

The Story Before the Story



John 11–12

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It was 3:00 AM on Tuesday when my eyes flew open because Katie was nudging me saying, "Wake up! Wake up! I don't think Grizzy made it home last night." Now, Grizzy is our goldendoodle. I've had her for a couple of years now and she's part of the family. She always sleeps in the house, usually somewhere around our room or in the living room, in the chairs. She just kind of picks her own spot. Katie thought she didn't make it in that night, and usually I'm the one who lets her in so I guess I forgot. Sometimes that happens and she sleeps right outside the door, so I thought no problem and I get up and open the door. She's not there. I go to the back door. She's not there. We go up to the playroom. She's not there. We go in the closet. She's not there. So, I walk outside and I'm calling "Grizzy!" She always comes when I call because she loves me relentlessly, but she's not coming. There's no sign of Grizzy. So I tell Katie, "She must be at Mom and Dad's house." Mom and dad live across the road and they have a new Poodle named Charlie, and Grizzy loves Charlie. So I said, "She just wanted to see Charlie and stayed over there too late. Memish and Papaw probably just brought Grizzy in, made a little bed, it's going to be fine, Katie." Well, Katie didn't buy that. So at 4:00 AM I'm driving my truck up and down the road looking for Grizzy. At this point, I'm

thinking if I find her on the road, it's not going to be good. We've already gone through one dog getting hit by a car and just how terrible that is, so I don't want to this again...I can't tell my kids this again. I drive all the way down the road looking the whole time and I don't see Grizzy, which is good news for me. I go back home, it's 4:15 AM, and I think she has to be at Mom and Dad's house so Katie texted Mom and Dad right then at almost 4:00 in the morning. They don't answer. I go back to sleep but Katie stays up the rest of the morning; she can't sleep. I'm asleep because I hadn't slept much that night, but at 6:00 AM my mom calls, and I wake up thinking oh, good news! But I hear her just yelling through the phone, "Grizzy's not here. We don't have Grizzy!" I'm like, oh no...my one plan was she was at Memish's house and she's not there. So Katie's worried, I'm worried, and I get back in the truck. It's now around 7:00 AM. Katie looks all around in the woods everywhere and I get in my truck and make the drive down the road again. This time I go a little further because I realize now something has happened, either she got hit by a car or the coyotes got her—something happened to Grizzy because she always comes home, she's never away from home, and especially if she's not at my mom and dad's house, something bad has happened. So Katie is going to take the kids to school and she says, "Call me whether it's good or bad." I'm driving around trying to find Grizzy, calling out of the truck, and I get back close to Mom and Dad's house when I see Dad's truck at the end of the driveway. He calls me on the phone, I answer it, and he says, "I have Grizzy!" My heart just explodes! I'm so happy. I didn't even know that I loved this dog this much, but now I know that I really care for this dog. I'm thinking that I don't tell my little girl now that her dog died; everything is great now! I come close to my dad's truck and he gets Grizzy in his arms (and Grizzly is like a hundred-pound dog!) so I come and take her and she's licking all over me! I'm just squeezing her and hugging her because she was dead to us, and now, she's alive to us! I asked Dad what happened and he said, "Well, I opened up the shop door this morning and Grizzy jumped out." Apparently, she somehow got locked in the shed, spent all night there, and nobody knew where she was. Everyone thought she was dead, and then I called Katie and she answers with that panicked voice and I say, "Hey, I got Grizzy she's with me!" I could hear all the kids cheer! I put the kids on

speaker phone and they talked to Grizzy, "Grizzy, we love you so much!" Everybody was just excited. The kids say, "As soon as we get home, all we're going to do is cuddle with Grizzy," and they did. They cuddled with Grizzy and loved Grizzy because to us Grizzy was dead. We all assumed she was in the road somewhere, a coyote got her, we're going to find her when the buzzards find her, and it wasn't going to be good. Our poor dog died, but suddenly she's raised from the dead.

So we had a little resurrection story that comes right before Easter, *the* resurrection story—it's kind of like a little story before the story. In John's Gospel, we're going to see a Man raised from the dead and it's actually the story before the story. He's going to use the story of Lazarus to be the story before the story. We are going to start in John 12 and we're going to read a lot of scriptures, so we're just going to read through this story and I want you to just get absorbed in the narrative of what's happening in this story.

Verse 1 says, "Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead." Now hold on just a moment...I mean that's a line! So, they are having a dinner party and there's a guy there who another guy just casually raised from the dead. This happens a lot, right? We all have that guy that we met that got raised from the dead, right? No! Nobody does...you don't, I don't. We had a dinner party last night to watch the Final Four. One of the Sunday school classes came over and I got to meet a new guy named Bobby. Imagine if Trevor introduced Bobby to me and said, "Hey, meet Bobby. Bobby is the guy that Jordan just raised from the dead." What do you think my response would be? "Uh, what? He did, uh, he did what?" "Oh, you know, a couple days ago he just raised him from the dead. No big deal." That's never been said. In the history of the world, that statement has never been said except for right here.

I just want to feel the weight of that. This is something spectacular that has happened. There's a man who raised another man from the dead. So we've got to have some background, we're going to need some details. How did this all go down? I want us to go back and see really the story before the story, because what John does is he tells the resurrection of

Lazarus before the resurrection of Jesus. He's sort of priming the pump; he's priming our hearts for what's going to happen during Holy Week. We're going to be in chapter 11 and we're going to walk through the story of Lazarus. Here's what the writer 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 him, saying, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.'" So we have the story of these two sisters who have a brother who's about to die. He's really, really sick, but they've got good news—their friend is with the miracle worker. They're friends with Jesus of Nazareth and you know what Jesus does? Everywhere He goes, He heals people. So, they're like...*Oh, no big deal. Jesus loves us, He knows us, we're not just bystanders and passersby; we are His friends and He loves Lazarus. This is really easy. Don't worry, brother; we're going to send for your best friend and He's going to come and do what He does. He's going to keep you from dying. That's what the miracle worker does!* Jesus heals people.

This seems like a very easy story, "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.'" Jesus is saying there's more going on than you guys know about. This situation, it's actually not going to lead to death it's going to lead to something else. It's going to lead to God's glory and the way God is going to get glory is I, the Son of man, am going to be glorified through Lazarus. Something is going to happen with this illness that is going to be about the glory of Christ. In other words, they have a plan for Him to heal their brother but Jesus has a bigger plan, and that is to bring glory to Himself so that people can see who He is. See, we often have a plan but we have to know that God always has a bigger plan, and a better plan, even in our suffering, even the midst of what we go through, and this is going to be the story of Lazarus.

Notice this next statement. It's a little shocking. Here's what it says in verse 5, "Now, Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." So, Jesus loves them. He is friends with them. He's buddies with them. He's hung out with them. He spent time with them. The miracle worker knows these

people personally and He loves them. So, what do you expect to happen? If the miracle worker loves them and his buddy's about to die, he's going to run to him and keep him from dying. That's what you would expect love to do. But notice what John says, "So..." in other words, because He loved him, "...when He heard Lazarus was ill, He stayed two days longer in the place where He was. That's a little shocking. Let me just put this really bluntly—because Jesus loved Lazarus, Jesus let him die. That's pretty harsh, right? That doesn't sound like love. Usually when you love somebody and you have the power to keep them from dying, then you would keep them from dying. But Jesus lets him die and He said it's because He loves these three so much that He's going to let Lazarus die. His love caused Him to delay and let His friend, whom He loved, not just get sick, but His sickness leads to death. So why does Jesus delay? Well, He's already told us the sickness is not unto death, it's to His glory and He's going to do something. We're going to see all throughout the story that Jesus is about to do something that is going to be more loving to Lazarus than just keeping him from dying so just track with me.

In verses 11–15, Jesus is with the disciples and He says, "After saying these things, he said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.' Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them 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.'" He's saying...*Hey Lazarus is dead now and I'm glad that I didn't go save him. I'm glad that he's dead.* That doesn't sound very loving, right? That doesn't sound like a loving friend. Friends who love friends don't let friends die if they can help it. But Jesus let him die and He says I'm happy for your sake so that you can believe. He's talking to the disciples, so not does He love Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, but now He loves the disciples and He wants them to see and believe. This is about them seeing something and believing something.

But notice how Jesus interprets death. He says...*Oh yeah, Lazarus has fallen asleep, and I'm going to go wake him up.* The disciples are like ok, well he's napping so he'll get up eventually...but Jesus makes it plain that

he's died. Jesus sees death differently than we do. See, Jesus is reminding them that death is not the end but for believers death is just the beginning. If we're in the Lord, when we fall asleep we will wake up in the Lord. Can you imagine how good that news is for brothers and sisters in Nashville this week who just went through an horrific tragedy? Three little kids and three adults lost their lives. They were innocent, just going about their business, going to school, and then an horrific thing happens. So to hear Jesus say that those who die in Him, they're just asleep, and the truth is they're going to wake up. Do you know what those little kids saw as soon as they woke up? They saw the Lord Jesus. They're sleeping and they're going to wake up. See for Jesus, because there's an empty tomb, death is not final for us; death is like sleep. We go into it and we wake up on the other side with King Jesus. He's changing death for us and He's changing it even in the story. Lazarus is asleep and He's going to go wake him up, and that's what Christianity is going to be like. Everyone is going to die, they're going to sleep, and they're going to wake up. It's not the final enemy anymore because He is going to defeat the final enemy on the cross and then through the empty tomb. So, Lazarus is just asleep and Jesus is going to go wake him up, and this is all about the disciples being able to believe in Him.

Then, we're going to go to the sisters. Notice in verses 20–21, “So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’” I mean, ouch! That's kind of like...*Hey Jesus, thanks for coming—if you had come, he wouldn't be dead. This is kind of your fault. You have the power and the opportunity. I don't know what you're busy with. I don't know what sermon you're preaching or what revival you had, but I just want you to know that my brother, your friend is dead and you could've stopped this.* And do you know what? She's absolutely right. Jesus could have stopped Lazarus from dying. Here's sort of big theme I want you to see all throughout the story—it's going to happen three times. Everyone in the story wants Jesus to keep Lazarus from dying, that's the purpose, for Jesus to keep their brother, keep their friend from dying. Jesus does not want to keep Lazarus from dying, Jesus wants to save Lazarus from death, and that is a huge difference. We're

going to see all throughout this story that Jesus is not concerned with saving a man from dying He's concerned with saving a man from death. That final enemy that separates us from God, that's what He's concerned about. That's what He's going to war about. Jesus doesn't want to stop you just from dying so that you can be healthy and happy and have a good life; Jesus wants to kill death for you so that when you do die (it's going to happen) you wake up with Him because death has been defeated. That's what Christ came to do. We're going to see all through the story that everybody wants Jesus to do the little thing; Jesus wants to do the big thing in their life.

So, Martha said you could've saved Lazarus from dying and that's true, but notice how Jesus spins the conversation in verses 23–26, “Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’” See, Jesus is trying to build up the moment where He's able to tell and show that He is the resurrection and the life. He's not just here to save a man from dying; He is here to destroy death and that is by Him becoming the resurrection and the life. Now, there's not just a resurrection coming at some point in the future, Jesus is the resurrection. It's Him. He is the foundation of this new thing. He is the cornerstone. He is this new creation that is dawning. He is the resurrection and the life, which is what we will celebrate happening a week from today. This is Palm Sunday, and Resurrection Sunday is coming, celebrating when Jesus truly became the resurrection and the life. But Jesus wants to give them a little foretaste. He wants to give them a story before the story so they would see that He is the resurrection and the life. Throughout John's Gospel, He's made these “I am” statements, seven times: I am the bread; I am the door; I am the good shepherd; I am the way; the truth; and the life; I am the vine. This is one of those “I am” statements, which by the way is taking the name of God—**I am**—in other words, **Yahweh** is the resurrection and the life.

I want to pause just for a moment and ask you personally, is Jesus your resurrection and life? Do you have new life? Have you been raised from

spiritual death? Is Jesus now your life? Because that's what He came to do. He didn't just come to extend your life and prolong your life; He came to save you from death so you could have new life, resurrection life, so you could have life in His name. So, is Jesus your resurrected Lord and Savior? Has He brought you out of your tomb and do you now have new life? That's what He came to do.

Now, Jesus is going to interact with Mary, the other sister. Verse 32 says, "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." Again, the same thing—if you had come he would be happy and healthy and everything would be good, and it is true—Jesus could have saved him from dying. That's not why Jesus came. We'll see it again.

In verse 35, it says, "Jesus wept." See, Jesus comes to the scene and He's not some distant deity He is right there in their suffering. He is emotional. He is feeling the weight of this. He feels the loss of His friend. He suffers when we suffer. His heart bleeds when our heart bleeds. That's who Jesus is. He comes in our suffering and He suffers with us. He doesn't love the curse. He doesn't love the fall. He doesn't love that we are sick and dying. He doesn't love it when we die. He is weeping in this moment and His weeping leads people to say this in verse 36, "So the Jews said, 'See how He loved him!'" Of course, you have to imagine some people are talking. Like...*Hey, we thought Jesus liked Lazarus. Apparently not. Lazarus has been telling us Jesus is his bestie but Jesus didn't even come and heal him, and he's healing random people, everywhere but doesn't come and heal his own buddy! I don't think Lazarus even really knew Jesus, but well, look, Jesus is crying. I mean, it seems like it.* So, they're all a little confused, verse 37 says, "But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?'" That's the third time we've heard that, and it's true. The man who opens the eyes of the blind can also keep sick people from dying. Jesus could keep Lazarus from dying. That's not His purpose. That's not why He came. He did not come to keep Lazarus from dying; He came to save Lazarus from death, and we're going to see it in His own resurrection.

Verses 38–39 say this, “Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’” Now, I just want to put in your mind that there's a tomb, there's a cave, and there's a stone. Does that sound like any other story that's coming up? Does that sound maybe like what we will celebrate next Sunday, where there's going to be a cave, there's going to be a tomb, and there's going to be a stone and the stone is going to be rolled away? Again, I think John's intentionally saying, there's a story before the story, there's a resurrection before the resurrection of Christ, and I want you to show that that resurrection is to make us escape death, and get life.

So, Jesus rolls away the stone from Lazarus' tomb and they're all kind of freaked out. They say he's been dead like four days and this is going to be smelly. And then in verses 43–44, it says this, “When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out.’ The man who had died came out...” I mean, just think about how weird that sentence is, “The man who had died came out.” How many times have you heard that sentence ever? It doesn't happen. Dead people don't come out! But this dead man came out when Jesus called him. When Jesus spoke his name, this dead man came out of the grave. You also have that story if you're a believer. When Jesus spoke your name, you came out of your spiritual darkness, your spiritual tomb. You were dead, and now you've been made alive through the calling of Christ. You know this! You feel it because it's your story. You can identify with Lazarus.

Notice when 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.’” In other words, this man's not dead anymore, he's alive...he's good and alive; you can go check him, go take his grave clothes off. So, we see this little story before the story. Everyone in this scenario wanted Jesus to save Lazarus from dying; Jesus is the only one that wanted to save Lazarus from death. He wants everyone around to believe, to show them that He is not just a miracle worker who keeps people from dying; He is the resurrection and the life. He is saying...*If you believe in me, when you die it'll be like going to sleep, because I've killed the greatest enemy, which is sin and death. That thing that separates you*

from God, I've destroyed it on my cross. I've vindicated it through my resurrection, and now, if you believe in me, death now is like sleep and you wake up in my presence. See, Jesus doesn't want to keep you from dying; He wants to save you from death. He wants to save you from your separation from God. He wants to make it where when you close your eyes, you open them in the presence of Jesus. That's what Christ came to do.

Now, it takes back to the party. Now we know the story before the story, and now we're at the dinner party. And it's like...*By the way, Lazarus, that guy is here because the other guy, yeah, raised him from the dead.* Now you know the story and you know why people are there, and it's a little bit of a...*Whoa, is that the dude? Can I go touch him?* Lazarus is a celebrity now, right? His social media followers have increased. People are now paying attention and watching Lazarus. He's kind of a big deal. He's probably already written an autobiography, already signing copies of it. And now, we have this dinner party that they're throwing, not for Lazarus but for Jesus. I can imagine when Lazarus walked out of the tomb there was a moment where his sisters and all the friends were like...*Lazarus!* (Like we did with Grizzly) *Lazarus, we love you!*...and they are just going crazy. I think that lasted probably for about three seconds then it all dawned on them, and they all kind of turned around. Jesus was just probably sitting there like...*What's up? How are y'all doing? Yeah, I'm the resurrection and the life.* Can you imagine that scene! When it dawned on them, it was like oh who is that?...*I'm the resurrection and the life. Believe in me, I just showed you that I can, not just keep people from dying, I can kill death.* And that is what we desperately need. We don't just need a longer, prolonged life; we need someone to kill death, and that's what Jesus came to do.

Let's pick up in the story in verses 2–8 of chapter 12, “So they gave a dinner for Him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with Him at table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples (he who was about to

betray Him), said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. Jesus said, 'Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.'"

So, there has been a resurrection (Lazarus), now there's going to be a burial, but it's a burial of Jesus. But I just want to walk back through the scene a little bit because here you have Martha serving, it's kind of her deal, and then you have Lazarus who's just reclined at the table, and Mary is worshiping. So, Martha serving, Lazarus is setting, Mary is worshiping and I think she's getting it right. She grabs this jar that's a pound of pure nard and she pours it all out on Jesus' feet. She takes her hair and she is wiping His feet, she's anointing Him for burial, and the entire house is filled with this aroma. Everybody notices because you're not supposed to do this with pure nard. This little jar is three hundred denarii. That's a whole year's wage! That means it was about fifty thousand dollars in today's time. So it's meant to be used in little doses. Like those little essential oils, it's really expensive and the cap is only made for a drop or two to put in a diffuser. You're not supposed to get a five-gallon bucket and pour in the house. A: it's going to cost a lot, and B: the aroma is going to be everywhere. That's not how you use it. This is pure nard; this is valuable. She is being extravagant; she is over the top; she's doing what she shouldn't do; she used it with abandon. Why? Because she is worshiping her Jesus. Everybody is saying you shouldn't have done that; that was too much; you went too far. And what they call wasteful, Jesus calls beautiful. He says you see her wasting her life because she's giving everything to me, but she's the only one who's understanding what's really going on—that I am Lord and Savior, I am resurrection, I am life and she is worshiping me, and she's preparing me for my own burial, for that moment where I am going to destroy death for all of you. She is worshiping the Lord.

Then we see verses 9–11 say this, "When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of Him but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. So the chief

priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.” (Now, that's the second time it said that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Remember, we'll hear it three times; He could've saved him from dying, three times in this story we're going to hear Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. It's a pointer, saying they want this but Jesus came to do something greater...Jesus came to save them from their death.) So, the chief priests make a plan—everybody's following Lazarus because Jesus raised him from the dead, how about we go kill him? I'm thinking yeah, that'll work. I couldn't see how that plan would backfire, can you? Hey, this guy got up from the dead let's kill him...umm, wouldn't you think it might happen again? You're dealing with a guy who can raise people from the dead so it's probably not a good day to kill people that He can just raise from the dead, but this is their plan.

Now we get to palm branch moment, we get to Palm Sunday. So, we saw the story before the story, and now we're all caught up and here's what it says in verses 12–13, “The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!’” They take palm branches and they begin to wave them, and that was sort of a national symbol of Israel. They're hailing themselves as Israelites and it's also a way to show victory after war. When you win a victory, you grab palm branches and you wave them. They are saying we believe this has already won this war. He's already going to conquer our enemies, and they quote Psalm 118 and they say, “Hosanna,” which means Lord save us, please. And they say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” He's “even the King of Israel!” So they're all saying Jesus is the King of Israel who's going to save us, and what they mean is to save us from these Romans, to save us from our oppression, just like Moses did out of Egypt. Jesus is going to come and he's our King, and He's going to bring us out from these Romans and we are going to be powerful again. They're waving Him as the King. So we're going to see that they want Jesus for a wrong reason and they're all going to abandon Him when the cross comes because they want a political leader who can make their lives better. They

don't want a Savior who conquers their greatest enemy, sin and death. They're not going to understand. They're not going to get that.

Notice what Jesus does next. Verse 14 says, "And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, 'Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!'" Everyone is saying, Jesus, you're the King, and so Jesus grabs a colt of a donkey and He sits on it and He rides into town. What's Jesus trying to say? I am who you say I am; I am the King of the Jews; I am the Promised One. See, a lot of times during Easter week and Christmas you see these weird articles that say Jesus never really said He was this and the church makes up this stuff; He was just this good teacher, more a revolutionary, and everybody just like packed on all these things and made all these stuff up. Jesus knew His Old Testament. He knew the King of Israel was going to ride in on a donkey, and when He sees everybody coronating the King, He says...*I'm just going to ratchet up a notch. Just in case, go get my donkey. Let's do this thing. Let's make sure everybody knows, like Zechariah 9:9 said your King's going to come in on a donkey. I'm the king. I'm here.* See, Jesus is not just a good teacher, not just a nice guy (He is those things), He's not just your Savior (He is that), but He's also your Lord and King. He is the ruler of the universe to whom every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord. He's not just the King of Israel; He's the King of kings and He is the Lord of lords. He is making a declaration—*this is who I am*. His disciples didn't even understand these things at first. When Jesus was glorified then they remembered these things had been written about. See, they didn't read the Old Testament very well. These are fishermen, so they were like...*We missed Bible School, we are fishing. Oh yeah, Zechariah said that!* Then when He rose from the dead, they're like...*Oh! That was He was saying—He's King!* Yes disciples, good job, you got it!

Verse 17 says this, "The crowd that had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness." That's the third time John has reminded us what Jesus did. Everyone wants Jesus to do what? Keep Lazarus from dying. What does Jesus want to do? Destroy death for Lazarus. He wants to save Lazarus from death, and that's what He did through the resurrection. But notice

verse 18, "The reason why the crowd went to meet Him was that they heard He had done this sign." That's why they came to Him. They heard about the sign. They heard about the miracle. They heard about the resurrection. They're coming to see the show. They're not seeking Jesus as Savior; they're seeking the signs that are around Jesus, the wonders, the miracles. They're not coming to them as a Savior; they're coming for the signs. I just want to ask you now that you're here on Palm Sunday, why are you here? Are you around Jesus and around the people of Jesus because you love the miracles, you love the signs? Do you love the idea that somehow being close to Jesus will make your life better and you'll be more blessed? That you would have a greater marriage and your kids will behave, and you're not going to get cancer and all these things just going to magically work themselves out because you're close to Jesus and Jesus does these signs? Are you coming to Him for all the things He can give you? That's why the crowd came...and when the cross came up, they all left. What believers do, they don't come to Jesus just for signs and miracles; they come to Jesus as Savior. They come to Jesus as people who need saving from their sins and saving from death. Jesus is our Savior. That's why He came. He didn't just come to keep you from dying and to make your life better, healthier, and wealthier. He came to save you from sin and death. That's what Jesus does. That's who Jesus is. So if you have a sin problem and a death problem, separation from God, Jesus is your man. He killed death at the cross and He destroyed it through His resurrection, and that's what He wants to do in your life.

As we pick up the story, we see that there's this Greek guy who comes to Jesus and all the disciples are like... *You're Greek, you can't come to Jesus. Jesus is for the Jews.* Jesus is like... *Look, I'm going to die, and I'm for all people.* He's not just Savior to the Jews; He's Savior to all people. In the verses that follow, He said He's going to be lifted up. That's talking about the cross of Christ—He's going to be lifted up and then all people will be drawn to Him.

And then, we have this closing that John does, and it's a closing about unbelief because what we see all through the story is this command to believe. Hey, believe it, believe it, believe it, and then we're going to find

the people who are not believing it. John's going to give us some reasons why from the Old Testament. It says this in verses 36–41, When Jesus had said these things, He departed and hid Himself from them. Though He had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in Him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 'Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.' Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke of Him." John grabs two Old Testament scriptures from Isaiah. The first one is from Isaiah 53. You probably know that passage, right? It's the passage of the Suffering Servant, the one who's going to die in our place for our sins, and he's saying Isaiah was writing about Jesus. Isaiah saw Jesus in that passage. Jesus is the Suffering Servant. But then, he brings another passage, Isaiah 6, that "holy, holy is the LORD." Do you remember when the Lord filled the temple and He showed Himself as the King? He is the Lord of hosts, the King of kings, the Lord of lords. John says Isaiah was looking at Jesus. He saw His glory and he spoke about Him in that moment. John is taking two massive theological understanding of the Old Testament—there's going to be a Suffering Servant and there is an exalted King—and he's saying Jesus is both of those things. He is the Suffering Servant who is also the exalted King.

See, they can't wrap their minds around how you can suffer and also have glory. It happens a week from today when Jesus, on Good Friday, is the Suffering Savior. He's a Suffering Servant who dies in our place for our sins, but then that Sunday morning He is the exalted King who rises from the dead as our conquering King of kings. See, it's both of those things. Do you know what John wants you to do? He wants you to believe. Believe who Christ is. He's working out of Lazarus so that the disciples would believe. He's working His own resurrection so that people would believe in him and have life in His name. But notice this sad line in verses 42–43, "Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in Him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than

the glory that comes from God." Even the authorities, even the religious leaders are starting to believe in Jesus because they saw it, they see Him, they know. They're becoming believers, but it's secret. In other words, they believe intellectually in their mind but they're not willing to apply. They're not willing to confess it. They're not willing to go all in with Jesus because they want their place at the synagogue. They want their place of authority. In other words, they know it will cost them the glory of man and they prefer the glory of man rather than the glory of Christ.

So I just want to ask you, as we went through this whole story, because what we've seen is it's really a story before the story. It's a story of Lazarus and then we have the story of the resurrection, which is coming Sunday. But I think we also have stories after the story. It's not just Lazarus got risen from the dead, and then Christ rose from the dead. It's when Christ rose from the dead, He now, after Him, has many brothers and sisters who are calling on His name and have been raised from the dead. So, my question is do you have a story after the story? Do you have a resurrection story like Lazarus before? Are you Lazarus afterwards? Has Jesus called you out of your tomb and given you life because of His death, burial, and resurrection? Do you have resurrection life? Do you have a story after the story? Has His story changed your story? Just think about a few characters in this story, are you like these religious leaders? Yeah, you want to believe, but man, there's too much at stake. You know it'll cost you too much so you believe it intellectually but not in your heart. You're not confessing it. You're not following the Lord because you really love the glory of man more than the glory of God. You don't have a resurrection story. You believe it in your head but you don't believe it in your heart and it hasn't changed your life. Or are you like the crowds? You are believing in the signs but you're not believing in the Savior. You like all the good that Christ can do but you don't come to Him for your sins to be forgiven and to have new life. Or are you a little more like Lazarus and Mary? You've been raised from the dead and now, like Mary, you're extravagantly loving Jesus. You're giving everything to Him because He is worth it. See, everyone in the story wanted Jesus to save Lazarus from dying and Jesus wants to save Lazarus from death, and that happens through resurrection. Jesus doesn't want to save you from dying. You will die if the Lord doesn't come

back. You will die. It's going to happen. He's not going to prolong your life. That would be really bad. Can you imagine being three hundred years old? Nobody wants that, right? Nobody. He's not going to try to save you from dying; He wants to save you from death, separation from God, your sins, your greatest enemy. He wants to turn your dying into resurrection so that when your eyes close you open them in the presence of Jesus. He's not here to save you from dying; He wants to save you from death, the very power of death, and that happens through His death, burial, and resurrection.