

## INTRO:

Of course for the last few months, we've been in a series through the Book of John entitled, ***"That You Believe."*** And that's because THAT is John's stated intent for writing. As he says in ***ch.20: "these things are written SO THAT you believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that BY believing have life in his name."***...BUT we've also titled it that because, I don't know if you've noticed this, but we seem to be in a season of disillusionment, where for years now, we've been promised things like a better world, ***right?***, if only we all do our part. Only to NOW be told by environmentalists for example, that the world could end in 50 years. Or that even WITH modern medicine, we've nonetheless entered the age of deadly pandemics. Or that no matter how hard we try, political tensions seem to be higher than ever. ALL while the institutions in which we once trusted seem fraught with spin, or worse, corruption. And the list goes on-and-on to the point that LAST year, the World Economic Forum named "youth disillusionment," which they defined as *"loss of trust in existing economic, political and social structures,"* as the 8th LARGEST global risk...Just a ton of disillusionment that has, of course, led many - certainly many in the church - to begin questioning everything - faith, spirituality, even God...And I know for many of you, that's not a theoretical thing/that's very REAL experience! Both questioning your faith OR just being frustrated at God, cuz your life isn't going to plan. All your friends, for example, are dating/getting married, but you're not. Those around you are getting new jobs/promotions, but your career seems stalled. I remember after college, I had several friends, most notably my roommates, who were working these great jobs, while I was inputting computer data, for an insurance adjusting firm, on hourly pay. Not exactly my dream...For others of you, it's maybe that you thought you'd own a home or have kids by now. OR that the kids you DO have would be treasures rather than...terrorists...In all seriousness/whatever it is: Loss of health, stifled dreams, broken marriages, parent/mom-guilt, you're like, *"God how is THIS your plan for me?"*...Maybe nobody articulated it better than C.S. Lewis, who in 1960 lost his wife to a painful bout with bone cancer. He wrote this: *"I can't understand why God's always there when things are going well, telling you what He expects of you. But go to Him when your need is desperate...what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence...And the longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence becomes...Why is God, he said/C.S. Lewis, so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so absent a help in time of trouble?"*<sup>1</sup>...By the way, that quote, NEVER makes it on the page of "favorite quotes."...***And so here's the question for you today: What do you do when you're disappointed/even disillusioned with God? What do you do when you're disappointed or disillusioned with God?*** Cuz that's the question we've got before us here in ***John 11***, as Jesus performs a 7th and final sign of raising His friend Lazarus from the dead. Let's take a look:

---

<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1961), 17.

**TEXT:<sup>2</sup>**

It says, “Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to (Jesus), saying, ‘Lord, he whom you love is ill.’” So you recall last week, Jesus has been telling the Jewish leaders that He’s God. BUT they won’t believe AND they’re ready to kill Him. So knowing His death is imminent, Jesus has retreated from the city but NOW gotten word that his good friend Lazarus is sick! And of course the reason Mary and Martha, you see, are sending word to Jesus is not only cuz they’re close friends, BUT in BEING close friends, they’re no doubt thinking, “surely, if Jesus has been willing/able to heal complete strangers, as we’ve seen, He’ll do the same for one He loves!” Theologian D.A. Carson points out that a cynical reading of that phrase, “the one Jesus loved” might say, “Well, I guess Lazarus was the ONLY one Jesus loved.” But of course that’s not true!...I’ll tell ya there’ve been 2 men in my life - my father and a mentor of mine named John, who BOTH have this remarkable quality wherein almost everyone who gets around em believes they are their special friend. They have this ability to give themselves to people so that everyone feels especially loved. That was Jesus’ way too. It’s why John later describes HIMSELF as, “the Beloved Disciple of Jesus.” Not that he was the ONLY Disciple Jesus loved, but rather that when YOU get to know the Jesus of the Bible, you feel particularly loved by Him. Mary and Martha knew that’s the kind of person Jesus was, and so they’re confident He’ll come to their aid.

BUT it says, “when Jesus heard it he said, ‘This illness doesn’t lead to death. It’s for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.’ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. SO, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place he was.” A couple things you gotta see here. **One**, for Jesus to delay 2 days meant effectively coming 6 days AFTER receiving the original message, given that Bethany - where Jesus needs to go - was about 4 days journey from where Jesus was. **Two**, look at that word “So” there. **An incredibly arresting word right?** Especially when you consider that, maybe a better translation for it in the Greek is, “therefore.” So “Jesus loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus, THEREFORE... he stayed two days longer.” It’s arresting cuz it shows intentionality on Jesus’ part TO delay, which you’ll see in a second, actually costs Lazarus his life. And then **Third**, ya gotta see that Jesus delaying/in effect LETTING Lazarus die, doesn’t diminish His love OR His power. Cuz again, we’re told that Jesus loved this family AND is in some way using this delay for, as He says, “the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”...One of the things, God’s taught me the last couple years is: Whenever I’m discouraged/something isn’t going the way I think it should - instead of asking, “God, what are you doing/don’t you love me?” asking, “God, HOW are you loving me in this?” Cuz what this is clearly showing us is that trials aren’t

<sup>2</sup> Works consulted:

- Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King! With Study Guide*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 157-74.  
 - “The Resurrection Before the Resurrection” - D. A. Carson - *D. A. Carson Sermon Library* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2016), Jn 11.  
 - “The Disappointed: John 11:1-48” - J. D. Greear - *J. D. Greear Sermon Archive* (Durham, NC: The Summit Church, 2017), Jn 11:1-48.  
 - “Out from the Grave: Seeing Jesus” - Mar. 2, 2014 - John 11:18-44 - Tim Keller - *Timothy Keller Sermon Archive, 2014-2015* (NYC: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2014)  
 - “The Wrong Resurrection” - 11/22/22 - Episode 72 - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/larkcast/id1339351918?i=1000587112283>  
 - “Reclaiming Church” (Kindle Location 24). Kindle Edition. - Lark Network  
 - *Various Articles*: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/silent-surprising-purim/> + [https://www.denisonforum.org/current-events/revival-in-asbury-gen-z-christianity/?utm\\_source=feedly&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=revival-in-asbury-gen-z-christianity](https://www.denisonforum.org/current-events/revival-in-asbury-gen-z-christianity/?utm_source=feedly&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=revival-in-asbury-gen-z-christianity) + <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/hope-disillusioned-generation/>

evidence of God NOT loving you. Rather, they're OFTEN the platform from which God shows you just how MUCH He loves you!

So they wait for 2 days, after which Jesus says, "*Let's go to Judea again.*" *The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and you're going there again?' Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.'*" And in the language of John's Gospel, you know, "*walking in the day/according to the light*" - for Jesus - means obeying His Father. For you and me, as those who follow Jesus, it means **listen**: Your obedience to Jesus is more important than your comfort or even your safety. Cuz for those who are in Christ and therefore promised that God is, as **Psalm 54:4** says, "*not only your helper but the sustainer of your soul,*" then the only place you're ULTIMATELY unsafe is when fleeing FROM that God!

And so despite the Disciples' pleas, Jesus says, we're going. Cuz "*our friend Lazarus, He says, has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.*" To which the Disciples, you see, are like: "*Um, question: if he's just fallen asleep, he'll recover. So...no need for us to go right?*" ...And can't you almost see Jesus roll His eyes there in **vv.13-15**: Like, "*Really guys? You seriously thought I was talking about sleeping/that we'd walk 4 days for days for that? No,* he says. *Lazarus has died, and for your sake I'm glad I was not there, so that you may BELIEVE.*" Jesus AGAIN showing you that while we tend to be primarily concerned with things like our comfort, safety, enjoyment; HE is primarily concerned with your belief - what it is you're trusting in. Because of course what you trust in will either be to your reward...or your ruin. One of the greatest theologians ever, St. AuGUSTine, said that the fundamental problem of the human heart/your biggest problem in life/the source of ALL our problems - is what he called, "*disordered loves.*" Going all the way back to Adam and Eve loving the fruit over God; our disordered loves are those people and things you get out-of-order with BECAUSE ya end up loving or trusting em more than God. Cuz of course, if you love and trust ANYTHING more than God, whatever that is, it'll crush you. For example, if your spouse is your main source of love, hope, meaning; not only, will you be furious when they inevitably mess up, but YOU'LL crush THEM under the weight of your expectations...If it's your job, you'll inevitably overwork or make compromises to the detriment of your health/family/reputation. Whatever you trust in will either be to your reward or your ruin. And so knowing that, Jesus/like with His disciples here, is actually willing to lead you into uncomfortable/unsafe things IF it means restarting, recalibrating or just deepening your faith in Him!...And I KNOW, that's not a fun truth. It wasn't, you see in **v.16**, for Thomas, who I think sarcastically turns to the group and says, "*Let us also go, that we may die with him.*" ...And so they go and it says, "*when Jesus came, he found Lazarus had been in the tomb 4 days.*" Over half a week. Which is significant because Jews held to a belief that after someone died, their spirit would hang around for 3 days before going to heaven. So for John to note that Lazarus had been dead 4 days, is John saying, "*He's not just dead. He's dead-dead.*" And by the way everybody knows it. You see, it says, "*many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.*" So we're not talking about Jesus needing to pull some slight-of-hand and ya know slip ol Las some smelling-salts. No! The guy is dead!

Which is WHY, **v.21**, Martha says to Jesus, *“Lord, if you’d been here, my brother wouldn’t’ve died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”* And commentators note that while Martha’s partly hopeful there, she’s also accusatory/essentially accusing Jesus of not caring. *“Jesus, you shoulda been here!”* It’s very similar to the Disciples in **Mark 4**, who in the middle of a storm see Jesus sleeping in the boat and say, *“Teacher, don’t you care that we’re perishing?”* NOT that God doesn’t have the ABILITY to help, but doesn’t seem to CARE to help... ***Have you ever been disappointed in God like that?*** In college, my religion professor was IRONICALLY a well-known/outspoken skeptic, who attributes disappointment in God TO the reason he lost his faith. He said this, *“I think if, in fact, God appeared to me and gave me an explanation that could make sense of the torture...and slaughter of innocent children, and the explanation was so overpowering that I could actually understand it, then I’d be the first to fall on my knees in humble submission. On the other hand, I don’t think that’s gonna happen. (And) hoping it will is proly just wishful thinking (and) a leap of faith by those desperate to remain faithful to (a) God (they want to believe in).”*<sup>3</sup> God, you don’t seem to care!

Now, I want ya to see how Jesus responds, because ya notice down in **v.32**, it’s not just Martha who accuses Him, but Mary too, who says, *“Lord, if you’d been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.”* So exact same statement! And YET, Jesus responds to each of them in completely different ways. Not cuz they have different personalities, but because He loves em both... differently! Cuz notice with Martha, He gives a theological answer. Says, **v.23**, *“Your brother will rise again.’ Martha said to him, ‘I know he’ll rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”* - And that’s Martha repeating the standard teaching of the day about a FUTURE resurrection. So Mary’s responding theologically. SO Jesus says to her, *“I AM the resurrection and the life.”* NOT: *“I’m gonna give you resurrection,”* or *“I’m the cause of resurrection,”* or *“I WILL BE your resurrection/make a way for resurrection,”* but *“I AM the resurrection. Whoever BELIEVES in me - there it is again - though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you BELIEVE this?”* And I love the way Robert Capon explains what Jesus is saying here. He says, *“Jesus is not interested in what Mary THINKS she knows. He’s concerned with what she’s willing to believe.”*...It’s like flying on a plane. You might know all there is to know ABOUT planes - the physics behind lift and drag; the metals used to cut down weight. You might be a straight-up MIT-trained aeronautical engineer. But knowing ABOUT planes is not the same as being willing to step foot ON a plane. And sadly, church is often full of people who know a TON about church, Jesus, religion, morality, BUT, who when it comes time to actually TRUSTING Jesus - ya know, with your relationships, giving, politics, desires, sexuality - won’t step foot into that. Jesus isn’t interested in what you think you know, but in what you’re willing to BELIEVE! And so He goes after Martha’s beliefs! In a sense, argues with her by basically telling her that He’s God - that resurrection isn’t just coming; it’s here, He’s saying. Because He’s here! That He doesn’t just have ACCESS to divine power, He IS the power that gives life to everything! In other words, He gives to her the ministry of truth! Acts with her as a kind of “lion!”...But notice, with Mary, it’s totally different. With Mary, it’s not a ministry of truth, but of tears. He’s not a lion, but a lamb! Cuz it says, *“When Jesus saw (Mary) weeping*

---

<sup>3</sup> Bart Ehrman, *God’s Problem*, p.153.

and the Jews who'd come with her weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled." And scholars say that phrase "deeply moved" is a deficient translation, but it's BECAUSE, in English, we don't have a great word for the Greek there, which really translates more like, "snort."<sup>4</sup> Like an animal snorting and about to charge. John Calvin says that Jesus is here "like a wrestler preparing for a contest with a hated foe. The violent tyranny of death, which He came to overcome, now stands before His eyes."<sup>5</sup>...And, v.34, so Jesus says, "'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept." - Literally, burst into tears! Which admittedly, seems odd **right?** Cuz I mean, in like 10 minutes He KNOWS He's gonna pull Lazarus out of the grave and back to life. **So why's He crying?** It's BECAUSE you're being given a picture of how, AS A FRIEND, Jesus suffers with you!...See Martha struggled with wanting answers to why Jesus delayed and why her brother died. **So what did Jesus do?** He responded like a teacher, and gave her answers that helped her see in whom she was trusting... But Mary's not struggling with answers; SHE'S struggling with the hopelessness of what she's feeling. **And so how does Jesus respond to HER?** He doesn't say a word. Simply enters into her pain. Allows Himself to be deeply moved/even angry with her! **Cuz ya know what?** That's what a friend does! I mean, for Jesus, 10 minutes is really no different than 10,000 years **right?** And so He knows what's ultimately gonna be, not just the beautiful end to THIS story, but the beautiful end to YOUR story - how YOUR suffering/whatever that is for you today - will ONE DAY be swallowed up in glorious resurrection. He knows that! BUT He also knows that RIGHT NOW, you still hurt! Are still lonely, still in pain...still in need of a friend!...And boy what a friend we have in Him. Because you see, v.38, "Jesus, deeply moved again came to the tomb...(And said), 'Take away the stone.' Martha...said to him, 'Lord, there'll be an odor, for he's been dead 4 days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed you'd see the glory of God?'" - Which is to say, when YOU look at Jesus Christ, you are literally looking at divinity through the filter of humanity! The lion who is a lamb, and the lamb who is a lion!

"So, it says, they took away the stone. Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, thank you that you've heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people...that they may BELIEVE that you sent me.' When he said these things, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out.' The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'"...Mic Drop!... With a word Jesus raises the dead. Because for one who IS resurrection; it only TAKES a word...to completely **turn disappointment/disillusionment...to delight!**

## APPLICATIONS:

So I asked you in the beginning: **What do you do when you're disappointed/disillusioned with God?** Let me leave you with **3 Brief Things:** **First, Do Your Best Not To Blame God:** As I mentioned earlier, when you're suffering, it's really easy to say, "God, why are you allowing this?" Or worse, "There must not BE a God." But what you have to understand is that just like the Disciples couldn't understand why they needed to go back to Judea/Mary and Martha

<sup>4</sup> ἐμβριμάομαι (embrimaomai) Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 339

<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, Volume 5: John 11–21 & 1 John (Trans. T. H. L. Parker; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1959), 13

couldn't understand why Jesus hadn't come sooner, you too may not understand everything about why God is letting you go through some pain right now. But what you CAN understand is that for whatever reason God is choosing to ALLOW that pain, HE has had the honesty and courage to take His own medicine! Cuz of course, Christianity is the only faith in which God has come down and involved Himself in your suffering, so that someday He WILL end all suffering without ending you! So while you may not know what the reason for your suffering IS - as Tim Keller said, "*you DO know what the reason is NOT.* And it's NOT that God doesn't love you. No! He's loved you to the point of coming to be with you, weeping/being angry ALONGSIDE of you, and ultimately dying FOR you!...Don't blame Him so that it closes you off TO Him.

**Second, Determine Not To Be Afraid Of Death Or Decay:** And of course, on the one hand, I mean that literally. **2 Corinthians 5:8** says that, "*to be away from the body - to die - is to be home with the Lord.*" What that means is you're a follower of Christ this morning/**listen:** the worst thing that can happen to you is death! But the worst thing death can do to you - because Jesus IS the resurrection - is simply provide you a homecoming. **Remember high school homecoming?** That's when the biggest party was **right?** For those who are in Christ, death is simply an invitation into the biggest, most perfect party of your life! You literally don't have to fear it...But on the other hand, I mean it figuratively too. Cuz maybe you say, "*I'm NOT afraid of death.*" And YET you also say/we all do, things like: "*I'm scared I'll never get married. Afraid of not having that career I long for. What if I never have a family or enjoy a certain experience.*" You understand THAT'S a fear of death/of having your life slip away in some capacity!...But Friend, for those who are in Christ, as great as those things might be, they'll never trump what you have in Jesus. Cuz none of those things are resurrection! So even IF you get all those things; it'll never be as good as what you have in Christ. And if you NEVER get those things; you won't actually be missing out in comparison to what you HAVE in Christ. So determine to get Christ rather than be afraid of death and decay!

And then **Finally, Don't Limit Your Trust In Jesus:** Cuz if ya think about it, that's not only what got us into all the suffering we experience - again going all the way back to Adam and Even - BUT it's therefore what Jesus is ALWAYS pressing on/even USING your suffering TO press on. That's why He talks so much throughout this about "*believing and trusting*" Him. Cuz there's just so many ways we DON'T **right?** I mean The Disciples didn't trust He knew what He was doing in going back to Judea. Mary and Martha didn't trust that He cared. Even the Jewish crowd, you see there in **v.37**, didn't trust that He was really willing or able to help...The same is true for us. Some of you don't trust Jesus WITH your life and need to FOR salvation. Others of us don't trust Jesus in some area OF life and need to for sanctification. In other words, in some sense we're ALL unbelievers. And YET, if Jesus really is great enough to, not only, raise Lazarus from the dead, but HIMSELF from the dead for the forgiveness of your sin, then you can't limit your trust in Him! He can't be one you just bring into your life as a consultant or assistant when in need. But NOR can He be someone you simply serve out of obligation, given what He's done for you. Rather, He's gotta be BOTH your lion...and your lamb!/the One who instructs, guides and informs every aspect of your life, but who's also your comfort, your joy, your delight. Trust Him like that!...**Let's Pray:**