

When God Gets Personal with my Grief

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Sermon Overview

Life-changing Lessons

1. My great loss is not a measure of God's love for me.
2. God answers all prayers, but He doesn't grant all requests.
3. In moments of grief, God wants us to trust Him even when we don't understand.
4. To see God at work in my loss, I must remove the stone.

Scripture John 11

¹Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. ³So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

⁴When 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." ⁵Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

⁷Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

⁸"But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?"

⁹Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. ¹⁰It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light."

¹¹After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

¹²His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." ¹³Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

¹⁴So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

¹⁶Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Jesus Comforts the Sisters

¹⁷On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸Bethany was less than two miles^[a] from Jerusalem, ¹⁹and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰When 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. ²²But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

²⁷"Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ,^[b] the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

²⁸And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." ²⁹When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

³²When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴"Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

³⁵Jesus wept.

³⁶Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

³⁷But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead

³⁸Jesus, 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."

⁴⁰Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

⁴¹So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I 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."

⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The 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."

Opening Question

We grieve when we lose something of great value. Let's think about some of the greatest grief some of us have experienced? Let's have a few of us very briefly share a time of grief in our lives.

Digging for Truth

1. Life-changing lesson #1 says "**My great loss is not a measure of God's love for me.**" Les said "If God does nothing else for us, we can be assured of His love. How can we know of God's love for us?"
2. A Christ-follower should never fear death, just as we never fear sleep. What is your level of fear toward death? Why?
3. Lesson Two is "**God answers all prayers, but He doesn't grant all requests.**" Put this in your own words or in your own situation.

How does God answer prayers that we don't get the request answered?

What requests have your children made that they weren't ready for or that didn't need to be answered?

4. How are Christ-followers supposed to react to grief? There are a number of options:
 - a. Feel as if the loss is the end of the world.
 - b. Rely on ourselves and act as if we don't need God or anyone else.
 - c. Try to numb our senses so we don't feel the pain.
 - d. Place hope in Christ

I know that we usually pick letter "D" even though it's not always our natural tendency. Without Christ, which of these is your natural tendency? How do we make the shift from our natural tendency to put our hope in Christ?

5. Look at the passage and share some statements reflecting Martha's faith in Christ. Do you think Martha truly believed that Jesus could still raise Lazarus? Would you believe at that point?
6. Lesson Number Three says, "**In moments of grief, God wants us to trust Him even when we don't understand.**" Read Proverbs 3:5-6. What are some things in your life that you don't understand? What are the possibilities of how God is at work? What does He want of you?
7. Les said, "Belief must precede sight." Jesus said, "If you believe, you will see the glory of God." What keeps most Christians from truly believing in Christ and that He can do miracles in our lives?
8. Lesson Four says "**To see God at work in my loss, I must remove the stone. Before God acts, He often requires a step of faith.**" What are the things God may be waiting for us to do in order to show our faith in Him?

Closing Thought

Les said that "It could be that some of the things in your life you think are dead, may just be sleeping. Jesus may grant your request to restore it." What is there in your life that you are praying God will restore?