

RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS

John 11:1-54

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus

Key-location: Bethany

Key-repetitions:

- Resurrection: the resurrection (Jn 11:24, 25); Lazarus' resurrection (Jn 11:43-44, 46).
- Jesus was told, "Lord, if you had been here my brother wouldn't have died": by Martha (Jn 11:21); by Mary (Jn 11:32).
- Weeping: Mary wept (Jn 11:33); Jewish friends wept (Jn 11:33); Jesus wept (Jn 11:35).
- Jesus was criticized: Some questioned why didn't Jesus keep Lazarus from dying (Jn 11:37); Jesus directed the stone be removed, but Martha complained that Lazarus' dead body would stink (Jn 11:39); some reported Lazarus' resurrection to Pharisees (Jn 11:46).
- Bury/tomb: Lazarus had been in tomb for four days (Jn 11:17); Jewish friends thought Mary had gone to tomb to weep (Jn 11:31); Jesus asked where Lazarus was buried (Jn 11:34); Jesus went to the tomb (Jn 11:38); the tomb was a cave (Jn 11:38).
- Stone: The tomb was a cave with a stone (Jn 11:38); Jesus ordered, "Take away the stone" (Jn 11:39); they took away the stone (Jn 11:41).
- Jesus' dialogue with: his disciples (Jn 11:4-14); with Martha (Jn 11:21-27, 39-40); with his Father (Jn 11:41-42).
- Jesus gave orders: told disciples, "Let us go to him" (Jn 11:15); ordered, "Take away the stone" (Jn 11:39); shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" (Jn 11:43); told people, "Unwrap him and let him go" (Jn 11:44).

Key-attitudes:

- Martha and Mary's grief when Lazarus died.
- Martha and Mary's feeling betrayed by Jesus because he had not prevented Lazarus' death.
- Jesus' sadness.
- Jewish leaders' fear and despair when they heard about Lazarus' resurrection.
- People critical of Jesus.

Initial-situation:

During the second half of the third year of his public ministry, Jesus made three trips to Jerusalem to participate in three different religious feasts. The first trip was for the Feast of the Tabernacles. After the Feast, Jesus was still in Jerusalem and on the Sabbath he healed the man who had been blind since birth. That provoked a conflict with the Pharisees.

Jesus' second trip to Jerusalem was for the Feast of Dedication. Jesus was in the temple and claimed that God was his father. The Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy and

picked up stones to kill him. After the Feast of Dedication, Jesus went across the Jordan River.

Initial-problem:

The sisters Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that their brother Lazarus was sick.

Final-situation:

Jewish authorities plotted to kill both Jesus and Lazarus, because many Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus as a result of the miracle done for Lazarus.

BIBLE STORY

Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus lived in Bethany. Lazarus became sick. The sisters, Mary and Martha, sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

Jesus received the message and said, "The final results of this sickness will show God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through this sickness."

Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus; however, upon hearing that Lazarus was sick, Jesus stayed where he was two more days. After two days, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

The disciples answered, "But Teacher, recently the Jews tried to stone you; you're going back?"

Jesus told the disciples, "Our friend Lazarus is asleep; but I'll go wake him."

His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he'll get better." Jesus was speaking of Lazarus' death, but the disciples thought Jesus meant natural sleep.

Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. But let's go to him" (Jn 11:1-16).

Jesus arrived in Bethany and found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem; many Jews visited Martha and Mary to comfort them. Martha heard that Jesus was coming and went out to meet him, but Mary remained at home (Jn 11:17-20).

Martha told Jesus, "Lord, if you'd been here my brother wouldn't have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

Jesus answered Martha, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha responded, "I know he'll rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies; whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Martha replied, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world" (Jn 11:21-27).

Jesus stayed where he was, but Martha returned to the house and told Mary, "The Teacher is here. He's asking for you." Mary jumped up and went to Jesus. Jewish friends noticed how quickly Mary got up and left. They followed Mary, thinking Mary was going to the tomb to weep.

Mary reached Jesus, fell at his feet, and said, "Lord, if you had only been here, my brother wouldn't have died."

Jesus saw Mary weeping, and he saw the Jewish friends who had followed her also weeping. Jesus was deeply moved and troubled. Jesus asked, "Where did you bury Lazarus?"

They replied, "Lord, come and see" (Jn 11:28-34).

Jesus wept.

Jews said, "See how deeply Jesus loved Lazarus!"

Others said, "If he loved Lazarus so much, why didn't he keep him from dying? Jesus opened the eyes of the blind man; he could have kept Lazarus from dying."

Jesus again was deeply moved. He went to the tomb. The tomb was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. Jesus ordered, "Take away the stone."

Martha replied, "But, Lord, by this time there is a bad smell. He's been buried four days."

Jesus told Martha, "I told you that if you believed, you'd see the glory of God."

They took away the stone. Jesus looked up and prayed, "Father, I thank you that you listen to me. I know that you always listen to me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" Lazarus came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go" (Jn 11:35-44).

Many of Mary and Martha's Jewish friends saw what Jesus did and put their faith in him. But some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. The chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling body.

They asked, "What are we accomplishing? This man is performing many miracles. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him. Then the Romans will come and take away our power and our privileges, and they'll destroy our temple and our nation."

Caiaphas, the high priest, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You don't realize that it's better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."

From that day on, the Jewish authorities plotted to kill Jesus (Jn 11:45-53).

The chief priests plotted to also kill Lazarus because many Jews were leaving the Jewish leaders and believing in Jesus because of the miracle done for Lazarus (Jn 12:9-11).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Mary and Martha's brother Lazarus was sick, why did they send a message to Jesus?
2. Why did Jesus delay responding to Mary and Martha's message?
3. How can the story of Lazarus' sickness and resurrection help us deal with sickness and/or death, when we must face it for ourselves or for our loved ones?
4. Why did Mary and Martha feel that Jesus had failed them?
5. How did Jesus prove he has power over death?
6. How did the religious leaders rationalize their plans to kill Jesus and Lazarus?
7. Feel free to share your experience of a desperate situation that strengthened your faith.

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **People in need should call on Jesus for help.** Mary and Martha's brother, Lazarus, was sick and they turned to Jesus for help (Jn 11:6).
2. **Potential disaster can ultimately bring glory to God, since God can bring good out of a bad situation.** Jesus said that Lazarus' sickness was for the glory of God (Jn 11:4). See Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28.
3. **God loves, even when he does not respond immediately to his loved ones' requests.** Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus; however, when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days (Jn 11:5-7). Jesus loved this family, knew their pain, but delayed his response. His delay had a specific purpose. Jesus expressed his deep love for the suffering family by weeping (Jn 11:35).
4. **The believer in Jesus has victory over death and will have perpetual life.** Jesus told Martha that he himself is the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Jesus will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Jesus will never die (Jn 11:25-26). The resurrection of Lazarus was a sign of Jesus giving the believer victory over death (Jn 11:44).
5. **Jesus has power over life and death.** Jesus brought Lazarus back to life from the dead (Jn 11:43-44). Jesus is life and he can restore life (Jn 14:6).
6. **When leaders' plans cause others to suffer, they mask their actions as being for the good of the people.** When planning for Jesus' death, the Jewish leaders masked their reasons as:
 - To protect the people from following a deceiver (Jn 11:48).
 - To protect the temple and Jerusalem from destruction by the Romans (Jn 11:47-57).

- To do what was best for the majority (Jn 11:50-51).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Role-playing Drama:

Have two volunteers pretend they are religious leaders discussing why it's necessary to kill both Lazarus and Jesus.