

## Good Friday's Sacrifice led to Easter Sunday's offering

### **John 11:1-44 (ESV)**

#### ***The Death of Lazarus***

**11:1** Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. **2** It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. **3** So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." **4** But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

**5** Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. **6** So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. **7** Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." **8** The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" **9** 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. **10** But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." **11** After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." **12** The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." **13** Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. **14** Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, **15** and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." **16** So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

#### **I Am the Resurrection and the Life**

**17** Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. **18** Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, **19** and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. **20** So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. **21** Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. **22** But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." **23** Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." **24** Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." **25** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, **26** and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" **27** She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

#### **Jesus Weeps**

**28** When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." **29** And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. **30** Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. **31** When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. **32** Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." **33** When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. **34** And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." **35** Jesus wept. **36** So 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 also have kept this man from dying?"

#### **Jesus Raises Lazarus**

**38** Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. **39** Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." **40** Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" **41** So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. **42** I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." **43** When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." **44** 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."

How did it end up here? Jesus hung on the cross like the worst criminal. Most of the people there thought he deserved it. And standing beside me, or should I say barely standing, was his weeping mother. Had I just wasted 3 years of my life? After all I'd seen, could this really be the end? How could it be that the one who claimed to be "the resurrection and the life" was dying in front of me?

My name is John, the Apostle. I was one of the twelve Jesus' chose along with my brother James. Looking back, I can't believe he chose us. We were so passionate yet reckless. We saw everything in black and white.

And we were so arrogant. We wanted the highest positions of honor in Jesus' coming kingdom. We grew up pretty well off. So we struggled with this ministry to the poor business.

Yet He saw something in us and Peter. We became very close to Jesus. We saw the miracles and how people responded to Him. He once invited us to come along to a home where a little girl died. Her father Jairus' was devastated. Yet Jesus went into the room. Her little body lay still like a calm lake very early in the morning. Yet a few words from his mouth and she came back to life. So Jesus with resurrection power was nothing new to me. Peter, James and I saw it happen in that room.

But the time He claimed to be the resurrection and the life, everyone saw His resurrection power. We were a fair distance from Jerusalem. A messenger arrived from Mary and her sister Martha, good friends of ours. Their brother Lazarus was very ill. When Jesus heard the message, He answered, "This sickness will not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

"Oh" we thought. "That's good. Lazarus may be sick but Jesus would somehow heal him. We were sure He would instruct us to pack up our things and immediately go to Bethany where they lived. But we stayed there two more days. So we thought Lazarus was not that ill. Then Jesus said, "Let's go back to Judea where that family lived" We were all confused. Jesus' opponents had just about killed him the last time there.

But Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." We thought he meant Lazarus was pretty sick but since he was sleeping, he would get better. Jesus heard our murmuring and then spoke plainly. "Lazarus has died. And for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." We were all shocked. Lazarus! Dead? How could this be? Why hadn't we left immediately when we got the news? In stunned silence we began the journey back to the little town of Bethany just outside Jerusalem.

As we approached the town, we met some people. Jesus found out Lazarus had been in the tomb already four days. He was definitely dead. Many people in our culture believed that when a person died, their soul stayed around the body for 3 days trying to find a way back in. But after 3 days, the soul departed. Lazarus was in no coma.

But before we had much time to digest this news, we saw Martha approaching. The devastation of grief twisted her face. “Lord,” she said, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”

Jesus replied “Your brother will rise again.” We all knew Jesus’ teaching of the resurrection or bringing back to life the dead in the last day. So did Martha. She responded “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” I thought Jesus was just comforting her with that future hope.

But then he said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” We all stopped. There was another one of His I AM statements. I AM is the name God gave to Himself when Moses asked for it at the burning bush. It was the divine name; God’s name. We’d heard Jesus’ declare “I am the bread of life. I am the Light of the World. I am the gate for the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd.”

Now “I am the resurrection and the life.” He claimed to have resurrection power in Him. I knew He had it because I’d seen Him raise that little girl. He claimed to be the source of life. So that if people believed in him, even though they died physically, they would live in heaven with God. They would never die. Then when the last day came, they would be raised with a new resurrection body to live forever with Jesus.

He asked Martha, “Do you believe this?” She answered “Yes Lord. I believe that you are the Christ the Son of God who is coming into the world.” I still thought He pointed to that future hope of the last day.

Then Mary came out. She said the same thing – “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw how hard she cried, He was deeply disturbed. He asked where they had laid Lazarus. When we arrived there, Jesus cried. People thought it was because He loved Lazarus so much. But He seemed to be looking at how hard everyone around was crying as if there was no resurrection and no hope for Lazarus.

So he commanded, “Take away the stone.” Martha immediately objected. “Lord by this time there will be a bad odor for he has been in there four days!” Jesus replied “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God.”

So they rolled away the stone covering the entrance to the cave. Martha was right. The stink of death floated out and penetrated our nostrils. We covered our noses and faces to stop the smell. What was Jesus

doing? Then He prayed “Father I thank you that have heard me. I knew that you always hear me. But I say this so that people standing here will know that you have sent me.”

Then he turned to the tomb and cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” At first, I didn’t notice but the smell went away. People started uncovering their faces. Then I wondered, if this miracle would actually occur, how could Lazarus come out? When we buried people, we tied their arms to the body. We tied the feet together at the ankles. And a burial cloth was wrapped around their head. But then we heard something from the tomb. It sounded like shuffling, like someone who walked with very short steps.

Suddenly a collective gasp rose through the crowd. There stood Lazarus still in his grave clothes. No one moved or even breathed until Jesus spoke “Unbind him and let him go!” Mary, Martha and others quickly rushed to Lazarus’ and untied him. We gathered around to see if he was really alive. Then we looked at Jesus in amazement.

But now I stood at the cross. What happened to the resurrection and life? Could He raise others from the dead but not save Himself? I stood there watching Him writhe in agony. Then around noon things got worse. The sky darkened. The wind picked up. His agony seemed so intense and increased and went on for nearly 3 hours until Jesus uttered the most horrible cry I’ve ever heard, “My God, My God why have you forsaken me?” This was more than physical pain. It was the pain of endurance; the pain of a Holy God’s wrath pouring out on His own Son for our sins, my sins.

Then it seemed to ease off. I heard Him say “I thirst.” So the Romans’ held up a sponge soaked with sour wine. He received it. Then He uttered those words that I thought were the end of Him and end of my life purpose. “It is finished.” With that Jesus bowed his head and gave up His Spirit.

The resurrection and the life was dead. How could the resurrection and life bring resurrection power to anyone now that He was gone?

On Sunday, we would know the answer. I was one of the first who arrived at the empty tomb. I saw His burial clothes not struggled through and ripped off but folded and placed just like someone had supernaturally

passed through them. Then I knew that the Resurrection and the life had passed through the burial clothes to his own resurrection.

Then resurrection and life could be offered to anyone who believed Jesus was the Christ. But to make that offer, the terrible sacrifice of what you now call Good Friday needed to happen.

**The sacrifice of Good Friday led to the offer of resurrection and life on Sunday.** So remember today all He suffered for you. Remember what He died to purchase for you. Remember that He had the authority to lay down His life for you. He did it so that you might have resurrection and life.