

Sermon for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Date: September 22, 2024

Location: Zion – Colby, WI

Old Testament: Isaiah 55:6-11

Epistle Reading: Romans 6:15-19, 20-23

Gospel Reading: John 11:1-44

Sermon Text: John 11:1-44

Sermon Title: Miracles: Waiting on a Miracle

Introit: Psalm 37:5-7; Antiphon: Psalm 37:4

Hymns:

LSB 474 – Alleluia! Jesus is Risen (v. 1,4,5)

LSB 552 – O Christ, Who Shared our Mortal Life (v1,9,4)

LSB 955 – Let the Vineyards be Fruitful

LSB 593 – See this Wonder in the Making

Distribution:

LSB 633 – At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing

LSB 609 – Jesus Sinners Doth Receive



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Text: John 11:1–44

¹Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. ³So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴But 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.**”

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

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

²⁸When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” ²⁹And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. ³¹When 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. ³²Now 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.” ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴And he said, “**Where have you laid him?**” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” ³⁷But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹Jesus 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.” ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, “**Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?**” ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “**Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I 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.**” ⁴³When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “**Lazarus, come out.**” ⁴⁴The 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.**”

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Grace and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

This week we are starting a series looking at some of the miracles of Jesus. Just for a little bit of context Jesus, that is God, created all things and when He created the world He created an order. There are rules that govern the natural world.

There is gravity, the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics, the fact that the earth rotates around the Sun, the Moon rotates around the Earth. All of these things are natural laws God established. Now is a miracle when we see God operate outside of the natural order He created? No! I want you to see miracles as something different. I want you to see them in a new light, in a way you've perhaps not thought of them before.

We think miracles are the suspension of the natural order, but believe Jesus meant for them to be the restoration of the natural order.¹

We are going to walk through the Gospel reading, which you can find in your bulletin, or open Bibles to John 11.

I want you to understand: Before sin entered the world, before there was death, before there was suffering, before there was disease, before the Fall and walk out of Eden, the supernatural was the natural order.

We are going to look at one of Jesus' last miracles. In John chapter 11, verse 1 it begins:

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.



It continues:



³ So the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, he whom You love is ill."

⁴ 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."

Bethany was a small village about two miles east of Jerusalem. Interestingly, you have to kind of go through the Mount of Olives and the garden called Gethsemane to get there.

Lazarus was nothing special beyond a very good friend of Jesus. He isn't known for anything in particular. He was just a regular guy, who just happened to be one of Jesus' favorite people. Jesus would often go to their home to take a rest and share a meal.

It says in verse 5

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

He loved them. They were good dependable friends. But look at what the Bible says:

⁶ So, when He heard Lazarus was ill, He stayed two days longer in the place where He was.



1 Pastor Tim Keller

Doesn't that look like a typo in the Bible? "He loved them so much He stayed where He was two days longer." It doesn't say: the traffic was too bad; He was afraid of getting arrested; He was in the middle of some crucial teaching. That would make sense. What doesn't make sense is He loved them so much He didn't go.

When you're praying for a miracle from God, often the first lesson we learn is: **How to wait on the Lord.**² That's part of it. You look through the whole of the Bible, and you see time after time, example after example, of God giving: a vision, a burden, a promise, and then nothing for a time.

When we look at Mary and Martha, they know Jesus loves them, they know He cares, but when someone you love is suffering and hurting, even a few days feels like an eternity. What do you do when you've begged God for something?

These are prayers where you are figuratively, or maybe actually, on your face before God saying, "God, I need You now. I need You and I don't know what will happen if You don't show up."

What happens to your faith when you're waiting, and it seems like God is not hearing you. You know God loves you, you love God and you need Him to show up to deal with the trouble in your life. What do you do in your faith when you're living with trouble in your soul?

You remember:

You don't have to understand the plan
to understand God has a purpose.

Never forget God says:

As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are My ways higher than your ways
and My thoughts than your thoughts.³

We don't want God to think like us because, as we're about to see in John 11, there may be something a whole lot bigger going on than what we can see. So let's explore how we reconcile our troubled soul?

Let's watch as Jesus has a conversation with the disciples. He says:



⁷ Then He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

And the disciples remind Jesus:

⁸ Teacher, the Jews [*the Temple authority*] were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?

Have you ever been in a conversation where the two of you are talking about two completely different things? Look at how the conversation is going starting in verse 11.

² Psalm 27:14

³ Isaiah 55:9

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.” (*Meaning there’s no reason to risk Your life.*)

Then in verse 14

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.”

It took a couple days to get from where they were to Bethany and the house of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. That’s where we find ourselves in verse 17.



¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days.

So just grasp this. That means Lazarus died the same day Jesus got word of his illness. Remember, Jesus is God. He already knew that, and still waited for days. Also note that Bethany is not far from

Jerusalem, and this was a well known family so many people are there as Jesus walks in. Let’s pick up in verse 20

²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him. Mary stayed at home. ²¹ Martha told Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.



This is the first way we learn to reconcile a troubled soul. If you are living there right now, here’s what you do. You start with learning to pray honest prayers, really honest prayers. Notice Mary and Martha are grieving in different ways. Mary didn’t even leave the house. You might be able to identify with at. Something happened. You asked God for help and He didn’t do it the way you expected. Some get to a place where they feel God gave up on them. They think, “You know this Jesus thing, I think I’m out. I tried it. I’m good. I’m just gon’na stay in the house.” Sometimes people get to that place.

Martha on the other hand, makes a beeline to the gate of the village, straight to Him. He doesn’t even get through the gate and she stops Him to say what she thinks. Notice: Jesus met them both right where they were.

I think sometimes when we hear we should pray really honest prayers, you may think, “That makes me uncomfortable. He’s God, I shouldn’t be irreverent.” I would say it’s not irreverent, it’s intimate. God can handle your frustration. He can handle your questions. How can you have intimacy with God if you are unwilling to be genuinely honest?

For these two ladies, a funeral has already happened. The worship service is long over. The casserole is in the refrigerator. They’ve all told the stories like, “Hey, remember that time when Lazarus was 10?...” Then, days later, Jesus shows up.

When we are waiting on God, we aren't waiting for nothing. A Divine delay is not ever His denial. There may be a good reason for God's pause. So when we're dealing with your troubled soul, let's start with just praying honest prayers.

Secondly, and this may challenge you, I want you to risk your heart and believe in God again, hope again. In verse 22



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.”

The next thing Martha does is run to her sister to say:

²⁸ The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” ²⁹ And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to Him.

It takes courage to risk your heart in believing again, to hope again. These two sisters were handling the situation in very different ways, but Jesus met them both right where they were.

Then the picture gets powerful. Look at verse 32.

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.

This is so powerful! God, the Creator of all that is, wept tears of sorrow. He lived, out loud and on purpose, His own words from the Sermon on the Mount where He said:

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.⁴

Now I'm sure He was not weeping for Lazarus because He knew why He was there. You're not going to weep or sob over somebody, if you know you're going to bring them back to life in a minute. What we see here is the very nature and heart of God. He chooses to walk right into

our suffering with us, to stand with us, even cry with us. There is a reason why He may not remove the struggle or pain from you right now, but He still chooses to put Himself right there with you in it.

He has, He feels, and He shows compassion. The Latin word for compassion literally means to co-suffer, to suffer with you. He chooses to live with and in your pain with you. Every tear you've cried, you have never cried alone. You have never cried alone because He has been with you the whole time, crying with you.⁵ Believe in Him. Risk your heart and your soul for Him.

Come what may, God is still good all the time. He is still a miracle worker. He is still the God that can look at hopelessness and sees the future hope that is yet to come. Nothing is over until Jesus says it's over.⁶ Your life could look hopeless. Nothing is finished until Jesus says it is finished.

Let's get back into John 11 at verse 38.



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."

Sometimes we get so preoccupied in the natural that even when we're speaking or praying to the One who is super-natural we forget who we're talking to.

It's important to note it was day four. This is significant, because at that time, the Jews had a belief, (we're not really sure where they got it) but they believed a person's soul stayed with the body for three days after they died. Sometimes God waits until there's only one explanation.



The whole point of this miracle was to magnify and display His glory so people would believe in Him. "It's gonna smell, Lord." Here's what Jesus says:

⁴⁰ "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 know that You always hear Me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe You sent Me."

⁴³ When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"



5 **Matthew 28:20** – [Jesus said] "...And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

6 **Revelation 22:13** – [Jesus said] "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

⁴⁴The 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.”



Sometimes God is going to wait until your expectations have expired, so He can display His glory and so others may believe. All of these challenges you’re navigating may all be a part of God’s design to use you to impact others, to grow their faith, to ensure their salvation.

God is present in your temporary, but He’s focused on the eternal. He puts Himself in this momentary challenge, but He is thinking about heaven and He’s thinking about your eternity. What Mary and Martha didn’t really understand is this miracle wasn’t about Lazarus, it was about them, and it is about you.

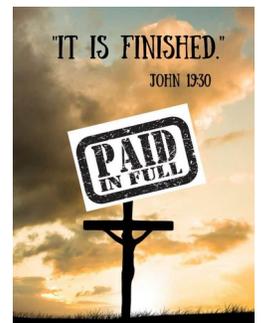
This miracle created two paths. People were flocking to Jerusalem because they heard of this miracle. At the same time the High Priest Caiaphas saw this as the last straw. For him it meant Jesus had to die.

Following this miracle, in John chapter 12, Mary anoints the feet of Jesus in preparation for His burial. That is followed by the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The end of that week we see the arrest in Garden of Gethsemane, the torture in the courtyard of the High Priest, and then the crucifixion of Jesus as He dies to pay a debt we owed.

Then He says those words. Those conquering words of victory, power and might, “It is finished!” Nothing is over until Jesus says it’s over. Nothing is finished until Jesus says it is finished. “It is finished” was Jesus declaring the miracle had now occurred. What miracle? Death is no longer the end. Death no longer has a sting.⁷ Why? Because Jesus said:



I am the resurrection and the life. And he who believes in Me will live even if He dies. And everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.⁸



The next thing Jesus says is, “Do you believe this?⁹” So do you?

It is the truth, spoken by God Himself to you. You may think your not worth it. You’re not, but your worth is not dependent on you.

God’s love does not depend on what you are worth.
Your worth is defined by God’s love.

You are His child. Do you believe it? I pray you do.

Amen.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

⁸ John 11:25

⁹ John 11:26



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Witnessing to God's love.
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