



## **John (So That You Might Believe) (Week 8/12) Raising Lazarus**

### **Small Group Discussion Questions**

**Connect:** *The blind man moves from knowing very little about Jesus to worshipping him. What step might help you grow in seeing and trusting Jesus more clearly this week?*

#### **Warm-Up**

1. What are the various signs that we have covered so far in this series? Have any stood out for you?
2. What do you think brings most Australians a sense of hope amidst trial and challenge? What are the type of 'ultimate' things that people hope for? What is our ultimate hope as Christians?

#### **Read John 11:17-37**

3. What has just happened prior to this? What had Jesus said about Lazarus' death? *What did he mean?*
4. What did the disciples think would happen to them when they went to Bethany? *Why?*
5. Who were Lazarus' sisters? What had been their relationship with Jesus prior to this?
6. What did each of the sisters say to Jesus when he arrived? How were they feeling?
7. How does Jesus first respond to Martha in verse 23 and 25? What does he mean by this?
8. How does Martha respond? How did she also misunderstand what Jesus was saying to her?
9. As Jesus comes to the tomb how does he respond? How does this demonstrate his love for Lazarus?
10. What does Jesus' weeping teach you about him? How does this make you feel?
11. In face and trial, how does the profound love of Jesus bring your comfort amidst difficulty?
12. How did other people respond? Why might there have been some cynicism? Do you ever feel like this?

#### **Read John 11:38-44**

13. As Jesus approaches the tomb what does he say? Why did people protest the request?
14. What does Jesus pray? How does this demonstrate the extraordinary power of Jesus?
15. What reminds you of the power of Jesus? How do you see the power of Jesus at work?
16. How does Lazarus' resurrection point to the future of all who trust in Jesus? Can you think of any other passages that point to this reality and give us confidence?
17. Does this mean that we shouldn't grieve? How do Christians know grief and hope at the same time?
18. Do you think our culture ever denies the inevitability of death? Why is this not helpful?
19. What comfort does it give you to know that Jesus has triumphed over sin and death?
20. Throughout the chapter what responses of belief do we witness? How do some respond in verse 45?
21. Do you believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life?

**Apply** *Who can you invite to Easter this year that they may believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life?*

**Pray** *Gracious Father, thank you for the love and power of Jesus which sent him to the cross that our sin and death might be defeated! Please help us to trust in him as the way, the truth, and the life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

# GOING DEEPER

## **John (So That You Might Believe) (Week 8/12) Raising Lazarus**

Small Group Discussion Questions

### **On Your Front Line this Week**

*Who can you invite along to celebrate Easter with you?*

### **For Families**

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: [stbartskids.org](http://stbartskids.org)

### **Listen, Watch, and Read**

- *Listen (sermon):* “Out From the Grave” by Tim Keller:  
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/out-from-the-grave/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “I am the resurrection and the life” by Stephen Nicols:  
[https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show\\_media=223278&show\\_file=236720](https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=223278&show_file=236720)
- *Listen (sermon):* “Hope in the Face of Death” by Paul Williams:  
<https://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/58963/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Suffering” by Vaughan Roberts:  
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/suffering/#sermons>

### **Series Resources**

- *Read:* “John: An Expository Commentary” by R C Sproul.
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Don Carson.
- *Read:* “The Message of John” by Bruce Milne. 📖
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Leon Morris.
- *Read:* “John for Everyone: Part 1” by Tom Wright. 📖
- *Read:* “Can We Trust the Gospels?” by Peter Williams. 📖
- *Read:* “Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John’s Gospel” by Andreas Köstenberger
- *Watch:* “John” by the Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-john/>
- *Previous Series* from St Bart’s (including Children’s Resources):  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/jesus-is>  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/i-am>  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/truth-glory>

📖 Available to borrow from the St Bart’s Library (Toowoomba): [stbarts.com.au/library](http://stbarts.com.au/library)

For sermons and additional resources, visit [stbarts.com.au](http://stbarts.com.au)

**st bart's**

**Raising Lazarus: Hope in the face of Death**

*John 11:11-44*

**Heart of the Sermon:** We can have hope in the face of death because of the love and power of Jesus.

***What hope do we have in the face of death?***

Last year was a tough one for our family in many ways

But the hardest part of it all was the death of my Father-in-law at the end of May

Although Henry was 94 years old, he was still fit and active

Riding his push bike and volunteering at the church office

My phone rang on Tuesday morning to hear the voice of my distressed mother-in-law

She couldn't get hold of my wife Anna or her sister

Henry had been rushed to hospital after suffering a stroke

Anna got on a plane that afternoon

The kids and I flew up early next morning and saw him in hospital that afternoon

And he died the next morning

It was all so sudden, so final

As the hearse drove away after the funeral

I held my sobbing children

Wracked by the pain of grief

Stunned by the reality that he was gone

And that sense of grief and loss continues to play out in our lives

Because there is the ongoing absence of someone who was central to our lives

Someone we loved

Perhaps you too are familiar with this experience in your own life

I have just been describing the impact of death on one family

But that experience and impact is spread throughout this room

Throughout the city of Toowoomba

Across the country and across the globe

Death is powerful and inevitable

It brings great pain in its wake

It strikes fear into our hearts

And it seems like an unstoppable force

What hope do we have in the face of death?

What hope do we have in the face of death?

That's what I want to explore with you today

As we look together at this passage from John 11

As we see Jesus confronting death in a very close and personal way

And I want us to see through this story

That we do indeed have hope in the face of death

Because of the love of Jesus

And because of the power of Jesus

***We have hope in the face of death because of the love of Jesus***

So firstly, in this story we see that we have hope in the face of death

Because of the love of Jesus

Now at first glance here we might doubt the love of Jesus in this passage

We haven't read from the beginning of Chapter 11

But if we had we would have seen

That when Jesus gets news about the illness of his friend Lazarus

He doesn't immediately rush to his aid

In fact, he delays for two days

Before setting off for Bethany

to the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus

By the time that Jesus gets there Lazarus is well and truly dead

Does that imply a lack of love, of care, of compassion on Jesus' part?

We might be tempted to think so

But this passage won't allow us to conclude that

In verse 3 we read

*So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."*

They know that Jesus loves Lazarus, their sick brother

In verse 5 we are told in no uncertain terms

*Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.*

The love of Jesus for this family is clear

We'll have to wait to discover why it is that Jesus chose to delay

But it's not for a lack of love

In fact, Jesus' delay seems to be driven by his love for this family

If we read verse 5 again but continue on

*Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.*

*So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days,*

It's not a lack of love that causes Jesus to delay

But rather his love for them causes him to stay where he is for some reason

And we see Jesus' love on full display in his emotional response at the tomb of his friend

In verse 35 we famously have the shortest verse in the English bible

*Jesus wept*

And what is the response of those around him to seeing Jesus weep?

Verse 36

*Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"*

Jesus loves Martha, he loves Mary, he loves Lazarus

He weeps at the tomb of his friend

Displaying his love and his grief in the face of death

And we have an even stronger emotional response described in verse 33

*When Jesus saw her weeping,*

*and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping,*

*he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.*

The word translated 'deeply moved' can mean snorting like a horse

It is a strong and visceral response that can express indignation and anger

There is deep emotional distress here

But Jesus is not angry with those he sees weeping

He is angry at death

At this force that wreaks destruction

on people like these who he loves

This too is the love of Jesus on display

As he expresses indignation and anger at death

and its power to hurt people

Death is a terrible cosmic evil

It has no rightful place in God's good world

It is ruinous and destructive

It is the enemy of God

It is a corruption of the life of his good creation

And so as we look at the love of Jesus in this passage

As we see him shed tears

As we see him snort with indignation and anger

As we see him troubled in spirit

We are seeing the heart of God in the face of death

Jesus' emotional response here is not just demonstrating the humanity of Jesus

Showing us that he is just like us

It does show us that

and that he understands our grief

But it shows us much more

We know from John's gospel

that Jesus is the Word of God who has been made flesh

As we look at Jesus we see the very character of God

As we look at Jesus we see God's attitude to death

God loves the people he has made

God loves his creation

Death is an enemy that causes pain, grief and fear

The love of Jesus, The love of God, in the face of death

Gives us hope that he might do something about it

***We have hope in the face of death because of the power of Jesus***

But love is not enough, is it?

I loved my father-in-law

but I was powerless to stop his death

I love my wife and my kids

but I'm powerless to stop them dying either

But Jesus is different to me

Jesus is not only loving but powerful

We can have hope in the face of death because of the love of Jesus and the power of Jesus

Certainly people in this story recognize the power of Jesus

Look at what Martha says in verse 21

*“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died*

And Mary says exactly the same thing in verse 32

*When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said,*

*“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”*

Then the crowd at the tomb say something similar in verse 37

*But some of them said,*

*“Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”*

Do you hear what they are all saying?

We know that Jesus is powerful

We have seen his power in giving sight to the blind

If only he had been here on time

he could have prevented Lazarus’s death

It’s like you see here in this diagram

Lazarus is heading towards death

Like someone hurtling to the edge of a cliff

And if Jesus had been there

he could have grabbed hold of him

and stopped him going over the edge

Jesus is powerful

He could have stopped this happening

But now it’s too late

Now it’s too late

You see they know something of the power of Jesus

But they have underestimated his power

Lazarus is gone

Death has swallowed him up

What can even Jesus do about that?

Well maybe someone still has hope

Did you notice Martha's words to Jesus?

After she has said to Jesus

*if you had been here, my brother would not have died*

She goes on to say in verse 22

*But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.*

That sounds promising!

But then in verse 39

when Jesus tells them to roll the stone away from Lazarus's tomb

Martha objects

*"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man,*

*"by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."*

Death has taken Lazarus

It has him in its grip

His body has started to decompose and to smell

What can Jesus do about that?

But Jesus can do something about that

He is so powerful that he can even haul Lazarus out of the chasm of death

In verse 43

Jesus calls out in a loud voice, commanding the dead man

*Lazarus come out*

And Lazarus hears the voice of Jesus, the Son of God, and he obeys

Verse 44

*The dead man came out,*

*his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.*

*Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."*

That's incredible isn't it?

Even four days in the tomb isn't enough to stop the power of Jesus

He is so powerful that he can pull this man out of death and restore him to life

That is powerful isn't it?

Only it's not enough is it?

Do you see a problem here still?

Let's go back to our diagram again

What we see Jesus doing here

Is not just stopping Lazarus from dying

But bringing him back from death

But what then will happen to Lazarus?

Will he now live forever?

No, of course not,

At some point in the future Lazarus would have died again

What Jesus does here is powerful yes

But it is temporary

It is not sufficient to defeat the power of death

With its inevitable pull

With its hold on us taking us down into its chasm

Death is still powerful and will claim the ones that God loves and that we love

Is there more hope than this?

Well through this series in John you have been looking at different signs of Jesus

And signs point to something

In John's gospel the miracles of Jesus, the signs, point to something even greater

And so too here

We see it spelled out in Jesus' conversation with Martha from verse 23

*Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."*

*Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*

What Martha is expressing here is the Jewish hope for life after death

held by many at the time

At the end of time, when God brings the world to a close

Then and only then will those who have trusted in God be raised from the dead

This is the great future hope in the face of death

This is what people were looking for when faced with the awful power of death

This is the resurrection hope

But listen to what Jesus says in verse 25

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.*

*The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;*

*<sup>26</sup> and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.*

This is the key to the whole passage

Centering us on the identity of Jesus

and interpreting the sign for us

This great future hope of resurrection and eternal life

Is here now in me, Jesus says

In Jesus the future hope of resurrection from the dead is breaking into the present

And it is by believing in Jesus

Placing the full weight of our trust in him

We can have hope in the face of death

Jesus brings Lazarus back from the dead here

But something greater and more powerful is about to happen

Jesus will be put to death on a cross

Jesus will be laid in a tomb like Lazarus and a stone rolled across the entrance

But Jesus will rise again from the dead on the third day

But Jesus' resurrection is not the same as Lazarus

Lazarus comes out wrapped in strips of linen and with a cloth around his head

But when people inspect the empty tomb of Jesus,

the grave clothes are still there

Jesus' resurrection is of a different order

He is raised bodily – the tomb is empty apart from the grave clothes

But he is raised with a transformed spiritual body

One that will never die again

Again our diagram can help us here

Jesus goes into death – he really and truly dies

But rather than just coming back to life only to die again

Jesus smashes through the other side of death

Breaking its power

And drawing out its sting

It is in the resurrection of Jesus

that we truly see his power over death

It is in the resurrection of Jesus

that we truly have hope in the face of death

Because Jesus doesn't just pass through death and break its power

for his own sake

He does it also for our sake

so that we can have hope for life in him

As Christians

As people who believe in Jesus and trust in him

Our hope is that just as Jesus was raised from the dead

So we too will be raised like him

That just as Jesus has broken the power of death

and passed through into eternal life

So too he will take us through with him into God's eternal kingdom

We can have hope in the face of death

Because of the love of Jesus

And because of the power of Jesus

Seen most clearly in his resurrection

*I am the resurrection and the life*

*the one who believes in me will live, even though they die;*

*and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.*

*Do you believe this?"*

## ***Do you believe this?***

Do you believe this?

Jesus' question to Martha

Is a question for us too

Do you believe this?

The question of whether people believe in Jesus comes up throughout this passage (v.14, v.40, v.42)

And as you have been seeing in this series it is the key question in John's gospel

It is the reason he wrote it (John 20:30-31)

*Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.*

*<sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

What about you?

Do you believe that Jesus is who he claims to be?

Do you believe that he is the resurrection and the life?

Do you believe that you can have life in his name?

Faced with the power of death

Faced with the inevitability of death

Faced with the fear of death

do you believe in Jesus?

The Anglican Funeral service quotes John 11:25 right near the beginning

*'I am the resurrection and the life,' says the Lord.*

*'Those who believe in me, even though they die, yet will they live.'*

It frames everything else that will happen in the service

And articulates our great hope in the face of death

It expresses that we are entrusting ourselves and the ones we love

To the love and the power of Jesus

It is our way of saying that we do believe this

Do you know this certain hope in Jesus?

Can you face death

not with fear and despair

but with hope in Jesus?

If you are not sure about that

Then I'd encourage you to chat with one of the ministry team here about it

By knowing and trusting in Jesus

You can have this certain of hope and certainty

Death is still powerful

Death still causes us great grief and pain

Death still breaks the relationships with those we love

But death doesn't have the final word

We can have hope in the face of death

Because of the love of Jesus

And because of the power of Jesus

The Apostle Paul sums it up beautifully in these words from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

*Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death,*

*so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.*

*For we believe that Jesus died and rose again,*

*and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him*