

Jesus Goes To War

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INI - SDG

John 11:1-45 Now a certain *man* was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was *that* Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. ³ Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." ⁴ When Jesus heard *that*, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, 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 he was sick, He stayed two more days 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, lately the Jews sought 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 one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." ¹¹ These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." ¹² Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." ¹³ However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him." ¹⁶ Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." ¹⁷ So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. ¹⁹ And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. ²⁰ Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. ²¹ Then 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 of 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 at the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ "And whoever 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 to come into the world." ²⁸ And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you." ²⁹ As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly and came to Him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. ³¹ Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there." ³² Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³ Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. ³⁴ And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" ³⁷ And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" ³⁸ Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, 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 him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been *dead* four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up *His* eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. ⁴² "And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are

standing by I said *this*, that they may believe that You sent Me." ⁴³ Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" ⁴⁴ And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go." ⁴⁵ Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.

Jesus Seeks The Battle

Good farmers need to know how to take advantage of opportunities. There is a window when it is time to plant. There is a window to harvest. There are some things you must do when it is dry. Some things to do when the sun is up.

We know how to take advantage of opportunities in farming, at auctions and in the grocery store. But Jesus isn't at the grocery store. He isn't talking about farming. Jesus has come to destroy death. He is seeking and taking advantage of opportunities to do battle with death.

This is what Jesus means in verse nine:

John 11:9 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."

When the sun rises there is the opportunity to get out of bed and get outside to get the work done while it is day. A lazy person will make excuses to put off the work that needs to be done and will lose the opportunity. His disciples are afraid to go back near Jerusalem. Jesus says that now is the time. Now is the opportunity to do what I came to do. Jesus isn't going to metaphorically lay in bed while the sun is up.

This is what we have seen Jesus doing the last four weeks. He takes advantage of opportunities to destroy death. Nicodemus came to Him by night. He used the opportunity to battle the darkness. Jesus met a woman at the well, rather than worry about His own rest he used that opportunity to give rest to the woman. Jesus found a man born blind. In that chapter Jesus said something very similar to our text.

John 9:4 "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work."

Jesus takes advantage in order to bring light to eyes and souls.

Jesus came to battle death. Lazarus is another opportunity to destroy death.

Jesus Battles death both Physically and Spiritually

The life which Jesus gives is not just the physical life that He gives to Lazarus, but also the life He gives to many of the Israelites. Jesus' words call Lazarus out of the grave, but they also call many out of the darkness of spiritual death and unbelief into the life of God.

John 11:25-26 I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.

In these verses Jesus makes two separate statements. These statements are not a repetition but are in fact two separate promises. I am the resurrection, and I am the life. Each of the two sentences that follow explain a different promise.

I am the resurrection. This is explained by the first statement.

"He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live."

With these words Jesus promises physical life. Our bodies may die but those who believe in Him will be bodily raised from the dead in the resurrection.

I am the life. This is explained by the next statement.

"Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

With these words Jesus promises spiritual life to our souls. Those who have been called out of spiritual death to life in Christ, their souls shall never again die.

Jesus has come not to conquer destroy in all forms, spiritual and physical. He gives life to our spirits and our body.

Jesus sends us out into the same battle.

We are good at taking advantage of opportunities to save money at the grocery store. We are not so good at taking advantage of opportunities that God gives us to do battle for the sake of God's kingdom.

There is little doubt that America is an even larger pile of dry bones then the one we heard about in our Old Testament reading. Preaching to a pile of dry bones seems worthless. Yet God sends Ezekiel and through that preaching gives life to those bones. Without the sharing of that word the pile will only get larger.

We like the Ezekiel are told to preach to dry bones. When we preach God promises to send His Spirit to rattle them bones. Sharing God's word with many in our country seems like a hopeless task, but we have the promise of the power of God working through that preaching. The same power that called Lazarus from the grave gives life even to dry bones.

We live in a society that teaches us to think that things like religion and God are private things that we ought to keep to ourselves. Just as the disciples urged Jesus not to go to Judea so our sinful flesh often urges us not to speak up and share the word.

Jesus sends us out to do battle with death, as we have opportunity.

He tells us "**Go and make disciples . . .**"

When Jesus tells us to go, He does not mean that we have to go to another content. He means that as we go about our daily activities, we look for opportunities to share the news that Jesus is risen from the dead.

Its important to take advantage of opportunities to share Christ when you have them, least you come to the night and find you accomplished nothing.

Jesus still seeks opportunities to battle death in our lives.

Because of our sinfulness often fail badly to see and take advantage of those opportunities God has given us. Because of our sin Jesus continues to battle death in our own lives.

The name Lazarus is a shortened form of the name Eleazar which means, "God has helped." We are all Lazarus, those whom God has helped.

Jesus is still seeking opportunities to do battle with death. He is seeking ways to reveal His glory in our lives just as he did in the life of Lazarus and the man born blind.

Nothing has changed since His ascension. He daily battles death in our lives, calling our souls through His word to wake from death to live to him. He calls us as He called Lazarus to come out of the tomb of our sinful selfishness and live to him. He calls us through His word and through the sacrament we are about to receive.

He provides us with all that we need so that we will see His goodness and trust in Him. He allows sin and sickness and suffering so that we might be reminded of our sin and repent of it. He heals and strengths us so that we will know His mercy and turn to Him. He daily battles death in our lives. His word gives life to our souls and His food gives life to our bodies.

Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He cares for us body and soul. He gives life to our souls now through His word and he promises resurrection for our bodies in that life to come.

"In Jesus' day, many people believed that a person's soul lingered about the body for three days, and thus there was hope of resuscitation. However, after the fourth day, there was no hope of the dead person being resuscitated."

Jesus waited until the fourth day to show without a doubt that he can and will raise the dead.

This is who our Savior is and this is who we are. We often refer to the believers on this earth as the church militant. Jesus leaves us for now on this earth so that we may do battle with death.

In our text Thomas has no idea how wrong he is. He says, "**Let us also go, that we may die with Him.**"
John 11:16

The apostles did not find death when they followed Jesus but life. Lazarus did not find death but life. The women who went to the tomb did not find death but life. We do not follow Jesus to die with Him. We follow Him to live with Him. **Amen.**