



Making Sense of Life When Life Doesn't Make Sense

Sermon 4

When Death Strikes, What Do I Do?

John 11

Death is real.

It is no respecter of persons, families, ethnic groups, languages, religions, or cultures.

Death is real.

It strikes unexpectedly, suddenly, tragically, and forcefully.

Death is real.

It occurs at the beginning of a bright future, and also at end of a long illness.

Death is real.

It comes upon the elderly, the older, the middle aged, the young adult, the teen, the child and the infant, and the babe in the womb.

Death is real.

It happens to the wealthy, the aristocrat, the socialite, the high roller.

Death is real.

It overcomes the poor, the homeless, the downtrodden, and outcast.

Death is real.

It appears to the healthy, vibrant, the energetic, and the athletic.

Death is real.

It to the shows up to the educated, winsome, charming, charismatic.

Death is real.

Death has been real since our first parents, Adam and Eve, said no to God's plan in the Garden of Eden. God placed them in optimum conditions with gorgeous surroundings, uninterrupted fellowship with Him, and everything they needed to fulfill His plan for them.

And... Satan lied... "Yea hath God said"?

And Adam & Eve defied... "They took of the forbidden fruit and ate..."

And death cried... I've got you!

And Adam lived 930 years, and he died – Gen. 5:5

And Seth lived 912 years, and he died – Gen. 5:8

And Enosh lived 905 years, and he died – Gen. 5:11

And so goes humanity... and they were born, lived, and died.

The Apostle Paul brilliantly summarizes this for us in Romans 5:12

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all people, because all sinned”

The Biblical Context: John 11

Jesus is summoned to come at once. His close friend, Lazarus was close to death.

In “Barnes Notes on The Bible” it states, “Where he was - At Bethabara [John 1:28](#); [John 10:40](#), about 30 miles from Bethany. This was about a day's journey, and it renders it probable that Lazarus died soon after the message was sent. One day would be occupied before the message came to him; two days he remained; one day would be occupied by him in going to Bethany; so that Lazarus had been dead four days [John 11:39](#) when he arrived.”

To quote John MacArthur regarding this passage:

“In this portion, we're going to see the cosmic supernatural creative divine resurrection power of God in action. And this power is beyond the ability of man to understand, let alone to accomplish on his own. We're going to see the kind of power that stops the processes of death decay, the kind of power that reverses rigor mortis, pours new life into rotted organs and starts a bloodless heart beating and pumping fresh blood to every organ and every limb, the kind of power that creates a whole new body, the kind of power that creates blood out of nothing and makes it flow fast and fresh, the kind of power that takes sightless decomposed eyes and gives them new tissue and new nerve in order that they may see again, the kind of power that takes a nonfunctioning decomposed mass of rotted brain tissue and gives it new powers to think and feel and move and speak. We're going to see resurrection power, the kind of power that in a word makes the dead alive. This is the power that Jesus puts on exhibit in this chapter and this kind of power is something that belongs only to God. God alone gives life and Christ here, giving life to Lazarus, proves beyond doubt that He is God, for the ability to give life belongs to God.”

“Making Sense Out of Life When Life Doesn’t Make Sense”

Sermon Outline – Message # 4

When Death Strikes, What Do I Do?

1. Mary and Martha’s Desperate Plea - vs 3

When Lazarus’ two sisters, Mary & Martha sent word to Jesus that their brother was sick, they made sure to say “Lord, he whom you love is sick.” This is an odd statement, because Jesus loved everyone, and surely they know that.

Why did they make that statement?

- a. They were appealing to Jesus’ deep personal affinity and friendship for Lazarus because they used the Greek word ***phileo*** (the friendship type of love) or
- b. They were appealing to His compassionate heart, His emotions, and sympathy for Him please to get there quickly.

2. The Determined Delay - vs 4-16

- a. Jesus explains a specific reason for Lazarus’ approaching death – It is for the Glory of God
- b. Jesus’ love for these three is revealed vs 5 = ***agapao***
- c. Jesus stayed two more days where he was; He was in no hurry to get to Bethany
- d. Jesus takes time to give a teaching lesson to His disciples – vs 6-16

3. The Definitive Explanation - vs 17- 27

- a. Lazarus had been dead for 4 days when Jesus arrived vs 17
- b. Many friends and family had arrived from Jerusalem to comfort the family vs 18, 19
- c. Martha confronts Jesus vs 20 – 27
“If you had been here, my brother would not have died”
- d. She exhibits raw emotion, disappointment and perhaps even some anger
“Yet, even now I know that if you say the word, he will rise to life”
- e. Jesus responds to Martha: “Your brother will rise again.”
- f. Martha replies: “I know; he will rise again in the resurrection.”
- g. Jesus responds: “I am – ***ego eimi*** in Greek (I am, I am) **The Resurrection & The Life**
(Jesus uses the definite article “**the**” for emphasis)
 - 1) Where ever I am, Resurrection is present!
 - 2) Where ever I am, Life is present!
 - 3) The one believing (***pisteuo*** in Greek) present active participle denoting continuous action (though he may die, yet shall he live)
- h. Jesus continues: “Whoever lives and believes in **Me** shall never die. Do you believe this?”
- i. Martha’s confession – vs 27: “Yes Lord, I believe (***pisteuo*** – perfect tense indicating that she has believed and settled this question and now it has abiding continual results) that You are **the** Christ, **the** Son of God, who is come into the world.”

Note the similarity of her confession to that of Peter in Matthew 16:16

4. The Distinct Call - vs 28-44

- a. As Jesus approaches the grave, he probably saw a cave hewn out of rock. Archeologists have unearthed family tombs in this area that were 6' x 9' x 10'. They had
- 3 slabs to the right
 - 3 slabs to the left and
 - 2 slabs at the front
 - all of the slabs were attached to the interior walls.

When one died, they did not have sophisticated embalming options like they had in Egypt, so they would hurriedly anoint the body with perfumes and so forth, presumably to help control the odor for a while. Then they would take linen strips and wrap each arm and leg, then the torso, then put a small sheet over the head and face, and then lay them on an open slab.

This is more than likely the type of grave Lazarus was entombed. And, they would roll a large round rock to cover the entrance.

- b. As Jesus approaches the grave, he sees the family gathered weeping.
- c. As Jesus approaches the grave, he is met by Mary, who simply says: "If You had been here, he would not have died."
She is obviously upset and trying to make sense out of Lazarus' death when it does not make sense to her.
- d. As Jesus approaches the grave, He sees and hears all the emotion, and He has three responses...

- 1) Jesus groans in His spirit – vs 33 **embrimaomai** in Greek

(some translate this as Jesus experiencing *indignation* – that He was indeed mad, either at death who had captured his friend, or mad that the sting of death had so deeply hurt these people He loved.

- 2) He is troubled – vs 33 **tarasso** in Greek

The same word is used in John 14:1 when Jesus told the disciples not to have troubled hearts because He was going away

- 3) He weeps – vs 35 **dakruo** in Greek means to shed tears

This is the only place in the New Testament where this word is used.

- e. As Jesus approaches the grave, He begins to speak

1) Take away the stone vs 39

2) Did I not tell you that you are about to see the glory of God? Vs 40

3) Father, I thank you.... Vs 41, 42

4) Jesus shouts with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" and out he came!!

5. Notice Several Important Things Here

- a. Lazarus had been dead four days; and by now there was a stench coming from the grave.

Why did Jesus wait four days? Most likely because there was a superstition among Jews at this time that when a person died, their spirit would hover close by in hopes of coming back into the body for a resurrection. On the fourth day, so says their superstition, the spirit would then finally depart into the next world. Perhaps Jesus was waiting until the fourth

day so that everyone, including those who held to that silly superstition would know that Lazarus was really good and dead and that his body was truly in a state of decay.

- b. Jesus called Lazarus by name, for if He had just shouted "**Come forth!**", every tomb in the area would have opened!

Conclusion:

Death is real. Unless Jesus comes again in our lifetime, every one of us will die.

The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27: "It is appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment."

A wonderful step toward "*Making Sense Out of Life When Life Doesn't Make Sense*" is understanding these basic immutable truths:

- God is a wonderful, loving Heavenly Father.
- He created everything perfect, but sin entered into His creation.
- He had the solution for our sin problem before the sin problem ever existed.
- That solution was the gift of eternal life through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Yes, sin is real and sometimes life is really difficult to understand because sin has so marred and tainted God's original plan. And
- Yes, death is real, too. For the Believer, we need to see death as simply the doorway into eternity with Christ in heaven.
- Unfortunately, though, for the unbeliever, death is the doorway into **eternal** separation from God in hell. Consider what this means..... But
- Jesus has come to pay the price for our sins, die on a cruel Roman wooden cross, shed His blood to cover our sins, and to satisfy the just demands of God for our sins. And
- Jesus was victoriously raised from the dead by the power of the Father, was seen by his disciples and over 500 eye witnesses, and then ascended back to heaven. And now He waits for you to trust Him for your personal salvation and for your Christian growth. And
- If seen through the eyes of God, perhaps understanding death and other perplexing things in your life are a part of God's big plan to bring glory to Himself and to grow you into being more like Jesus.



Grace Ministries
1771 International Pkwy. Ste. 117
Richardson, TX 75081
Office Phone: (800) 527-4014

Website: www.grace101.org