

Life After Death: Faith in God's Resurrection Power

Wednesday with the Word

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John 11:1-44

What is on the surface? As a Christian we must always look beyond what we see in the physical. When we get caught up focusing on what we can see with the natural eye we are denying ourselves the spiritual insight we have because we are saved.

As a Christian we should always know that things aren't what they appear. We know that God is working in and through what we see and what we see in the physical does not take into account what God is doing in the spiritual. ***God always works beyond our circumstances or situation.***

John 11:1-3

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, ^[a] "Lord, he whom you love is ill."

The sisters knew the Lord. The Lord loved their brother. They thought because they had served the Lord faithfully that they should be on God's priority list. They thought they could send for God and God was supposed to come right away. They even used a little power play by saying, "He who you love is sick."

We don't earn our blessings or responses from God. God acts according to God's will and not our whims and wishes. When God doesn't answer our prayers the way we want, it isn't because of what we have or haven't done but it is because God is sovereign. We have to pray to accept God's will while simultaneously being honest with God about what we desire.

Your / Our Stuff is Bigger than You

John 11:4

⁴ But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

This is an interesting response. Jesus doesn't leave right away like one would have expected but what Jesus does is he says, "This is for the glory of God." What is the meaning of Jesus' response? Jesus is clear when he hears the request, "This ain't just about Mary, Martha, and Lazarus." Whatever we go through ain't just about us. It is about us and those who see what God is taking us through. We must always remember that what we are going through extends beyond our personal pain or struggle. It is working a larger work among those who are witnessing God act in our life. As God brings us through God is bearing witness to those who are watching. Now I am not suggesting God is sadistic and allows us to go through for the purpose of a witness. I am simply saying when we go through what we go through it is bigger than us. In some divine way God is glorified. We might not see it or understand it but we know somehow God is present and active in our lives during the worst of times.

He is on the Way

John 11:5-7

⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶ after having heard that Lazarus^[b] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

The more mature saints would say, "He may not come when you want Him to but He is always on time." We have to realize that no matter what we are going through that God is on the way. God is on the way. God is making God's way to our location. No matter what we are going through or what we are waiting on, God is on the way. There may be no physical signs that God is coming but you can rest assure that God is on the way.

Opposition to the Coming

John 11:8-10

⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰ But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them."

Folk will try to get in the way of God coming to your location. The biggest obstacle are folk who doubt God and try to talk you in to doubting God by telling you God ain't coming. These folk are the stumbling folk who don't walk in the day and light of God. Then there are these disciples who don't walk by faith. Literally Jesus is walking by faith; Jesus has the faith to go where the stone throwers are waiting on him. Don't ever let people who throw stones stop you from going where God is calling you to go. You have to go and do what God is calling you to do so that you can do the work God is calling you to do.

Dead, Sleeping or Walking Dead!

John 11:11-16

¹¹ After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." ¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." ¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

What appears to be death to us and others is life to God. While the disciples and we will find out later the mourners, Martha and Mary saw Lazarus as dead Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps." Your situation may look dead but God says you are only sleeping. The reason death can appear as sleeping to God is because God can raise dead stuff back to life again. For many of us we have some dead stuff in our life that God wants to raise back to life. Even though it is dead God has power over life and death. So to God dead stuff appears to be sleeping stuff. God has the power to raise marriages back to life, careers, dreams, relationships, futures, health, etc.... There is nothing God can't bring back to life. We also have to ignore doubting Thomas and his friends who speak doom and death where God is about to bring life.

What is dead or sleeping in your life?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Do you know any professional mourners?

John 11:17-19

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother.

When things are going bad in our lives it appears that folk can find us. Whenever death like circumstances exist folk tend to gather to mourn with you. Very rarely do folk gather to cheer you through but many times they just sit and cry with you. If they don't really know God they will have you mourning instead of praying and praising God.

What if Martha and Mary would have surrounded themselves with praying *praisers* instead of whining mourners? What difference would that have made?

Who do you surround yourself with when you are going through something?
Who would call right now if you found self in a crisis?

Do they know God like you know God? Would they pray and praise with you or whine and complain?

Who should you call in times of crisis?

What makes Martha and Mary different?

John 11:20

²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home.

Martha – runs to meet Jesus

Mary – sits

Why are they acting so differently?

Martha still had faith and love for God. She believed God even in the midst of the tragedy. She runs to God immediately, God doesn't have to request her presence. She got away from those mourners and went to get close to Jesus. When we find ourselves in crisis and folk are surrounding us to mourn with us, we have to find our way back to God. We have to find our way back to spend time with God so that God can speak to us as God speaks to our situation. Because Martha ran away from folk and ran to God she hears from God first hand about their situation.

What does God have to say about my dead stuff?

John 11:21-27

²¹ Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” 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.^[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷ She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,^[g] the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

Martha knew God could have saved her brother but she had a hard time believing that God could do something after the fact. In many instances we pray for something and in the prayer we have an unspoken understanding of how we want God to do what we want God to do. I have found that God very rarely meets my request the way I want God to or the way I planned it. God normally does what I am praying for God’s way and not my way. One of the problems Martha and Mary had is that they wanted God to do it their way. When God didn’t do it their way (heal Lazarus before death) their faith began to wane. We have to learn to trust God to do what God said God was going to do and we must always remember God will do it God’s way.

Let’s Do This

John 11:28-44

²⁸ When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” ²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” ³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you

believed, you would see the glory of God?”⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me.⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.”⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Mary comes with her issues, the people come with their doubt but God comes to get the job done as God honors the pain and faith of the sisters. Both sisters were trying to believe in God, in their own way. They were struggling to make it through this painful moment. The folk around them obviously didn’t have the level of faith that Martha and Mary had and this was directly linked to the fact that none of these other folk talked directly to Jesus. Only Martha and Mary talked directly to Jesus and as a result it informed their faith in God’s resurrection power.

Jesus calls Lazarus by name, he didn’t say all dead things come back to life. This is important because there are some-things that are dead that we need to leave in the grave! We need to be very specific about those things we want God to call forth and bring back to life. We need to name them before God and pray for their resurrection, creation or recreation. We need to be very specific. Sometime we want only a part of something to come back to life. We need to name that part.

**What is dead or dying in your life that you want to be resurrected?
Only you can answer this question!**

Name It	Why is it dying?	What are you going to do about it?