



Sunday, June 28, 2026

John 11:1-17

Today we come to John chapter 11, and this is one of the most significant chapters in the entire Gospel of John because in many ways, everything has been building toward this moment.

First, John 11 marks a major turning point in Jesus' ministry. Up until now, opposition towards Jesus has been growing, but after He raises Lazarus from the dead, the religious leaders reach a point of no return. This miracle becomes the final straw and from this point forward, they are no longer merely questioning Jesus or looking for ways to discredit Him. They are fully committed to putting Him to death.

Second, this miracle is what many scholars identify as the seventh and final sign recorded in John's Gospel. We talked about this a few months ago - that throughout his account, John carefully selects specific miracles and refers to them as signs because they point beyond themselves to a greater spiritual reality. These signs are not random displays of power. They are revelations of who Jesus is.

Turning water to wine at a wedding in Cana

Healing an official's son by simply saying the word

Restoring the lame man by the pool of Bethesda

Multiplying the loaves and fish

Walking on the sea

Giving sight to the blind man

Giving life to a dead man

And this is where it gets interesting. For the first-century reader, numbers carried significance. Historically, the number seven represented completeness, fullness, and even perfection. We see this significance, especially in the creation account where God created the world in six days, declared His work to be very good, and then rested on the seventh day because His work was complete. Nothing more needed to be added. So the number seven became associated with God's finished and

perfect work.

So when John places the raising of Lazarus as the seventh sign, he has the finished and perfect work of God in mind because not only does the miracle of raising a man back from the dead reveal the fullness of His Lordship like no other miracle can, but it also foreshadows His own death and resurrection where through that Jesus Christ would defeat sin and death for all of eternity.

In other words, this seventh sign is preparing us to see that Jesus has all authority - not only over sickness and suffering, but over life and death itself.

So, with that in mind, if you have your Bibles with you this morning, I'd like to invite you to turn with me to John chapter 11 where we will be reading from verse 1-17. If you are able to stand, I'd also like to invite you to stand for the reading of the word of God:

John 11:1-17

‘Now a man was sick—Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair, and it was her brother Lazarus who was sick. 3 So the sisters sent a message to him: “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

4 When Jesus heard it, he said, “This sickness will not end in death but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, 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 that, he said to the disciples, “Let’s go to Judea again.”

8 “Rabbi,” the disciples told him, “just now the Jews tried to stone you, and you’re going there again?”

9 “Aren’t there twelve hours in a day?” Jesus answered. “If anyone walks during the day, he doesn’t stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 But if anyone walks during the night, he does stumble, because the light is not in him.”

11 He said this, and then he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I’m on my way to wake him up.”

12 Then the disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will get well.”

13 Jesus, however, was speaking about his death, but they thought he was speaking about natural sleep. 14 So Jesus then told them plainly, “Lazarus has died. 15 I’m glad for you that I wasn’t there so that you may believe. But let’s go to him.”

16 Then Thomas (called “Twin”[a]) said to his fellow disciples, “Let’s go too so that we may die with him.”

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.’

So as we step into this incredible seventh sign, again, we see John setting up the context for us in the first few verses. And in it we find out that a man named Lazarus was sick. But not just any man named Lazarus. The one from Bethany - the same place as Mary and Martha - in fact, this Lazarus was Mary’s brother. You know Mary - yes that Mary - the same one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped His feet with her hair.

But here’s what’s interesting about John’s introduction. The event where Mary anoints Jesus and wipes His feet with her hair doesn’t actually happen until the next chapter. Yet John introduces her as though we already know exactly who he’s talking about. It’s as if he expects us to say, ‘Oh, that Mary.’

Why?

Because ultimately, John wants us to see how this story foreshadows the cross. In the very next chapter, Mary will anoint Jesus with perfume and wipe His feet with her hair, not realizing that her act of worship is also carrying out a Jewish burial custom that foreshadows His death.

So, by introducing Mary at the beginning of this story, John is telling the reader to pay close attention because these two chapters are intimately connected. The raising of Lazarus is not simply a miracle about one man coming back to life. This is a foreshadowing of Christ’s own death and resurrection.

In fact, John wants us to read these stories together. As we watch Lazarus walk out of the tomb, he is teaching us how to read the story that is coming next. So that when Jesus is laid in a tomb only days later, we don’t read His death as the end of the story. We’ll read it with the resurrection already in view. So this creates expectation and context for the reader which is part of John’s intention.

The other thing John wants us to see is the aspect of relationship that Jesus shares with Lazarus and his family.

In verse three, we are left with the understanding that Jesus has a deep love for Lazarus - as Mary identifies him as the one that Jesus loves. The word for love that is used here is the Greek word, 'phileo.' This kind of love is better referred to as deep, brotherly affection. So, Jesus loves Lazarus as a brother. And then in verse 5 we see that Jesus loves Mary, Martha and Lazarus but the word for love being used here is the Greek word Agape. Agape love is an unconditional, selfless and sacrificial love. This is the kind of love that a Shepherd has for his flock - as we learned in the last chapter - that he lays down his life for his sheep. So naturally, it's this agape love that drew Jesus to the cross, to lay down His life for us. The reason John uses both phileo and agape here is to leave the reader with no doubt about the depth of Jesus' love for this family. Jesus didn't just care about them from a distance. He had genuine affection for them as friends, and at the same time He loved them with the selfless, sacrificial love that seeks their ultimate good.

And that's critical to understand because what comes next almost seems to contradict everything we've just been told. If Jesus loved Lazarus so deeply...and if he loved Mary and Martha so completely, why didn't He leave immediately to attend to Lazarus? Instead, why did He intentionally wait two more days...while His friend grew weaker and eventually died?

I think John wants the reader to wrestle with that question before moving forward because it teaches us one of the greatest lessons of this chapter. That God's timing may not be your timing, but God's timing is perfect. And so we see that God's love is not always expressed through His immediate intervention. Sometimes His greatest expression of love is found in His purposeful delay.

Verse six specifically says, 'So when he heard that he was sick, he stayed two more days in the place where he was.' The word 'so' in Greek is better translated as therefore, which makes sense because when you put verse 5 and 6 together the heart of it is as follows: 'Therefore, because of His great love, when Jesus heard that His close friend was sick, He did not leave right away to visit him, but decided to stay for a few extra days instead.'

Which doesn't make any sense to you and me, right? In my mind, it should read, because of His great love, He dropped everything He was doing and left to go heal His close friend Lazarus.

I think John wants us to feel the tension of this moment. Because even though Jesus reassures both Mary and Martha that this sickness will not end in death, you can see that they don't interpret that

the way Jesus intends it. Jesus isn't saying that Lazarus won't die. He's simply saying death won't have the final say. The sisters don't quite understand though. They know that Lazarus will live again - in Heaven but they have no idea that Jesus was speaking of resurrection in this life for His dear friend.

And so, in order for the most powerful of all miracles to take place, death first had to be fully embraced.

Not mostly dead.

Not almost dead.

Not even on death's door.

Dead.

Four days dead, in fact.

You see, John intentionally tells us in verse 17 that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. That's not an accidental detail. In Jewish tradition, it was commonly believed that the soul lingered near the body for three days, but by the fourth day, when decomposition had begun, there was no hope of return. Whether or not that tradition was true isn't John's point. His point is that by every human measure, Lazarus was beyond hope. No one could later argue that Jesus simply healed a sick man. This wasn't a healing. This was a resurrection.

You see, Jesus intentionally waited until every human possibility was gone. Why? Because as long as there was another explanation, people could then maintain control of the narrative.

And that's really what this section is all about. It's all about control. If you remember, this is the same element that John brought into view in chapter 9 and has been a consistent layer that has been woven into chapter 10 and now here in chapter 11.

And so one thing that stands out to me in this section is the two days that Jesus stayed before heading over to see Lazarus. You and I know that this was intentional because Jesus had to make sure that by every view possible, Lazarus was dead. He followed the tradition of four days specifically so that no one could refute this miracle and say that this was just a healing instead of resurrection.

But, have you ever thought about what those two days of waiting would have looked like. I certainly hadn't until studying this passage this week. And in my mind, I have a feeling that Jesus would have carried on normally because He knows what's about to happen. But it's Mary and Martha that must

have been dying on the inside. I imagine that they're probably even wrestling with the fact that Jesus is waiting and not taking immediate action. They may even be frustrated with Jesus and looking at His decision to wait as inaction and irresponsibility. But it wasn't. It was masterfully purposeful. They just couldn't see it...yet.

And I wonder if many of us can relate to Mary and Martha. Perhaps we find ourselves in a season of silence, where we know that God knows our deepest desire, but it seems like He's not answering. Or it seems like He's not doing anything. Maybe we interpret all of this to be that He doesn't care....and the silence is deafening. And yet all the while, deep down, we need to be reminded that He is still in full control. And His timing is perfect.

There's a common expression Christians use in moments like this. We say that God is a God of the eleventh hour. In other words, when it looks like time is running out, God steps in at the very last moment and comes through. There's certainly truth to that, and I've experienced this in my life and many of you have experienced this in your life. In fact, just a few weeks ago, there was a family in our church who was preparing to move. It literally came down to a few days before their move-out date, and they still had nowhere to go. Yet God miraculously made a way where there seemed to be no way.

So yes, our God is never too late.

But John 11 pushes us even further and reminds us that God is not ruled by hours or days like we are.

Because if we're being honest, the eleventh hour for Lazarus would have been before He died. And Jesus didn't come at the eleventh hour. He came after the clock had run out. After every human possibility was gone.

Because sometimes God doesn't just wait until the last possible moment. Sometimes He waits until there are no possible moments left - so that what He does cannot be explained by human ability, but only by His power.

Again, do you see what Jesus is showing us here? The issue really isn't timing. It's control.

We want God to work according to our timeline because it allows us to feel like we're still in control.

Why?

Because of Fear. Deep down, we're afraid that if we surrender control, everything will fall apart. We think that holding tighter will somehow produce a better outcome. And yet everything that Jesus is showing us here is the complete opposite.

Back in Chapter 9, He took a man who had been blind from birth, rubbed mud on his eyes, and then told him to walk 10-15 minutes across Jerusalem to the Pool of Siloam before he would receive his sight. Jesus could have healed him instantly. Instead, He required the man to trust Him before he could understand what God was doing.

Then in Chapter 10, He taught us that sheep experience life not by taking control, but by trusting the Shepherd. They don't find abundant life by forging their own path. They find it by following His voice.

And now in Chapter 11, Jesus shows us what that trust looks like when life doesn't make sense. When God seems silent. When His timing feels painfully slow.

This is why Paul says:

Philippians 4:6-7

'Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.'

And so, as we wait, we trust.

But what does waiting and trusting look like?

I think it looks different for each one of us. But I know this: it means refusing to let our present circumstances determine our future. It means continuing to pursue the Lord through His Word, through prayer, and through worship, even when we don't understand what He is doing.

And here's how you know it's working. Not because your circumstances have changed. Not because you've finally received the answer you've been praying for. But because, in the middle of the waiting...you have peace.

In just a few short chapters Jesus will remind his disciples of this peace and say,

John 14:27

‘Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don’t let your heart be troubled or fearful.’

You can trust Him. He is for you, not against you. His plans for you are Yes and Amen.

Closing blessing:

May the Lord Bless you and Keep you

May He cause His face to Shine upon you

May He be gracious towards you

Lifting up His countenance before you

And may He give you peace

In Jesus name, Amen.

Josh Hageman

Lead Pastor

Kingsview Community Church

[www.kingsviewchurch.co](http://www.kingsviewchurch.co)