



Sunday, July 17, 2026

John 11:41-57

Last week, as we walked through the second part of John 11, we saw the story come to a brilliant climax as Jesus stood before the tomb with Martha and Mary and commanded Lazarus to come out. And in doing so, we saw that Jesus is not only the One who has power to raise the dead - He is the Resurrection and the Life itself.

But there's a reason that Jesus uses the term resurrection and life in the same sentence because both words speak of physical life and spiritual life. That Jesus isn't just Lord over the physical, nor is He just Lord over the spiritual. He is the resurrection and the life - He is Lord over all! This wasn't merely the restoration of Lazarus's physical life. It was the seventh and final sign in John's Gospel, pointing beyond the miracle itself to the One who alone possesses the very life of God.

But as incredible as that miracle was, John isn't finished. In many ways, the raising of Lazarus isn't the conclusion of the story - it's the turning point. Because whenever Jesus reveals who He truly is, people are forced to respond. Some will believe. Others will reject Him. And today, we're going to see that the greatest miracle Jesus had performed would also become the event that set in motion the final events leading to the cross.

If you have your Bibles with you this morning, I'd like to invite you to turn with me to John 11 where we will be reading from verse 41-57. If you are able to stand, I'd also like to invite you to stand for the reading of the word of God:

John 11:41-57

' So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you heard me. 42 I know that you always hear me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so that they may believe you sent me." 43 After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go."

45 Therefore, many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what he did believed in him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

47 So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and were saying, "What are we going to do since this man is doing many signs? 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

49 One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! 50 You're not considering that it is to your[d] advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish." 51 He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but also to unite the scattered children of God. 53 So from that day on they plotted to kill him.

54 Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews but departed from there to the countryside near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and he stayed there with the disciples.

55 Now the Jewish Passover was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country to purify themselves before the Passover. 56 They were looking for Jesus and asking one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? He won't come to the festival, will he?" 57 The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should report it so that they could arrest him.

Last week we ended our message with the resurrection of Lazarus, but instead of heading into the next section, I decided to include the resurrection of Lazarus once again in this week's reading because there's something significant in how Jesus presents this that we simply can't miss.

'Father, I thank you that You have heard Me...'

Notice that even before stepping into the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus doesn't begin His prayer by asking the Father to intervene. He begins with thanks.

Think about it. Lazarus is still dead. The stone has only just been rolled away. As a dead man for four days, there is likely a strong smell of death that is coming out of the tomb. So, nothing has changed yet. And yet, the very first thing that comes out of Jesus' mouth is neither a request nor a command. He simply begins by giving thanks.

That fact, alone is absolutely beautiful, but noticed now the nature of his gratitude because it might not be what you expect it to be. Notice that Jesus doesn't thank the Father because the miracle has already happened. Nor does He thank the Father because of the miracle that is about to take place. He simply says:

John 11:41b-42a

'...Father, I thank you that you heard me. I know that you always hear me...'

That is such a beautiful statement because if you were with us when we started walking through this chapter, you'll remember that we saw this same theme of thankfulness and gratitude when we talked about God's timing.

We were reminded that God's timing is not always our timing. And specifically in the case of Lazarus, the expectation of his sisters and everyone around them was that Jesus would drop everything, rush to Bethany, and heal him before he died.

But Jesus didn't do that. Instead, He waited. He waited... until Lazarus was dead. Again, you and I on the other side of history, know that this was intentional so that Jesus could bring a resurrection instead of a healing. But Mary and Martha didn't know that. From their perspective, Jesus' delay looked like intentional inaction - which caused them both deep frustration.

And if we're being honest, many of us can relate to this too. We have an expectation of what God should do and when He should do it and when He doesn't move according to our expectations or our timeline, we can begin to wonder if He's even moving at all. If He even hears us at all.

I think the apostle Paul models this beautifully with the church in Philippi by reminding us not to worry or to be anxious when this seems to be the case. But that when we make our requests known to God, He offers us His peace as we patiently wait and trust.

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.'

But the key part of this verse is that before we start making our list of requests or petitions, we are

to start with thanksgiving.

What Paul teaches in Philippians is exactly what we see Jesus doing here - that thankfulness isn't simply our response after God answers our prayers. Thankfulness is the posture of a heart that already trusts Him. It is the way we release our control and place our trust in the One who truly is in control.

We're thankful before we ever know the answer because we already know that He loves us, He cares for us. And just as Jesus says here...we already know that He hears us.

So maybe the next time you approach God with your requests and your needs, don't begin with the requests. Begin with thankfulness.

Begin by remembering what He's already done for you through the cross. Think of five or ten things you're thankful for - ways you've already seen God's faithfulness in your life - and allow that gratitude to stir your trust in Him.

Then, from that place of trust, bring your requests before Him. You may not have your answer yet... but you'll discover that His peace is already beginning to stir in your soul as your trust is being firmly established in Him.

So again, we see that from a place of thankfulness and gratitude for the relationship that He and the Father share, Jesus now proceeds to command Lazarus to come out. And as He does, we need to pay close attention to His process. Notice His instruction in verse 43-44:

John 11:43-44

'After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go."

There are two things I want you to see here:

The first one is the language that Jesus uses here. Jesus tells us that Lazarus is bound and instructs the people to unwrap him.

He's bound but needs to be unbound. Another way to say this would be to say that Lazarus was bound, but needed to be loosed. Which is interesting because in the Greek, the words that Jesus is using here are the same words that He uses in Matthew 16 and 18 when He speaks about the au-

thority He is giving to His Church:

Matthew 18:18

‘Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.’

Now when it comes to the concept of binding and loosing in the Gospel of Matthew, it’s important that we understand what Jesus is actually talking about. Over the years, this passage has often been understood to mean that Christians are to bind Satan and loose Heaven over someone’s life. While it’s certainly true that we have authority over the enemy through Christ and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, that’s not what Jesus is actually talking about here.

What Jesus is describing is the relationship between Heaven and His church. Heaven establishes the standard, and we faithfully live it out here on earth.

In Jesus’ day, binding and loosing were common rabbinical expressions. To bind meant to forbid or prohibit something. To loose meant to permit or release something. The rabbis used this language whenever they were applying God’s Word to situations that weren’t specifically addressed in the Law of Moses. Each situation was evaluated in light of God’s Word. If it reflected God’s heart and His will, it was permitted. If it contradicted God’s heart and His will, it was prohibited.

What Jesus is not saying is that the church has the authority to dictate to Heaven what can be permitted or prohibited. The Word of God always directs the church - not the other way around. Our responsibility is to discern what Heaven has already declared and then faithfully live it out here on earth.

Jesus gives us an example of this in Matthew 18 when He talks about a brother who has sinned against another. He lays out a process for lovingly pursuing restoration. While that specific process isn’t found in the Law of Moses, it is completely consistent with the heart and principles of God’s Word. Once again, Heaven sets the standard and the church faithfully applies it.

For example, most churches require children’s workers to complete a background check before serving. The Bible never commands background checks. But protecting children clearly reflects God’s heart. So the church applies the principles of God’s Word to a situation the Bible doesn’t specifically address. The church ‘binds’ someone from serving without first being properly screened, and it ‘looses’ those who have been screened to serve. That’s binding and loosing.

So now, when Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and uses this same language of binding and loosing, this is very intentional for Jesus. He's drawing our attention - not necessarily to the action of binding and loosing as we see in Matthew, but to the Kingdom authority that this reveals to us. That Heaven sets the standard and we follow suit. That there are things the Jesus only does and then there are things that He asks us to do.

Notice the order. Jesus doesn't ask anyone to help Him raise Lazarus. Only Jesus has authority over life and death. Only Jesus can call a dead man back to life. But the moment Lazarus comes out of the tomb, Jesus turns to the people standing around Him and says to them, 'Unbind him and let him go.'

Think about that for a moment. Jesus could have removed the grave clothes Himself. He could have spoken another word and caused every strip of linen to fall to the ground. But He doesn't. Instead, He intentionally invites the people around Lazarus to participate in what He has already done.

Jesus performs the miracle. The people participate in the ministry. Jesus gives life. The people help Lazarus walk in that life. Jesus establishes the reality; the people faithfully live it out.

Church, this is discipleship. Jesus alone saves people. We don't. Jesus alone gives new life. We can't. But what the resurrection of Lazarus shows us is that once He has brought someone from death to life, He then calls us to come alongside them, help remove what still belongs to death, and encourage them to walk in the freedom He has already secured for them.

And now the last thing we see in this chapter is that, just like the other six signs John has recorded, there are two very different responses to Jesus. Some believe that He is the Messiah, while others reject Him. In fact, in the very next few verses we read that when the Pharisees and the religious leaders hear about Lazarus being raised from the dead, they finally determine in their hearts that Jesus must die.

Their response was so strong because they feared that if more and more people began following Jesus, it would draw the attention of Rome. The Romans might then step in, strip away the religious leaders' authority, and tighten their control over Israel. Although Israel was living under Roman occupation, Rome still allowed the Jewish leaders a measure of freedom to govern their own religious affairs - as long as they kept the peace.

It is in that context that Caiaphas, the high priest - a man whose name we'll continue to encounter as we move toward the cross - makes a statement that changes everything. He says,

John 11:50b

'...it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish.'

At this point, Caiaphas isn't primarily concerned about saving the nation. He's concerned about preserving his own position and the authority of the religious establishment. In his mind, sacrificing one man was a small price to pay if it meant protecting their power.

But this is one of John's great ironies.

Caiaphas thought one man should die to save one nation from Rome. But Jesus came to die, not simply for one nation, but to rescue all of humanity from the far greater oppression of sin and death.

Without realizing it, God used the words of Israel's high priest to proclaim the very purpose for which Jesus had come.

And from that moment on, everything changed. Up until this point, Jesus had certainly been viewed as a threat. The religious leaders had already challenged Him, rejected Him, and even tried to kill Him. But now He had publicly raised a man who had been dead for four days. There was no explaining that one away. As a result, more people than ever were believing that He was the Messiah, but the leaders feared they were losing both their influence and their control.

So Caiaphas' suggestion to kill Jesus was no longer just a flippant comment. It became the plan. And isn't it remarkable that these words come from the lips of Israel's high priest? The very man appointed to represent God before the people ends up rejecting and condemning the very One God had sent. The man whose calling was to recognize God's Messiah proves to be more spiritually blind than the man who was physically blind in chapter 9.

Oh, that we would be a people who would not miss the forest for the trees.

The religious leaders had every reason to believe. The evidence was right in front of them. The Messiah stood among them. The Light of the World walked in their midst. They watched a man who had been dead for four days walk out of a tomb alive... and yet they still refused to believe.

May we never become so committed to our own opinions, our own traditions, or our own desire for control that we miss what God is doing right in front of us.

Instead, may we continually invite the Holy Spirit to soften our hearts, open our eyes, and help us see Jesus for who He truly is - the Christ, the Son of God, and the One who alone has the power to breathe life back into death.

And thus concludes chapter 11. And from this point forward, everything changes. The events leading to the cross have now been fully set in motion. Jesus withdraws into a remote place, and only when He knows the Father's timing is right will He emerge again - ready to carry the weight of the world's sin upon His shoulders for you and for me.

And as I've reflected on these last three chapters, I couldn't help but notice something - That if you had been one of Jesus' disciples walking with Him through these events, you would have experienced a beautiful progression of what it means to follow Him.

In chapter 9, our blind eyes are opened. We discover that we are all like the man born blind. We need Jesus to open our spiritual eyes so that we can see Him for who He truly is - not merely a good teacher or a prophet, but the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world... and perhaps most importantly, the Lord of my life.

Then in chapter 10, we learn to trust His voice. Jesus tells us that His sheep know His voice and willingly follow Him. Sheep don't follow because they're forced to. They follow because they've learned to trust their shepherd. As our eyes are opened to who Jesus is, we begin surrendering control of our lives and following Him wherever He leads.

Then in chapter 11, Jesus invites us to join Him in His work. We cannot raise the dead. Only Jesus can do that. But this isn't just a physical work - it's both physical and spiritual. Only Jesus can call a dead body back to life, and only Jesus can make a spiritually dead heart alive through salvation. But once Jesus has given that new life, He invites us - His Church - to come alongside one another, to help unbind one another, to disciple, encourage, pray for, and lovingly help one another walk in the freedom He has already secured.

Church, may we never stop seeing Him. May we never stop trusting Him. And may we never stop joining Him in His work until He comes again. 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.com