

Session Fifteen: The Raising of Lazarus Continued

Opening Prayer

Quick re-cap:

- A situation of extreme human lack has been created with the presence of a dead man, allowing God room to act in a dramatic way in order to show who he is.
- The disciples have mistaken the desire of Jesus to return to Judea as a risky, political, military type campaign.
- Jesus' friend Martha has shown herself to be strongly self-reliant and with a faith that is insufficient.

Mary's Faith

- Mary is now summoned. Martha who does the summoning calls him "the teacher," which is again an inadequate title.
- Mary now comes but only because she has been called, and she comes quickly; she does not run out on her own authority.
- Mary approaches Jesus with more humility: she bows to the ground before him.
- The "Jews" accompany her as the weeping ones, focusing on the dead man rather than on the one who can give life. Mary goes straight to Jesus, not to the tomb, and they follow her in confusion.
- Mary repeats much of what Martha asserted earlier: if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But she does not add the piece about "because God does whatever you ask."
- This intentional difference suggests that Mary's understanding is deeper than Martha's- Jesus is not merely a wonder worker but his very presence itself brings life.
- However, Mary now begins to weep which means that she too has not fully grasped who Jesus is.

Jesus' reaction:

- Jesus displays consternation at the lack of faith of all those around him.
- He weeps, but the verb in Greek that John uses for Jesus' weeping is different than the one used to describe that of the crowds and of Mary.
- His weeping is not over loss of Lazarus because he knows how that situation will end. His weeping is instead over the failure of those around him to grasp the faith that truly saves.
- Think of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem in Luke's Gospel, "soon to be destroyed for its lack of faith."

What Jesus does:

- He takes himself to the tomb. He orders the stone to be taken away. He takes command.
- He prays aloud before the sign, first time he does so, in order for those listening to learn from HIS true faith in his father.
- He calls Lazarus out.
- "untie him and let him go."
- Lazarus appears in burial cloths and cannot free himself. As dramatic as his raising is, it is still less dramatic than the raising of the Son of Man whose burial cloths will be discovered neatly folded up on Easter Sunday morning.

Does this lead to faith?

- No and yes.
- The Sanhedrin decide to put him to death.
- The Jews who had been with Mary believed in the sign, others went to the Sanhedrin alarmed.

- They make no mention to the Sanhedrin about the prayer of Jesus or the context.
- He is presented merely as someone who is stirring up the crowds before Passover and therefore is a threat to the peace of the city under Rome.
- In the great plan of God, this work at the service of life will now lead to a death.
- In this way Jesus now stands firmly in the line of the prophets who were rejected before him.

However, Mary and Martha and Lazarus have come to a deeper faith as the next scene will show:

What's next?

- The Sanhedrin has decided that he has to die to save the people.
- Jesus leaves the area to go to Ephraim which is northeast of Jerusalem.
- He comes back for Passover, stopping first at Martha, Mary, Lazarus' home, and then into the city.
- He will die as Passover begins.
- Mary, Martha, and Lazarus have a dinner for him.
- Martha serves – she has been humbled.
- Mary anoints with the oil and the fragrance fills the house. It is the fragrance of true devotion and recognition of who he is and what he is about to do.
- It is contrasted with Judas who complains and grumbles from the position of a hardened heart.
- Faith has both grown, and it has also been rejected.

Who is Jesus?

- He is in full communion, conversation, and friendship with the unseen Israel God- who he shows more and more to be his Father.
- He is therefore the Word made flesh and the glory of the Father. He is God among us.
- He is the resurrection and the life. He identifies himself with these things.
- He is the bread of life- identified as such- and he is THE resurrection. Indestructible life.

Is Jesus Annoyed at human weeping? Is there room for our mourning?

- John presents Jesus in a very strong manner because he want to underscore the real identity of Jesus as the Word made flesh who has dwelt among us.
- When one assembles all the pieces of the puzzle to complete the New Testament portrait of the Savior, it is clear that Jesus is keenly attentive to human pain and weakness. His heart is moved with pity for us. He knows humanity well.
- There is room for mourning in the Christian experience.
- However, the Christian does have to always work to grasp it in the light of the greater plan of God so that mourning does give way to joy, a joy that the world and life cannot rob us of.
- An excessive mourning can present what might be the reality of a faith that needs to mature.
- Blessed are those who mourn: that Beatitude speaks most directly to reality of mourning over sin as the only true tragedy of the human condition. The comfort is found in conversion and the mercy of the redeemer who moves us beyond sin.
- Jesus weeps in John for the possibility of a humanity that refuses the gift of his grace. For the radical possibility of our human freedom that can in fact reject God.

End of Session Fifteen