

Gospel of John: The Love of God

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Have you ever been disappointed? Have you seen movie or music advertisements about a new song or movie about to come out and you got yourself excited about its release? The advertisements always show the best parts of the movie or song. Then when you finally see or hear the first release, you become disappointed because the advertisements really did have the best parts. The rest of the music or movie was rotten. The New Disney Snow White movie that came out this year was a flop after much money was spent for advertising. Some years ago, I planned a trip to Arizona. One of the places I looked up was the town of Tombstone. The advertisements made it sound so great and I like Western history. I was so disappointed when I got there. It was a tourist trap and it didn't live up to the hype. I'll never go back again. We've been reading about Jesus in the Gospel of John for the past month. During that time, we have read about some of the miracles Jesus did – heal a blind man, heal a man who couldn't walk, and restore the spiritual condition of these men as well as the woman at the well and Nicodemus. During Jesus' day, there was no TV's or internet to advertise Jesus, but people had mouths and the talk about Jesus and what He was doing was spreading across the land. The Pharisees had hard hearts and said Jesus was from the devil (Matthew 12: 24). Most of the other people have heard the stories, but they wanted to see the evidence and proof for themselves. Maybe some thought of Jesus as only as some type of magical person who could do some tricks and magic. These thoughts are still believed by some today. Even in some American Seminaries, Jesus' miracles are coming under attack – did they really happen? The problem with this false teaching is that if we question the miracles of Jesus, then we are at the same time questioning if He really is the Son of God. John wanted this Gospel to set the tables straight, not just for his time, but for all time – Jesus is the Son of God. We've already mentioned some of the past miracles of Jesus – physical and spiritual. All the past miracles were leading up to this huge miracle that we're going to look at today. Even this miracle today is

small compared to the miracle during the Easter event we celebrate every year. However, it's an important miracle for us. This is a miracle that only God could do and we'll see that demonstrated by Jesus.

Let's turn to John 11: 1-4 where we read this, "Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) ³ So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."⁴ When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." (NIV-www.biblegateway.com)

The past few stories that we studied happened in Jerusalem. The religious leaders in Jerusalem were trying to arrest Jesus after the healing of the blind man, so Jesus and the disciples went beyond the Jordan River to areas that John the Baptist had preached. During this time, Jesus receives notice that a dear friend of His, a man named Lazarus, was very sick. Lazarus' sisters sent the notice to Jesus because they knew what Jesus could do. In fact, Mary – the one sister, had been healed spiritually by Jesus. She wiped Jesus' feet with expensive perfume to show her Godly love for Him in Mark 12 and John 12. Some scholars have issues with this since the timing is different in these Gospel's. Would it be so hard to believe that Mary washed Jesus' feet more than once out of respect for Jesus? Anyway, the sisters were hoping that Jesus would come right away and do healing to their sick brother. Jesus makes an important statement we need to look at in verse 4, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it. (NIV)" Jesus would give His disciples the ability to heal diseases and cast out demons through His name in Luke 9, but Jesus shows evidence here that He is above His disciples because Jesus already knew what was going on with Lazarus even before the notice from the two sisters came. So, if Jesus already knew what was happening with Lazarus, why did Jesus go the opposite direction away from Bethany? Bethany was a small town about 2 miles from Jerusalem. Jesus took this route on purpose. Just like the other stories and miracles from Jesus we have looked at; they were all part of the plan of the Lord. This wasn't by chance. If we have a family member sick, we'll try to stay close to

home just in case things get worse. Jesus went the opposite direction because He already had something bigger planned. Lazarus was to die to bring glory to Jesus and to His Father. The sisters didn't know this and poor Lazarus didn't know this as well. Why didn't Jesus send word back to the sisters that He was going to wait a few more days before coming? We would have, but Jesus already knew what had happened before it happened and He knew what the final outcome would be. The disciples could heal people through Jesus' name, but they didn't know the persons past and future like Jesus did. Again, this shows us that Jesus is the Son of God.

The final item we'll look at here is that everything Jesus does here is motivated by His love for His Father and for the people. Jesus wants His Father to receive glory and He wants to heal Lazarus. We have to understand that to be a true follower of Jesus; we must be motivated by His love to serve Him. We are motivated to go to Church to worship Him out of love. We treat each other with respect and love because we SHOULD be motivated by His love. Many Christians today in America have become so hateful and mean. Many are not motivated by His love serve. Why is that?

Let's continue with John 11 and turn to 17 – 27 where we read this, ¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than two miles^[a] from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. ²¹ "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." (NIV-
www.biblegateway.com)

We now come to the arrival of Jesus to Bethany. Even before Jesus arrives, Martha goes out to meet Jesus. We're not sure the motive of Martha for doing this. Maybe she was a little upset in knowing all the funeral stuff didn't have to happen if Jesus had come right away. Maybe she just accepted the fact and just believed in Jesus. We're not sure, but what we are sure of is that Martha has a good understanding of Jesus. Martha knows if Jesus had come on time, her brother would have been healed by Jesus. Martha believed Jesus was the Son of God. Martha also knew that Lazarus would be made anew on the Resurrection Day. Martha also states that she knows that the Father will give Jesus whatever He asks. Martha adds salt to this in verse 27 that she believed Jesus was the Son of God. God gives His Son whatever He asks for. Martha was a simple woman with very little education. Women were treated differently in this culture than our culture today. Martha didn't go to Bible College, but she did know Jesus and that made all the difference. Martha believed! Just like the once blind man in Jerusalem, he believed in Jesus as well. Martha believed Jesus could do anything. She didn't understand everything that Jesus did, but she believed in the Son of God. Do we believe in the Son of God? Jesus isn't just a good man or just a prophet. Jesus is the Son of God and we need to treat Him in that way. Martha did. She didn't yell at Jesus or tell Him off because He took so long in getting there. She just believed in Jesus – she had loving faith. I used to say simple faith, but I now think simple faith is really true “loving faith” for Jesus. Plus, we're seeing that this plan was not just for physical healing. When Jesus went the opposite direction instead of going to Bethany to heal Lazarus, Jesus stayed around the Jordan area. In John 10: 40, we read, “He went beyond the Jordan River to stay near the place where John was first baptizing. And many followed him. ‘John didn't do miracles.’ They remarked to one another, ‘but all his predictions about this man have come true.’ And many believed in him there (NLT)”. Jesus didn't waste any time. Even while waiting for Lazarus to die, Jesus was caring for the lost. When Jesus is talking to Martha, Jesus is concerned for her spiritual condition. There is no one of this earth that cares more about your spiritual condition than Jesus goes. Everything that Jesus does in this story is

motivated by His love for His Father and for the people. Let's continue with the story.

Let's finish with John 11: 38-44 where we read this from John, ³⁸ "Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." ⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." (NIV- www.biblegateway.com)

We see right away that Jesus is deeply moved. In verse 35 that we didn't read, it states that Jesus wept. Jesus wept and then He was deeply moved. Even the Son of God felt pain. I believe He felt the pain of the people because Jesus had true compassion for people. Not only that, but I believe Jesus saw this scene as a foreshadow of what laid ahead for Him. His death and resurrection, but also His Father having to look away from Him because of our sin that He carried to the cross. Jesus could see all of this so plainly. Rest of the people were either complaining that Jesus should have healed Lazarus or I'm sure the Pharisees were looking at Jesus with hate in their eyes. Others were looking with wonder - wondering what was going to happen next. Then, we read that Jesus spends time giving His Father glory. Jesus sets us an example to follow. We need to give our Lord more praise than we do. Even the Son of God praised His Father on a regular basis. We give the Lord glory so that others may believe. We don't give God glory to make ourselves look good or righteous. We do it out of Godly love for Him and so that others may believe in Jesus. In other words, when you praise God out loud to people, you are giving a personal testimony.

Finally, we read about the miracle itself. Jesus commands Lazarus to come out in verse 43. Jesus tells the people to take off the grave clothes and the words I really like, “let him go”! I would have loved to see the faces of the people there. I would have loved to see the faces of Martha and Mary. With my imagination, I can see Lazarus, wrapped in grave clothes, hopping out of the tomb. He’s trying to get loose from the grave clothes, but they are holding him back. It sounds like what sin does to us until Jesus releases us from our bondage. For Lazarus, he was held in bondage by grave clothes. For us, we are held in bondage by sin till we allow Jesus into our heart and ask forgiveness for our sins. When we do, then Jesus says, “let him or she go”. Then we are free indeed like Lazarus. This could only happen because Jesus is the Son of God. Plus, because He is the Son of God, He loves us the same as His Father loves us. This is the Jesus we serve. If you turn your life over to Jesus, you’ll never be disappointed. Jesus comes as advertised – He is the Son of God. Praise the Lord!

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.: Wheaton, 1996