

Is Our Confidence in Christ? (Part 1)

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[0:00] Turn with me to the Gospel of John chapter 11 this morning. Familiar text to all of you I'm sure, but some things that I think that we can glean from that, that perhaps we've not recognized before.

As I say, a familiar passage of Scripture, a lot of things that are found in there. Some good doctrinal studies are there. We see Christ Jesus in the power of resurrection. We see him declaring that he is the resurrection and the life and those type of things. And then the story of Martha and Mary and Lazarus and how he loved them. They're kind of some special friends that Jesus had throughout his ministry. But there's an underlying theme here that I think we really need to try to pull out of here, pull out of the text. Because I really believe this is something that Jesus is really focusing on, in particular to his apostles. Realize with me, these 12 men that have been called of Jesus to follow him and be a part of his work and be used of him, are really in the classroom experience as they walk with him for two, two and a half years.

Everything Jesus does, everything he says, has a learning experience, in particular for these 12 men, for these 12 apostles. And they're present here at the events of John chapter 11. Some things they're going to need to know. I love the way Jesus does this throughout his public ministry with the apostles. That they're, you know, just kind of under the surface, does some work that serves to penetrate the mind as well as the heart of these men that are with him. Now, yes, there's benefits to others, the multitudes that are there. Many come to know Christ as a result of what he does.

But I want us to focus on what he's doing with the apostles here. And it's not just basically for the sake of the apostles, but it's for you and I as well. So pick up with me. We're just going to read a few verses for the sake of time, and then we'll travel through the passage together. Verse 1 of John chapter 11, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now, maybe, you know, some of you have different translations that may speak even more precise about that. But when Jesus said, this is not a sickness unto death, he's simply saying, this is not death in its final issue. In other words, it's not going to be the culmination of what happens to

Lazarus here. He's going to die. In fact, Jesus says that in a little bit. But it's not the final issue as far as the life of Lazarus is concerned. Go back to verse 4. Again, he said, this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now, Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. And when he had heard, therefore, that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that, saith he to his disciples, let us go into Judea again. And his disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again. And Jesus answered, are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things saith he, and after that he saith unto them, our friend Lazarus sleepeth. But I go that I may awake him out of sleep. Now, notice the carnal fleshly thinking of the apostles here. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he do well. I like that. You know, you just don't wake a guy up from a good nap. Amen? You just don't do that. And that's kind of what the apostles were saying here. Lord, if he's sleeping, don't wake him up. He's doing good.

[5:26] All right? Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. Now, notice verse 15. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there. To the intent you may believe, nevertheless, let us go unto him. It's not for the sake of Lazarus, not even per se for the sake of Mary and Martha, though they get in on this. He said, what's transpiring here, and in particular, the reason for my delay, apostles, is for your benefit. And we'll see what that benefit is in just a moment.

Pray with me, if you will. Father, we thank you today, again, for the privilege of being together to worship you and to preach your word, to dive into your word, to feast on your word together. So, Father, thank you for that opportunity today. Now, I do ask that you speak to our heart through this and that you will enable us to make the personal, practical application of the word of God and what you say to us through it today to our lives. So, honor your son and thus yourself through what is taking place here this morning, through your word, and we'll thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, we know the rest of the story, and we're going to get there for just a moment. But what was it Jesus was saying here? You know, Mary and Martha, send word, our brother, the one you love, is sick. As if to say, Lord, if you come, we know you can do something about that. You can heal him, keep him from dying. But purposely, he delayed. Now, why is that? Now, keep your finger in John 11, but realize with me, what we really see here is another Mark chapter 4 experience. Turn there with me just a moment, if you will. Mark chapter 4. You'll remember what happens here. Begin at verse 35 with me. And the same day when the evening was come, he saith unto them, that's Jesus. Let us pass over unto the other side. Now, if you're following the Lord Jesus in his ministry, you've seen the reality that he is the Christ, that he's the promised one, that he's God in the flesh. And so, you have to believe that anything that he says is true. Anything that he says is going to transpire. He says here to his apostles, let us pass over unto the other side of the lake, of the sea. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship.

[8:35] And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind. Now, that normally is not a good thing. You're out in the middle of the water here, and all of a sudden, a big storm comes. A Urochladen, if you will. Great storm. Now, the waves beat into the ship so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship. What was he doing? Asleep on a pillow. Yeah. Now, it's amazing. These are the guys that say in John 11, Lord, if Lazarus is sleeping, it's good for him. Don't wake him up. But now, what do they do?

Jesus, asleep in the back of the ship, head on a pillow, resting well from a weary day. And all of a sudden, they go wake him up. They wake him up and say, Lord, carest thou not that we perish? Lord, don't you care? Look what's happening. The waves are beating upon the boats, and the water's coming in. We're going to drown. Lord, don't you care? Look what he does. He arose and rebuked the wind and said unto the sea, peace be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

Now, look at verse 40. He said unto them, why are you so fearful? Here's the key. Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith? Here they were in the boat. And there were other small boats that traveled along with them. But these guys in this boat with Jesus were in the boat with the one who was God in the flesh. Yet when the storms came, they were scared to death. Jesus said, why is it that you're so fearful? Fear in the presence of deity is out of place.

[10:53] Look what they say. Verse 41, they feared exceedingly and said one to another, what manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? What manner of man is this? Now, back in John chapter 11, I want you to notice something. When Jesus gets word that Lazarus is sick, and you know, Mary and Martha had sent their their servants to bring word to Jesus. And they got to believe here that whatever the message read, it gave the idea that this is a serious thing. That it was one that they didn't expect him to live unless God intervened. But I want you to notice, in the midst of that, he waited two days.

Notice the calmness within him. Notice the fact that he did not react with human emotion like most human beings would.

And there's a reason for that. Now, again, remember, though he's God in the flesh, he's still operating in his earthly ministry in his humanity. But there's a calmness here. Because he's conscious of the divine presence and power of God that's in the midst of all of this. Calm, collected, waits two days, and then tells his disciples. We must go on into Judea. The apostle's response was, Lord, you go there, there's people there who want to kill you. Jesus, in essence, responds, as long as we're doing the Father's will, we'll be fine. And then he spoke of the fact, Lazarus is asleep. Then he's dead. I'm glad for your sakes. Now, what is it he's wanting to do here? He's wanting to get the apostles to recognize. They already know who he is. Haven't really fully comprehended all of that at this point. But they know who he is. They, Jesus wants them to recognize.

[13:37] recognize that their confidence and their expectation of anything must lie in him. They saw the beginning of that in Mark 4 on that little boat. And now he's going to do something here to provide for them more of a reality of what their circumstance here is, what their situation is, and who it is they're walking with. It's for your benefit, he says, that I've delayed, that Lazarus died, because something here is going to transpire. So they go into Bethany, or go toward Bethany, just outside of town. Martha gets to come to him. And she runs out to him. And notice and remember what happens here. Verse number 19.

Many of the Jews came to Mary and Martha to comfort them concerning their brother, the professional mourners, you realize. All right. Come to help them grieve and mourn. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him. But Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha... Now, that's an interesting thing here. I just have to think about this. When Martha gets word that Jesus is coming, I'm sure that Mary caught word at the same time. Martha runs, if you will, to meet him. But Mary stays right there in the house, grieving. We'll look at that some more in a minute, how that pertains to everything. When Martha gets to Jesus, notice what happens. Verse 21. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. Now, I don't think it's an accusation here against Jesus.

[15:51] But perhaps they thought the message that was given to him was late and getting there, delayed for some reason, whatever. But it's just a statement of faith. Lord, had you been here, this probably wouldn't have happened. He probably wouldn't have died.

But I know that even now, whatsoever thou will ask of God, God will give it thee. And then Jesus responds by saying, thy brother shall rise again. Martha, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Then in verse 25, that monumental statement, Jesus said unto her, I am, I am, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Now look at this next phrase, believest thou this? Mary, do you believe this? How so does she respond? Notice.

She saith unto him, yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which had come into the world. When she had so said, she went away, called Mary her sister, secretly saying, the Master has come and calls for you. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto him.

And now Jesus was not yet coming to town. It was in that place where Martha met him. Now, the Jews then, which were with her in the house and comforted her, that's the mourners, when they saw Mary, she arose up hastily, went out and followed her, saying, she goeth unto the grave to weep there. It's the only thing I can think of. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou had been here, my brother had not died. Same statement.

But look at something here. You remember how Jesus responded to Martha at that statement? Your brother will rise again. But look how he responds to Mary here. Now, when Jesus therefore saw her weeping, notice that, when he saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping, which came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled. Now, recognize something with me here.

[18:40] He groaned in the spirit. But I want you to notice something. He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.

That word groaned is the word that means to snort like a horse in anger. Now, isn't that interesting? To snort like a horse in anger.

Now, look what he said. Why is that? Look what happens. He says, Where have you laid him? Where have you laid him? And they said, Lord, come and see.

Why? Why did he groan in his spirit? Why was he troubled? Didn't say he was that way at Martha, but he was at Mary.

And it comes after the time when he sees Mary, no doubt weeping, but these professional mourners with her as well. Why? Why did that have such an effect?

[20:00] Now, there are some that will say, well, this was Jesus responding in his humanity because of the compassion and love that he has for Mary and Martha, and his heart was just broken.

But wait a minute. You don't see that. In fact, in the first time he gets the message of his illness, he waits two days calmly, trusting, confident into the divine power that he's aware of.

Here, I think it's something different. Realize who Mary and Martha are. Remember previously when Jesus came, anytime Jesus came through Bethany, they wanted to host him. They loved him so dearly, he loved them. And remember the time that they put on a feast for him? He went to dine in their house.

Martha was busy in the kitchen, remember? Flower flying everywhere, pans rattling. She's busy in the kitchen, fixing a sumptuous feast for the Lord Jesus.

[21:18] She was married. She was in the living room with Jesus. Martha comes out, you remember, and says, Lord, here's Lyon's paraphrase.

Lord, we're glad you're here, and we want to just do the best we can, provide a great meal for you. But Lord, would you please ask my sister to come and help me?

I'm busy. I'm doing this all by myself. Lord, can't you get her to come help? What did Jesus say?

Martha, Martha. Boy, when he calls your name twice, you've got to listen.

Amen? Martha, Martha. You are anxious and troubled about many things, but there's one thing that's needful, and your sister has chosen that better part.

What is it that Mary chose? She chose to sit at the feet of the Master and learn from Him. Yeah.

[22:23] That was what was most needful there. Now, we don't know what Jesus taught or told Mary at that point. Got to believe it was something about the kingdom.

And now here she is. The one that sat and listened and learned from Jesus about whatever it was, now says to Him, Lord, had you been here, He wouldn't have died.

It's the same Lord that was at dinner that's now there close to the tomb.

He groaned in His Spirit. And I believe the reason being is because could be a couple of ways here. But I think it's because, most of all, that Martha just hadn't gotten a hold of it yet. He groans because humanity is weak and unable and frail to really grasp a hold of the reality of who Jesus is and what He can do.

[23:44] Now, notice with me. I'll show you what I mean here. He says to her, Where have you laid Him?

Hmm. Where have you laid Him? He's groaning in His Spirit. He said, Where have you laid Him? I thought about that here a while back. And I thought, You know what's happening here?

You see, deity wrapped up in humanity, yearning for a means of expressing itself. God in the flesh, His deity is wanting to break forth and show who He is and what He is.

Where have you laid Him? Yeah. They said, Lord, come and see.

Come and see. Now, I don't know what the tone of that statement was, but the thought just comes to mind. You go to the cemetery and you see all different kinds, different arrays of headstones and markers.

[24:55] When Darla and Michael, our son and daughter, lived in Louisville, we went to visit them and they said, You've got to go over here to Cave Hill Cemetery.

You've got to go through that, Dad, and just look at it. And we did. Oh, it's tremendous. Centuries old. Monuments of all shapes, sizes, just tremendous.

It's just to see. You know, people adorn those grave sites with various ornamental things. And I'm just wondering here, when they say, Lord, come and see, if that's not kind of the same way.

Come see where we've buried him. Come look at the array we've got here to honor his life. And look at the next, look how Jesus responds here.

What do they say? Shortest verse in the Bible. Jesus wept. Now that word in the Greek that's translated wept is a word that simply means to shed a tear.

[26:01] To shed a tear. No doubt. It's the idea here, really, to weep silently. I think for the same reason.

And I say that because it's not the only occasion where we see Jesus weeping. Look in Luke chapter 19. Turn there with me just a moment. Luke chapter 19.

Record of Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem prior to his crucifixion.

Now, you go to Luke 19. I'm going to read something out of Luke 20, Luke 13 for you here in just a moment. In Luke 13, verse 34, same event here.

Jesus says, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto thee.

[27:00] How oft would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings. And you would not.

Now, in Luke 19, verse 41, when he was come near, he beheld the city. Comes over, probably around the Mount of Olives, begins to see a panoramic view of Jerusalem.

He comes and beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.

For the day shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round and keep thee in on every side and shall lay thee even with the ground and thy children within thee and they shall not leave on thee one stone upon another because thou knewest not here's the phrase because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

in essence, you missed it. Israel, Jews, you missed it.

[28:33] I came as your Christ, your Messiah, to establish my kingdom and you missed it. you want to crucify me.

Now, the word wept there. Different word. Similar, but different. When he weeps at the grave of Lazarus, it's a silent weeping.

this is a loud demonstration of great lamentation here. Literally, he audibly bursts into tears saying, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you've missed it.

You've failed to grasp the reality of what God is doing and hence, you then have missed the blessings of what God wants to do.

I believe the same thing occurs at the grave of Lazarus. But he's a little more compassionate here and this, of course, is before the fact of Luke 19.

[29:51] Humanity cannot, outside of the help and the work of God, cannot grasp a hold of the reality. But Jesus is saying here in essence, I want you to understand and I want you to learn, Mary, Martha, apostles, that I am the one in whom you are to have full and complete confidence and I am to be your expectation.

Now, look what he says. After he weeps, those Jews amongst them again, say, oh, how he loved them. They still didn't get it.

Verse 38, Jesus, no, well, no, let's go back and read that. Verse 36, then said the Jews, behold how he loved him. Some of them said, could not this man which opened the eyes of the blind have caused even this man should not have died?

Jesus, therefore, again, groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. You know, I've got to wonder here.

When Jesus hears these accusations, could not this one that opened the eyes of the blind not have caused this man not to die? When he hears that, perhaps the same thought and feeling and sense comes to him that it does in Luke 19 when he sees the city full of people that have rejected him.

[31:31] Yeah. Because the next verse says, again, Jesus, therefore, again, groaning in himself, cometh to the grave.

It was a cave and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, take away the stone. Take it away. You ever wonder why he just didn't make it move or why he just didn't leave it there?

He could have just left it there and still caused Lazarus to come out. You know what I think? I think we see the reason for that in Martha's response there. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh.

For he has been dead four days. Decay has already set in. Putrefaction. It smells. I think that's probably the reason why Jesus had the stone rolled back.

So people could smell that aroma that comes, that aroma of death that comes out of that tomb. Yeah. So they'll know he's really dead.

[32:45] Now, look what happens here. Lord, he's been dead four days. He smelled. He stinketh. Jesus said unto her, I like this, Martha, did I not say unto you if you would believe you should see the glory of God?

Yeah. Lord, he smells. Martha, did I not tell you that if you believe, oh, there's the key word, if you believe, belief that goes as far as to cause us to respond positively to God.

If you believe, you would see God's glory manifest here at work. then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid and Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me and I knew that thou hearest me always but because of the people which stand by, I said it, Lord, I want them to hear that they may believe that thou has sent me.

And when he had thus spoken, he cried, notice, he cried with a loud voice, not so Lazarus could hear but so everybody else could hear, Lazarus come forth.

Look what happens. And when he had thus spoken and cried Lazarus come forth, he that was dead came forth.

[34 : 36] Bound hand, hand and foot with grave clothes. Now how did he get out if he couldn't walk? He was lifted from that pier and he was ushered out by the power of God.

And he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes. His face was bound with a napkin. I like this. Jesus said, loose him and let him go.

Loose him and let him go. Oh, what a beautiful picture of what God does in the power of resurrection both spiritually and physically.

When we're brought to the place of salvation by our faith and trust in Christ Jesus, we are loosed from the bondage of our sin and we are set free.

That's redemption. Amen? Redeemed out of the slave market of sin, purchased out of that, never to be returned again.

[35 : 50] Never been put up for sale again. Redeemed. Loose him and let him go. Now, notice what happens here with me.

then many of the Jews which came to Mary and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees and told them what things Jesus had done. I think it's interesting. Don't see what the response of the apostles were. But you've got to believe, I mean, anybody that saw that transpire had to be radically changed in their life.

Could never, ever be the same. Couldn't be. Yeah. Now, let me ask you something. We see that as a tremendous biblical story.

But it's more than just story. it's an event that transpired in the earthly ministry of Jesus. And that for a purpose. For the apostles, as we said, but for you and I as well.

[37 : 10] Is he our confidence? Is he our expectation? Not just in the matter of salvation, but a matter of every aspect and avenue of life.

The decisions that we make, the events that transpire, both good and bad, is our confidence in Christ.

Do we trust him? Do we expect him to do within our lives what he has designed our life to be?

Do we expect that from him? Or are we just kind of almost aimlessly walking our way through our life and living waiting to go to heaven?

Now, there are some things that need to transpire in our life for Jesus to really be our expectation and our confidence.

[38 : 21] That's another message. It's good that we're coming back tonight. So, be back tonight because there's some things that we have to see that transpire here.

and I'll give you a clue here. If you were to go to Genesis chapter 11 and first parts of chapter 12, you see the life of Abram.

Abram's a great picture of what we see here as far as our confidence and our expectations. there was a hindrance in Abram's life and until that hindrance was removed, Abram was not able and allowed to go in and inherit what God had in store for him.

Same is true for you and I. Something's got to happen for you and I. I'm not talking about salvation here. I'm talking about life now on our journey waiting to go to be with the Lord.

Something's got to happen before we really fully can inherit those things that God has in store for us on that journey.

[39 : 44] Come back tonight and we'll take a look at that.

Thank you.