Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Resurrection and the Life
Scripture: John 11:17-36
Code: 1532

Turn in your Bibles to the eleventh chapter of John. We come this morning to an exciting and extremely appropriate passage. I'm really thrilled and excited that the Lord has brought us to this passage in view of the events that have taken place. His timing is amazing. I appreciate very much His doing this in connection with my sermon series. That's real cooperation, I'll tell you. Provided me with the superb illustration. But as we come to chapter 11 of John's gospel, we come to the record of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead. And, in fact, today as we look at our verses in this record, verses 17 through 36, we come to the very theme of the resurrection andthe life.

Now, this week we have been face to face with the reality of death. I'm sure it has been as close to you as you like it to be. We have come to the awareness of the shocking reality that in terms of death and destiny, we have absolutely no control. There are some things over which we have control, but we have faced death this week in a way in which we are totally helpless.

Now we knowthat men fear death. And men today who have lost all kinds of things that they accounted to be precious are rejoicing aver the fact that they still have their life. And I think perhaps more than any other time in recent years, Southern California has become aware of the meaninglessness of materialism. People today are looking for one thing, really. When it comes right down to the nitty-gritty, they want some security in the life after.

But you know something? That security is extremely elusive. And the dread of death is one of the characteristics of our society. In fact, it's the taboo of our age. Sex used to be our taboo, now it's our national pastime. And death has replaced it. Physical death is that specter that sort of haunts the end of the corridor of every man's life. And we like to pretend that death isn't really so bad because we have flowers and we sing nice songs and we buy fancy boxes. And one man said a funeral looks a horizontal cocktail party. And we do everything we can to put a facade over the face of death because we don't want to realize what it really is. But the grim reaper is there and we've become very aware of that this week. And it becomes a little bit ridiculous to watch man play his little games with money, success, prestige, position, materialism, education, sex, whatever else it is and do it almost tongue and cheek because death haunts his mind and makes it all so pointless. And the kind of death anticipation that man suffers from, leaves him with a cosmic loneliness, that no matter what he has here in the way of security and friendship and meaning, it can vanish in a flash of a second into an ultimate and eternal loneliness. And consequently in anticipation of loneliness, man is already lonely.

Lennon and McCartney said it this way, "All the lonely people, where did they come from? All the lonely people, where do they belong?" And that's the song, you know, about the young girl who lives and dies and at her funeral nobody shows up and Father MacKenzie delivers the sermon. At the end of the sermon it says, "No one hears and no one is saved."

And man is sick and man is lonely and man is afraid. And he walks the world stalked by death. And death almost laughs at his ice castles which shall melt so fast in hell.

But that's not how it has to be because of John chapter 11 verse 25, look at it. Here is the greatest piece of news that has ever fallen on your ears. Are you ready for this? "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?* That's the greatest piece of news that ever hit the world...that death is no final disaster.

Because of Jesus Christ, death is not inevitable hell. A man who believes, that verse says, a man who receives Jesus Christ, dies physically only in order that he might rise again in an eternal kind of life. Death is no big deal. Death only opens up eternal life. This is our hope. And it's not a willy-nilly hope, it's a hope founded on truth.

Thomas Hardy in his little book Countdown, said, "The two ultimate questions of existence are these: has anyone evercheated death? Question number two, if he has, did he make a way for me to cheat it?"

Those are the two ultimate questions of human destiny. Number one, has anybody ever cheated death? Yes, who? Jesus Christ. Number two, did He make a way for me? Yes, John 14:19, "Because I live, said Jesus ... what? ... ye shall live also." We have seen death closer than we like to see it. We have stood helpless and yet we've come right back to the point that what is death? For the one who knows Jesus Christ but a releasing of his divine light. Jesus Christ conquers death in this passage whether it's your death, my death, Lazarus' death, His own death, whoever's death. This marvelous chapter illustrates this by showing the resurrection power of Jesus Christ in the life of one man named Lazarus. And this miracle of chapter 11 is the most powerful manifestation of divine energy that Jesus has given in His life so far. It is the account of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, four days dead.

Now just to review for a minute. As we saw last time, Jesus has concluded His public ministry. He began His public ministry about three years before. He was proclaiming the fact that He was messiah and the Kingdom was coming. He was declaring that Israel was in sin and needed to repent. He was doing miracles and making great statements of His own identity. And Israel rejected Him and refused Him.

In fact, in chapter 10 verse 31, they tried to stone Him. In verse 39 they tried to take Him ... to take His life and He escaped out of their hand.

That, in effect, ended the public ministry of Christ. Constant rejection. And so now He is about to make a transition into a secluded ministry. He is through dealing with the populous. He is through dealing with Israel in total. He is now going to concentrate for the last days of His life on His own, those who have already declared their faith in Him. He is no longer evangelizing, He is-if you please, if I can borrow a Pauline term-He is edifying His own. He is building up those who already have committed themselves to Him because He knows that when He leaves, to them is going to be given the responsibility of reaching the world with the truth of Himself. And so He turns from the mass to the little group of His own disciples and begins from now on until the cross and after the cross, until His ascension, to minister to His own, to solidify their faith and ground them so that He has confidence that when He leaves the ministry will be maintained.

Now, that personal secluded ministry really doesn't begin quite in chapter 11. But chapter 11 is the bridge from the public ministry to the private ministry of Christ. And I say it's a bridge because Jesus definitely has told us already back in verse 15 that He wants this miracle to happen in order to give faith to the disciples. But at the same time, He does it near Jerusalem when a lot of Jews are there so that it is still a testimony to Israel back on the other side. So, it is a transitional miracle. It is not only to defiantly announce to Israel in spite of your rejection, I am the Son of God, but it is to announce to the disciples in spite of your doubt I am the Son of God. So it is a miracle that makes a bridge from the public ministry to the private ministry of Christ. And following this miracle from here on out, most of Christ's ministry is occupied with those whoare His own.

Now, it is really only days before the cross, before the shame and suffering that Jesus will go through. But before He gets to the cross, in order for one last defiant miracle--and it is a miracle of defiance to say to those rejecting Jews, "Just watch and see what you've rejected"--He does this tremendous miracle in a last climactic blaze of power. But He also does it to convince His disciples of His own power aver death. And they're going to need to believe in that, aren't they? Because it's not going to be very marry days when they're going to see Him hanging on a cross. And the only hope they're going to have is the hope that they can remember that He does have power overdeath**.** And even that hope fades.

So, it is a very important miracle. It is essential in the face of the terrible rejection of Christ that Israel know what they've done. And it is also essential in view of the resurr .. of the rejection of Christ that the Disciples not be discouraged and disappointed and say, "Oh, the whole thing fell aver. The whole thing was all wrong. Maybe He's not the Messiah." So in order to confirm their faith in view of rejection, He performs this miracle. And through it all He is establishing His glory. It's a miracle for the glory of Christ.

And there's a kind of progression with His Disciples. He's trying to build them up. First He told them He would rise, remember back early in John's gospel where He said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I'll ... what? ... I'll raise it up again?" He told them He was going to rise. Now He says, "By doing this miracle, I have the power to rise."

First He said I'm going to rise, then He said let me show you a little of My resurrection power. And finally, He did rise Himself, didn't He? And do you realize that after His resurrection, that's when ... that was the total proof, wasn't it? Following the resurrection, that's what really turned the Disciples loose as fireballs and they went out and died as martyrs. But the progression of His establishing faith in them was, "I'm going to die. Here's an illustration of my resurrection power. Now I'm going to rise. Here's an illustration of My resurrection power. Here's My resurrection."

And finally when He rose, they remembered that He said He would, they remembered His power exhibited in Lazarus. And they believed. And they moved from there to change the world. And that's why in all the Apostle's writings in the New Testament, and in all their preaching, the key subject about which they preach is ... what? ... the resurrection. So, this miracle then of Lazarus' fits the secluded ministry of Christ in the sense that it builds the faith of the Disciples, yet it hangs on to the Jews to show them His power in defiance of their rejection.

Now the chapter is divided into four parts: the preparation for the miracle, the arrival of Jesus, the miracle itself, and the results. Last week we saw the preparation. You remember what we saw? The critical man, Lazarus was sick. The concerned sisters sent a message to Jesus ... (sneeze) Excuse me ... and told Him. And then the cringing Disciples said, 'Well, if we go back there we're going to die." And finally Thomas articulated their feeling by saying, "Oh well, let's all go and die with Him." So, we saw the critical man, the concerned sisters, the cringing Disciples and then through it all the confident Christ.

As you begin today, we see the arrival. Jesus and His Disciples now arrive at Bethany. The little band of Disciples loving Jesus with all their hearts and at the same time anticipating their death, follow Him to Judea to see Lazarus who by now is dead. And as we come to our section in verse 17, they arrive.

Now, as we look at our section this morning. And you might take that little outline that's in your bulletin and follow it. I want you to see something here. I want to use this purely objective account, in a sense, as an analogy. And this is difficult to do because it is not a pure analogy. An analogy is an illustration of something. Well, this is half analogy and half just plain truth. Parts of the time we'll use it as an analogy, other times we'll use it as a direct statement. And you'll see what I mean as we go.

But we see by analogy and by statement in these verses the perfect picture of salvation and resurrection life. Jesus is coming to a scene of death with resurrection life. And as it unfolds with

Martha, Mary and Lazarus, we'll broaden it out to see how resurrection life unfolds to us. Not because Jesus came to Bethany, but because initially Jesus came into the world, see. We'll parallel Jesus' coming to Bethany with resurrection life with Christ coming into the world with resurrection life for all who turn to Him. So, we're going to talk about resurrection life and for our study this morning, resurrection life and salvation are synonymous terms.

Now, we want to see four basic aspects of resurrection life, or four aspects of salvation. Number one, humiliation. Number two, revelation. Number three, faith. And number four, love. Those are the four basic ingredients of salvation. Humiliation: that's how salvation began. Christ humbled Himself and became a man. Revelation: that was the next step. Christ not only came, He declared His message. The third step: faith, man responds by faith. And the fourth part, which isn't really in that right order, but the fourth aspect of salvation was love which engulfed the whole thing.

All right, let's notice each one. As Christ comes to Bethany, how it is activated there and in a broader sense, how it relates to us. First of all, humiliation. Humiliation is seen in the fact that Jesus came to Bethany. He didn't have to come. They didn't even ask Him to come, they only told Him His friend was sick. He was busy with His plans. He was the Son of God, moving through the world with every minute of His time strategically clocked by God. And it would have been easy for Him to say, "I'm sorry, I can't be bothered with Lazarus. After all, the guy's a believer anyway. It's not big thing. He's going to rise at the resurrection. He's with the Lord right now, what are you crying about?* And He could have been very indifferent but He wasn't. He comes because He's needed. He responds in humility.

And it was humility because just going back to Bethany which was only less than two miles from Jerusalem was going right back into the beehive, was going right back to where His enemies were. That's why Thomas said in verse 16, "Let's go and die with Him if He's going to go." It took humility to put Himself back into that position. Do you realize that the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the creator of the universe was humble enough to respond to the need of two women? Jesus Christ was humility in essence. He was available.

You know, He didn't go through the world like this, you know, "Here's where I'm going, people, don't touch Me. I have My patterns." He went through the world like this, mobile, moving at every sensitive point to the need of every man who touched Him, illustrated by the woman, remember, in the crowd that was pushing Him, somebody grabbed His garment and He turned around and said, "Who touched Me?"

"Who touched you? Look at these people." No, He said, "Who touched Me?" And He pulled that lady out of that crowd and healed her. You see, Jesus moved through life totally sensitive to the needs of people. He was humble in that He gave Himself to people's need.

Now we see this at Bethany. Jesus comes because He's humble and He's needed. Verse 17, "Then when Jesus came, He found that He had lain in the grave four days already." Lazarus has already been dead four days. "Now Bethany was near unto Jerusalem, about 15 furlongs," that's less than two miles,, "and many of the Jews came to Mary and Martha to comfort them concerning their brother."

Now here Jesus arrives on the outskirts of Bethany and it's crowded with mourners who were at Lazarus' funeral. Now in those days you need to know a little bit about a funeral. It's an interesting thing. Whenever somebody died who was prominent, like this family must have been because theyhad an awful lot of people there and even the leaders, the Jews refers to leadership remember in John's terminology, the leadership from Jerusalem came out. So they must have been a predominant family. But nevertheless they were a believing family who were just close to Christ. So all these people were there and Jesus arrived.

Now often at a funeral, people stayed a week. They were like those weddings we talked about. Only there wasn't all the festivity, but they stayed a week to comfort the people. The whole of this group moved in on them. Now you can visualize the scene if you know a little bit about a Jewish funeral in those days. First of all, burial always followed directly after death. With no way to preserve the body and with the heat of that part of the world, the body was immediately put in the grave. And from then on it was a matter of mourning him and comforting the friends. Now there were some people who came as professional mourners.

They had a professional wail that they developed. And they were just around to wail a lot. I suppose if you got sick enough of the wailing, you'd probably forget about the problem of your own grief, I don't know. But anyway they were there. But there were a lot of people who were legitimately there comforting. And it was a beautiful custom, very beautiful. We need to see more of this in our own ministering to each other.

But anyway, they came. And even the Jews from Jerusalem were there. But when they got there the custom was to form a long procession and the procession would march around and then would form in front of the tomb. Now I was reading about this and I came across an interesting thing I thought I'd share it with you. The women always led the procession. And the reason was this, they believed and they were absolutely correct, that it was a woman who by her first sin brought death into the world. That was Eve. And therefore she being responsible for the whole mess ought to lead the mourners to the tomb. And that's what they did. You realize, of course, that women did bring it; it's like the man said, "God created man and then He rested. Then He created woman and nobody's rested." But anyway, that's not true. But anyway, that's what they believed.

So, there was a long procession led by the women that moved into the tomb area. Then at that point there were certain speeches and certain eulogies given and certain wailing going on. And an interesting thing that I discovered was that for a long period of time prior, when everyone was gathering, there was no food allowed, none at all. And you can understand why. That many people coming there would...you could wind up having a party if you weren't careful. So they eliminated any food. And they had a

large meal later on and to prevent anybody from coming just for the meal, they served bread, hard-boiled eggs and lentils. You see, they wanted to make sure that the funeral stayed a funeral and didn't become a party.

Well, so Jesus arrives in Bethany, finds all these people there and it's a Jewish house of mourning. And they're all gathered to mourn for Lazarus.

You say, "Well, what's the analogy here? How does this become an analogous to salvation?" Just this, Jesus came to Bethany prepared to deal with the problem of death. And isn't that exactly what Jesus did when He came into the world? Didn't the Apostle Paul say, "You who were dead in ... what? ... trespasses and sins, didn't Jesus come into this world to deal with the problem of death?" Didn't He come, in effect, into a funeral? When Jesus came to Bethany, it was a humble voluntary act of His will. When Jesus came into the world, it was a humble voluntary act of His will. When Jesus came to Bethany, it was to deal with death on a physical level. When He came to the world, it was to deal with death on a spiritual and a physical level. As the story of the resurrection of Lazarus begins with Jesus humbly coming because of the need, so the story of salvation and resurrection, life for the world, begins with the humble Jesus coming because He knew there was a need. Jesus didn't have to bother with Lazarus but He humbled Himself and came and Jesus doesn't have to bother with men, but He did and He came and He died in order that He might give life to those who are dead.

What are we saying? We're saying the voluntary humiliation brought Jesus to Bethany and a voluntary humiliation brought Him to earth. And as He came to Bethany to give life, so He says in John 10 "To the world I am come that you might have ... what? ... life."

So, as the resurrection of Lazarus begins in a humble coming of Jesus, so the resurrection of men from spiritual death began when Jesus invaded this world. All right, the second key point in salvation is revelation. He not only came but He spoke. He had something to say. And what He spoke was direct revelation from God, divine revelation. He uttered things innately *known by* Him, unlearned but known because He was God. Everything He spoke was divine absolute truth. And when we talk about divine revelation, what we mean is the content of divine truth revealed.

Now, Christ had something to say. When He got to Bethany, He said something and when He came into this world He said something, too, didn't He? He said a lot. So, when He reaches Bethany, He

unfolds the revelation that He came to bring. First He unfolds it to Mary and Martha ... rather Martha first and then Mary. And then we'll see how it's unfolded to all of us as we see how He says it to them.

Verse 20, "Then Martha, as soon as she heard Jesus was coming," evidently somebody gave her the message, "went and met Him, but Mary sat in the house.' Now this fits the picture. You read Luke chapter 10 and you find that where you have Mary and Martha at home, that Martha is the busy one, the hostess running around doing all the duties and Mary is sort of the melancholy one who's pensive and she sits in a corner. So when Jesus' arrival is announced, Mary who is pro ... Martha who is probably busying herself around, immediately goes to meet Jesus. She moves out. And verse 20, Mary remained in the house. And very likely, Mary didn't even know Jesus had arrived. We'll see that when we get to verse 28.

Well, Martha runs to Jesus and as she reaches Jesus she does something that is very exciting. Verse 21, "Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord if 'Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." Now this thought has been in Martha's brain for four days at least now, and probably more. She had been thinking over and over again during the heartbreaking days of waiting for Jesus to come, she had been thinking again and again, "If only He were here." And then when Lazarus died, "If only He had come." And the thought that's spinning in her brain involuntarily pounces off her lips. And she says, "0 Lord, if only You had been here, my brother had not died."

Now a lot of people think that Mary (should be Martha) is scolding Jesus, that she's really letting Him have it, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother wouldn't have died." That's not the character of Martha ... should have said Martha ... that's not the character of Martha to say that. Martha is not reprimanding Jesus.

You say, "What is the character of this statement?" It's half faith, half grief. She's saying, "0 Lord, if only You'd been here my brother would not have died." You say, Nell, that sounds like grief but it doesn't sound like half-faith, it sounds like total faith. Why she had total belief in Jesus. She believed that if Jesus had been there, no matter how sick Lazarus was, why Jesus could have rest ... could have raised him right out of the sick bed. She felt that Jesus had the power to raise Him from being sick, if only Jesus had been there, He could have changed all of that." You say, "Why do you call that half faith?" Because she only believed He could help Lazarus when he was sick not when he was dead. That's why it's only half faith. She had confidence in Christ, yet she limited His power. She believed that, you know, nothing could kill her brother when Jesus was there but that once her brother died even Jesus couldn't change that.

Now before you get too uptight with Martha and start to scold her, analyze your ownfaith. Isn't that how yours operates? 0 Lord, I believe, I trust You, Lord, and I keep on trust You until Tuesday morning. And you saw what happened to all your trust, didn't you? Yes, I believe, Lord. And you walk around like you're on eggs, see. I know, Lord, You've got my destiny in Your hands and all things

work together for good, and 0 Lord, I don't know what wonderful things You have planned for me through all this, Lord, I just trust You. Um, um, um, see.

And in your mind, doubt, doubt, you know, and fear and anxiety and terror. You see, you trust God, don't you, when everything is going good? Sure. The Lord provides, isn't He wonderful, He provides? And you're just saying that as long as you're checking in with that check every Friday ... the Lord is so good, He provides. Um, um, um ... my money, see. Oh sure, let's face it, our faith is very practical as long as we're not in the situation where...where we are totally confronted with the inability to do anything.

When you really have to trust God, then you find out the measurement of your faith. Sure, it would have been all right if he was just ill, but now ... oh no, it's too much for you, Lord.

Well, we're an awful lot like Martha. But good ole Martha, she wasn't about to throw all her faith out the window even though she had a little doubt, she hangs on to faith in verse 22 and this is really good. She's really got to hold on so she hangs on, she says, "But ... but I know that even now, whatever Thou will ask of God, God will give it to Thee," see. And there's almost a hope in that, isn't there? You can almost detect a "Heh, heh, I hope it's right, Lord." See. I mean she has doubt but she's not about to let go of all her faith. Hey, you know, Martha turns out to be a pretty good theologian. She was dead center in that verse. I know that even now whatever Thou will ask of God, God will give it to Thee. Did she really ... that's exactly what Jesus had said all through His ministry, right? Everything I do I do by the will of the Father. Didn't He say that? He said that so marry times. Listen, Martha knew who He was. And Martha even understood His relationship to God. She knew. Why Jesus had spent times in their home. They knew who He was. They knew His claims. And she says, "I know," how does she know? "Because You said it so many times, Lord, that whatever You ask the Father He gives You." She understands something of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Down in verse 27 she says, "I know You're the Son of God." She understood the relation between the Son and the Father. She knew that. She believed it.

And I'll tell you something else. She was a better theologian than you'll know by just looking at the English. You say, "What do you mean?" Look at the word "ask" in verse 22. "Whatever Thou will ask of God, God will give it to Thee." There are two words in the Greek for ask. One is rta, it means "to ask an equal on an equal basis." The other is the word which is used hereand it is not to ask on an equal basis, it is the word aitmeans "an inferior asking a superior." It is not the rta of an equal, it is the aitof an inferior to a superior.

You say, "Oh that's just ... you mean to say that Jesus was inferior to God? If you got that then you've got a problem because Jesus claimed to be God." Now, what are we saying here? This is a verse that some people who deny that Jesus was God could use, but that's not the point. Listen to this. Do you know what Mary was acknowledging by using the word ait? She is acknowledging the humiliation of

Christ. Listen, she was a

theologian. Man, she had it all down. She said to Him, "You have to ask the Father, I know, You said that."

You say, "Well, if He was equal to God, why did He have to ask the Father?" Because Christ voluntarily made Himself, the Bible says, a little lower than ... what? ... the angels even. You say, "Well, what is this thing about calling Jesus the Son and God the Father, and how come Jesus has to ask the Father?" Don't you understand that when Jesus was in glory before He came to the world He was face to face with God and equal with God, John I? You know that? But when Jesus came to this earth, Philippians 2, He gave up the exercise of all of His attributes and limited them to the Father's will.

In other words, He still had all of His power but He only used it in the framework of the predetermined plan of God and Himself in heaven before He came. When Jesus came into the world He wasn't powerless, He restricted the use of His power to be humiliated. He became a man, humbled Himself. And in His humiliation restricted the use of His powers and one of the restrictions was that He would ask the Father the Father's will in every given situation and obey it. And so it is simply His humiliation that causes Him to use the word ait, not His nature. And Mary (should be Martha) had it right. She used the right word. If she had used the word rtashe would have been emphasizing His deity. But she's emphasizing His humanity because, after all, as a person to her He appeared to be a person and was in His humility.

All right, so then Mary (should be Martha) acknowledges that she believes He can do something if He asks God. And certainly He said this back in chapter 5, He said, "I only do what I see the Father do, I only do what the Father tells Me to do, I only do what the Father commits Me to do. I only do the will of the Father." Chapter 6, again and again He said that.

Now Jesus responds. Verse 23, this is confident. 'Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again." Now you'd think she'd say, "0 Lord, fantas ... wait till I tell Mary." You know, you'd think she'd just really exploded, but no, not Martha. She's still hung up on doubts. So naturally she assumes that He's not talking about a physical resurrection today, He's talking about the resurrection of the just at the end of the world, see. She's got it way off somewhere. And look in verse 24, "Martha says unto Him," in almost a melancholy statement, "I don't that he shall rise again, the resurrection, the last day, I mean, I know that."

Well, you know, Martha, that's more than most Jews knew. They didn't understand that. Martha was pretty good on the Old Testament. Maybe she had read Psalm 16, I'll read it to you, don't look it up. Listen, "Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices, my flesh also shall rest in hope," why? "For Thou will not leave my soul in Sheol, neither wilt 'Thou permit thine holy one to see corruption. Thou

wilt show me the path of life, in Thy presence is fullness of joy, at Thy right hand are pleasures forever more." That's resurrection, isn't it?

And maybe she remembered old Job back there who expressed the same kind of thing in the nineteenth chapter, twenty-fifth verse, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God whom I shall see for myself.' Now Martha knew the theology of resurrection. So she says, "Lord, I know that he's going to rise at the last day."

But you know, there's an interesting enigma here. It really struck me as I read this. Isn't it strange that she felt that Christ had the power to raise Lazarus at the last day but couldn't handle this when he had been dead for only four days? Isn't that interesting? You know, isn't it interesting to rejoice in the power of God future and to doubt it today? Well, we do that all the time. "Oh, my God is going to come some day and the world is going to go up in smoke and Christ is coming out of the sky on a white horse and all the glories in the new heavens and the new earth, and all the fabulous things He's going to do in the future." But you run into a problem today and it's "Oh, gee..." see, nervous time.

Well, that's wonderful to postpone the power of God, isn't it? God can do anything in the future; He just has problems in the present. How ridiculous. How idiotic. Listen, if you can trust God over there, you can trust Him here. If His power is going to be exhibited there, it's the same power right here. I mean, if I was a believer in the Tribulation and I was reading all the things that were going to be going on...and when they're going on some people are going to be reading it in the Bible, you know, every morning they get up they'll say, "Well, let's turn a page in Revelation and see what's going to happen today"...during the Tribulation. And you know, you could really get uptight if you felt for a minute that God might mess up at the end when He came and destroyed the unjust, that just by mistake He might throw a couple of the just in there because He didn't quite know what He was doing. You could really get afraid that God might make one little mistake. I don't think the saints of the Tribulation are going to live in fear that God might mistakenly destroy some of His own. Can you trust the power of Godto be accurate? Then you can trust the power of God in an earthquake to be discerning as to who comes, who stays and who goes. He knows exactly what He doing...exactly, without an exception. And it's very easy to postpone all our belief in the power of God to some nebulus future when we don't even identify with it and very easy to doubt it today ... and needless, may I say, needless,

Just the opposite is true. Jesus is ... if Jesus could handle the resurrection of all the dead, some unto the resurrection of the just and some unto the resurrection of the unjust...you know, some to life and some to death, damnation back in chapter 5. If Jesus can handle that, don't you think it's a small thing to raise Lazarus who has only been dead for four days? Do you realize that God still has the wonderful task of raising the Old Testament saints who have been dead for thousands of years? Their souls are with the Lord, their bodies He's going to raise some day at the end of the Tribulation, did you know that? And they've been dead a long, long time. If He can handle that, friends, a four-day

corruption is a small detail. It's interesting to look at Martha's faith from that angle.

Verse 25, classic answer. "Jesus said unto her," and I like it, "I am the resurrection and the life." Did you get that statement? Did you get the context of that? He is saying "It is immaterial whether you're talking about past, present, future. There is no time involved. I am resurrection and life." You see, she's saying, "It's wonderful, Lord, I know in the future ... He's saying, "Right here, Martha, see, Me. I am resurrection, not I will resurrect, I am resurrection." What a tremendous statement. She's got it all off in the future and He says it's here right in front of you, Martha. It's Me and it doesn't matter when, I am resurrection and I'll resurrect whenever I design to resurrect. And He will. And He has.

And so, He says I am. You know "I am" is the name of God, isn't it? "I am." Here is the revelation, this is it. Christ says I am resurrection and the life. Isn't that what we wanted to hear, friends? Isn't that the message the world wants to hear? Who cheated death and did he make a way for me to cheat it? There's the message. I am resurrection and life. And you know, it's not a belief in a theology; it's a belief in a person, isn't it? Martha's thinking about an event. Jesus says no, look at Me a person, see. Salvation doesn't come in a system, friends, and it doesn't come in a religion and it doesn't come in a code, it comes in a living person, Jesus Christ who is resurrection and life. You will not have victory over death by going to church. You will not have victory over death by thinking religious thoughts. You will not have victory over death by doing good works**.** The resurrection and the life is an "I am Jesus Christ." And so Jesus is the full blessed life of God. He is the resurrection at anytime in history: past, present, future ... an unconditional statement that knows no time bounds.

All right, the third thing. We've seen humiliation and revelation, the third thing that is an ingredient of salvation--faith, verse 25. In the middle, "He that believeth," and there's the key, that's what faith is, believing, "in Me though he were dead physically, yet he will come alive," okay? Then from physical life it switches to spiritual in verse 26. "And whosoever lives spiritually and believes in Me shall never die spiritually."

Now notice the difference. Verse 25 is talking about physical. Even though you die physically, yet you will ... what? Live, that's our resurrection. And once you have that living new spiritual life, you'll never die spiritually. Physical death is nothing. It's nothing. All it is is the escape hatch into glory, that's all. It's nothing. But you'll notice the human side of salvation here, don't you? It's faith, isn't it?

You say, "What is faith?" Faith is believing, that's right. At the end of verse 26, what are those three words? "Believest thou this," that's the invitation, that's our invitation. Do you believe it?

How can I be resurrected? How can I be assured that I'm going to go into death and out the other side in a flash? How do I know I'll be resurrected into glory? Believe this, believe that Jesus is the Son of God, believe that He has the resurrection power, believe that He can rise from the dead, believe that He can raise you from the dead. Believe that, that's all He asks. Faith, that's it. Oh, that's exciting.

And once you believe, death is abolished totally. And then with the Apostle Paul you can say this, and I like it because what he's doing is standing there mocking death. First Corinthians 15, "0 death, where is thy sting? See? Did you get it? "Ah grave, where's your victory?" See. He's mocking it. The sting of death is sin. The strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God...what? ... who givest us the victory. Hey death, where is your sting? I like that. Big deal, death. Go ahead, get me and see what happens. Heh ... instant glorification.

Do you know something? Death cannot break the continuity of eternal life? It can't. You say, "Well, what does it mean to believe? How do you know you believe?"

John Patton, South Sea Islands, translating the Bible into the language of the South Sea Islanders, they had no word for "belief." No word for "believe." Didn't exist in their language. He wracked his brain for months trying to come up with a word for "believe." It's pretty important. He couldn't think of one.

One day he was sitting in his study and he had an old chair there and one of the natives was running to get to him. And he ran into the off ice and just, you know, flaked out in the chair, just flopped. Patton said, "That's it. Mat's the word for believe, to just throw your whole weight on something. Just flop." And that's what he put. And in the South Sea Island New Testament that he developed, the word "believe" is translated "to put your whole weight on."

What does it mean to believe God? It means to say, "God, I accept what You have to say and I'm going to just flop on it, it better hold." Just trust, that's what believing is. It's commitment; throw your whole self on God.

Now, it's like the father who I read about, this little boy would run, you know, like many times you probably done with your kids is run along the counter and leap off and the father would catch him, you know. You do it when the neighbors come over so you can show them how intelligent your kids are. Put him back up and he'd run along and then held get to the end and he'd leap off the father would grab him again, you know. He was just having a great time. One night the father thought held test his trust. So it was at night and it was dark outside and the little boy started running across and the father just flipped the light out. And the little guy just, you hear the pitter-patter of the little feet, whish, he caught him. No problem. You see, the little boy had learned to trust his father in the light; the darkness didn't matter because if his father was trustworthy he was trustworthy period, light or dark, right? And that's the way life is. If you can trust Jesus Christ in the light, what's the dark? He'll be there. We leap into the darkness of death and He'll catch us in His loving arms. No question about it.

Well, Martha really comes off with a tremendous confession. She does believe and look how she states her belief in verse 27. "She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord," now watch this, "I am already

believing." That's a linear verb, present. I am already believing that "Thou art the Christ the Son of God and that should come into the world, or who should come into the world." Lord, I'm already believing that.

You say, "Well, how come if she's already believing that, she had doubts?" I don't know, why don't you ask yourself the same question? How come if you believethat you have doubts? Oh yeah, that's right, isn't it? That's because Satan's still there and you're still human. But oh, I love that confession, "Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ the Son of God and should come into the world." That's the confession of belief, isn't it?

You say, "Well, I'd like to believe. What do I do?* Just read verse 27 and then say it to God if it's the honest prayer of your heart...I believe. You see, that's what the whole book of John was written for. Chapter 20 verse 31, listen, "But these are written," the whole book, John says, "that ye might ... what? ... believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that believing you might have resurrection life." The whole point of the gospel, resurrection life.

So, we see humiliation, revelation and faith. The last one, quickly. And this is simple because it is all narrative. The last thing we see is love. Oh, this is really good. You know, you can't have salvation without love. Love prompts the whole thing, doesn't it? It just permeates every part of it.

Verse 28, "And when she had so said," isn't it interesting that all she had to do was kind of confirm her own confession in her own mind, Jesus didn't even reply? She just confirmed her own faith and then just took off. Heh, it's really kind of beautiful. "And when she had so said, she went her way." I'm satisfied, thanks, Lord. The Lord didn't do anything. He just confirmed her own faith.

"She went awayand called Mary her sister secretly," didn't want a whole ruckus there in the house, "saying the Master is come and calleth for thee." Evidently Jesus had told her to get Mary. Well, as soon as she heard that "She arose quickly and came unto Him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town but was in that place where Martha met Him." So ole Mary whips out there and comes to Jesus. And verse 31, "The Jews then who were with her in the house and comforted her," that is with Mary, they were mourning with her. "When they saw Mary that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there."

In other words, if you're going to be a comforter and a wailer, you better go down there where she's going to be and comfort her. So they thought, "We'll chase her down to the ... down to the grave.'

Well, Jesus had this all planned. He got them all out of that house, all ready to get them all marched down to the tomb so they could all see the display of His glory. Here they all come traipsing out to Him.

Verse 32, "Then when Mary was come where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell down at His feet." That's a beautiful thing. Just really worshipped Him. "She fell down at His feet saying unto Him, Lord..." and here she says exactly what Martha said. Now that tells me there is collusion. They've been talking about this thing. "Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." And she's worse off than Martha because she doesn't even add, "I know if You ask God He'll do it anyway." No, she doesn't even have that much faith. Martha was hanging on to faith. Mary...Mary was a melancholy pessimist. She would have made a terrific wife for Thomas. They could have consoled each other, you know. I mean, she really loved Jesus but she just had less faith than Martha did.

Well, Jesus was so human. And I love His humanity because then I know He understands me, right? He was so human in all of this, now I want you to see what happens. Here's a cold scene of death. As fast as a change in verses, it is no longer a cold scene of death; it is a scene that is totally warmed by the love of Jesus. It just...I read this and all of a sudden I just, I had to stop and just meditate on Christ. I just felt like I do now, kind of an excited warmth to think about what the love of Jesus does here. Watch this, verse 33. "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping and the Jews also weeping who came with her, He groaned in the Spirit and," now watch this translation, it's a reflexive verb, "and troubled Himself."

Now, the word "weeping" there is klai. And it means "loud weeping, loud wailing." You know, they were really going on about it. Jesus saw this and He groaned in His Spirit. Now that's a hard statement to know exactly what it means because the word there means He was deeply troubled in the inner man. And it could mean this, sometimes the word means "angered." And it could be that what troubled Jesus is His anger over sin, see. That He is indignant about the pain and death and sorrow that sin causes, see. And that's...that's very possible that what you have here is Jesus indignant over what sin has created...this whole situation. It may just mean that He was in turmoil. But the thing that I think is the key here is that whatever wasgoing on in His heart, just wrung out from His heart an involuntary groan. He was just grabbed and gripped by the situation.

And then I love this, and it says, 'He troubled Himself." That's the fact that He let Himself care. He didn't have to care. He could have said, "Hey, everybody, don't need to cry, I'm going to raise him from the dead...it's going to be terrific." He could have sat in the back kind of tongue and cheek, see, kind of smiled at them. No, He knew He was going to raise Lazarus out of the dead. He knew that in a few minutes from now held be standing up talking to them. But knowing all that, His heart was ripped and torn by the consequence of sin that it brought such sorrow and death into the lives of people that He loved. Now that's a sympathetic Savior. That's not like the Greeks thought. They said the common characteristics of God is the Greek word apathea(?) which ... from which we get our word apathetic. He doesn't care about anything. Jesus did. He let Himself care. He troubled Himself.

You say, "Why did He bother?" Because He wanted to feel every pain you've ever felt. He wanted to know that pain that you knew when you stood beside the grave of that one you loved more than any other person in the world, orthat one that you loved with a love that couldn't be expressed, and you watched that casket and you felt that pain and you felt that emptiness in your soul. And Jesus could say, "I know, I know." He wanted to feel everything you've ever felt. He's felt the pain of death that you haven't felt. He let Himself feel it. Somebody said, "In every pang that rends the heart, the Man of Sorrows had a part." And He did.

And then, beautiful thought, He spoke, verse 34. "He said, Where have you laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see." And off they all go. Evidently they arrived at the tomb and verse 35, the shortest verse in the Bible, two words, what are they? "Jesus wept." You know what the Greek is? "Jesus," and the word is not klaianymore, it's not the word for loud wailing, the word is completely different. The word is edikruse(?) and it means this, "Jesus silently burst into tears." It wasn't a professional cry and it wasn't a sentimental cry, it was the...it was tears that were spontaneously the expression of love that couldn't be held back. He just burst into silent tears. Not mourner's tears, but tears of love that couldn't be held back even by the Son of God. And, friends, those tears have been for all ages a testimony to the humanity of Jesus, haven't they? Cried two other times, once over Jerusalem, once in the garden. They weren't sentimental tears, they were the silent trickle of tears that course down cheeks that are flushed with love and drop to a chest that is heaving with sighs of sorrow. And it shocks me; it just shocks me to see Him weeping like that because I know He knows He's going to raise Lazarus.

But you know something? He is caught in human suffering. You see it? He is trapped by sorrow. He was a man of sorrows and what? Acquainted with grief. He was absolutely trapped in the sorrow of the moment. And because He was so human, He couldn't relinquish that. I'll tell you, that thrills my heart because I know He understandsgrief.

You say, "Well, what made Him cry like that?" It wasn't His

sovereignty, no. You say, "Was it His divine love?" No, divine love doesn't shed tears, does it? Agapa love does not cry. It was the same word that is used earlier, it's not agapa, look at verse 36, "Then said the Jews," they saw, they knew why, "Behold how He...what? ... loved him" They knew why He was crying. And the word "love" there is not agapa, it's not...that's the word for divine love and divine love doesn't shed tears. It's the word phile, warm human affection. Jesus just loved Lazarus man to man. And He wept because He loved him so much. I'll tell you, that's a sympathetic Savior.

Let me expand that. Jesus loved Lazarus and that's why He raised him. And that's why He wept over him. Do you know that in another sense that's why He came into the world to bring you resurrection life, because He what? Cause He loved you. That's why He sat over Jerusalem and said, "0 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft I would have gathered thee as a hen gathers her brood, you would

not. And He cried."

Salvation began in humiliation, revelation, all wrapped in love and we respond by what? Believing, faith. Here in this passage, this becomes clear to us. Next week we're going to see the miracle itself and a blazing display of glory.

Father, we thank You this morning for Your Word to us ... tremendous exciting view of Jesus Christ whom we love. Lord, may we never be in our own lives limiting His power because of our faith.

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