

Only Believe! In Jesus!

Jesus had some special friends: Lazarus, Mary and Martha who lived in the village of Bethany about two miles from Jerusalem. And as is recorded the gospel of John chapter eleven, Jesus received an emergency call from the sisters: Mary and Martha. Let us follow the account of the events as they unfolded in that Judean community.

John 11 New International Version (NIV):

¹ *Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.*

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." ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, ⁷ and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."*

Jesus responded to the call of Mary and Martha. We can be confident in the fact that Jesus loves us and he is ready and willing to respond to our call for help. But then we may not acknowledge that we need any help, hence we may not call. But thank God someone else who has seen that we need help may be calling Jesus on our behalf.

We may not be physically sick, or we may not be mentally sick. But even if we are not physically sick nor mentally sick, we may still be sick in the sight of our community. Therefore, we may be separated from our community. Possibly locked away in a prison somewhere. Furthermore, in the sight of God we have gone past the stage of being sick: We are dead as a result of our sins ("As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins" Ephesians 2: 1, NIV). We are therefore unable to have fellowship with God. We have been separated from God. We are in dire need.

Jesus had a plan of action with respect to Lazarus. He was not taken off guard, He was not confused. He understood the situation quite well. His plan was backed by all wisdom, all power, all love. And He has similar plans for us. But questions are often raised. The disciples expressed concern.

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

⁹ *Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. ¹⁰ It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."*

¹¹ *After 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."*

¹² *His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." ¹³ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. ¹⁴ So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus*

is dead, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

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

Our environment may present dangers, people may highlight obstacles, but Jesus is committed to getting to us.

¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

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.”

Lazarus was in a position where he just could not help himself. He was dead. From many viewpoints Lazarus was in the worst possible situation. But Jesus had a plan. It does not matter how hopeless our situation may seem, Jesus has a plan of rescue.

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?”

Jesus’ plan required belief in Him. Belief in who He is and belief in what He says. Martha believed.

²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

²⁸ 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.” ²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.

³² When 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.” ³³ When 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.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

Our troubles bring sorrow to Jesus.

³⁶ Then 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 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."

God is love. Jesus is love. His love drives Him to come to our help. Do we believe this?

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."

Lazarus could not help himself. He was dead, fully surrendered to the plan and the will of Jesus. Jesus wants to give us true life. But as long as we continue to think that we do not need Him we will never be raised from our dead condition and situations. When we acknowledge our helplessness before Him and believe in who He is and what He has done and what He can do then that true life is ours.

John 3:16 (NIV) For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.