11:35

Jesus wept.

- He weeps with Mary, he grieves with Mary...
- but with Martha he confronts her sorrow with Truth and calls her to hope!

**With Martha,
Jesus is claiming to be God
and with Mary,
he’s showing himself to be human.**

What is revealed in these 11 verses is that Jesus is both fully man and fully God.

- How Jesus responds in to these two people in the exact same situation tells us something incredibly profound about God and about us.
- It tells us that God understands that different people in the same exact scenario are still individual people whose needs may be radically different from one another.
- It tells us that God understands that what may work for one person, may be harmful to another.

In scripture, Jesus tells one guy, “go and sell everything you have and then follow me,” and someone else, he invites to follow Him without conditions.

- Because some people need truth.
- Others need to comfort of grace. And
- We all need both in different moments in our lives.

What we see in both the divinity and humanity of Jesus is that He’s the perfect embodiment of both grace and truth.

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Hebrews 4:15

We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Do you hear that? “*Tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*” **There’s the balance.**

He’s not just a sinless God who doesn’t know what it’s like to go through what we have gone through.

On the one hand — we don’t just have a sinless God who hasn’t experienced what we’ve experienced.

On the other hand — we don’t have somebody who’s just like us, who’s no better than us.

How can someone like that help us?

He’s infinitely high and infinitely low at once.

He is the God Who Weeps — But He’s also the God Who Works.

The God Who Works

John 11:38-39

Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

In the original Greek, Jesus not sobbing with self-pity... he’s not groaning in weakness... He’s filled with fury...

“Jesus advances to the tomb not weak and sniveling, but as a **champion preparing for conflict**. John uncovers the heart of Jesus as he wins our salvation, not in cold unconcern but with **fiery wrath against our enemy**.”¹

~ B.B. Warfield

Jesus isn’t angry about people’s lack of trust in Him,

He’s not angry with the people grieving.

You know what he’s raging against?

Death. Death itself.

1 Corinthians 15:26

The last enemy to be destroyed is **death**.

¹ Warfield, Benjamin Breckinridge. *The Person and Work of Christ* (Benediction Classics, Nov 23, 2015)

John 11:39

Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been *dead* four days."

- Jesus is about to raise a man from the dead, *but he tells **them** to remove the stone*
- And Martha is embarrassed about it... she doesn't want others to see what's inside... the decay, the stench, he's been dead for four days...

Maybe for you, you've got something in your heart that's been dead for four days, for 400 days, or four decades.

- A dream that God put in you years ago that life has just beaten to death... and maybe you're terrified of moving that stone away and taking a look at what that thing is...
- A marriage, friendship, or relationship that is dead... and maybe it's too painful to face it.. to grieve it... to feel it... to look at it for what it is... it's been dead so long, there's no way it's coming back to life...

*Whatever that dead thing is in your life,
if God is going to work a resurrection miracle in whatever that situation is,
we've got to be willing to face it.
To let the ugly reality of that thing, hit us.
To be honest about how bad, how dead that thing really is.
Sometimes we've got to remove the blinders and the barriers and face reality head on...*

John 11:40

Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"

- Believe, if you would believe...
 - But God it's impossible... He's been dead four days! It's not going to happen...

*⁴¹Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up *His* eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. ⁴²And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said *this*, that **they may believe** that **You sent Me.**" ⁴³Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, **come forth!**" ⁴⁴And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth.*

- Lazarus was probably so confused... and I would imagine everyone else is looking at each other in disbelief!

Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

Many of us hear this story and we think... "That was then... God can't do that in my situation... He can't work a miracle like that in my life." At this point in the service a video is shown of GC member Loren Frost, who literally died, and was given a choice by Jesus whether to stay in heaven or return to earth.

Do you realize that when Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth," and called His friend out of the grave, Jesus had signed his own death warrant? When Lazarus came out of the tomb, Jesus was guaranteeing Himself a place in the tomb. Because before this point, the religious leaders saw Jesus as a nuisance — but after the resurrection of Lazarus, they viewed Him as their doom and demise.

John 11:53

Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.

*When Jesus Christ gave life to Lazarus, He brought death upon Himself.
When death was brought upon Jesus Christ, it gave life to every single one of us.*

*When Jesus Christ gave life to Lazarus, He signed His own death warrant.
When death killed Jesus Christ, death signed its own death warrant.*

“Dialogue-Anthem,” is a great poem by George Herbert, in which the Christian and Death are having a conversation with one another. The very last interchange goes like this:

Death: These arms shall crush thee.

*Christian: Spare not, do thy worst.
I shall be one day better than before;
Thou so much worse, that thou shalt be no more.²*

Have hope, beloved.

God is still in the business of bringing dead things to life.

Jesus Christ has done all these things.

Why?

That you may believe.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you had the experience of feeling like Jesus needs to move right away... and He doesn't? What was the resolution?
2. Have you ever tried to manipulate God into doing something for you? To convince Him that your plan is the right one?
3. What is there to learn from Jesus in how he responds to the same question from Mary and Martha in radically different ways?
4. Discuss Jesus' deep wrath against death as an enemy.
5. What is the irony of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead — precipitating His own death?

² Herbert, George. *The Poetical Works of George Herbert* (James R. Osgood, 1871) p 205

NOTES