

The Word Resurrects the Dead

Makayla, do you want to take a break?” asked Traci, who had been watching her coworker closely. Makayla had begun to move a little slower.

The medical lab technicians were three hours away from the end of their shifts, and Traci was concerned for Makayla, who never complained, even in light of her illness.

Makayla shared that she had breast cancer, but only her doctors knew what stage and how much longer she would be able to work.

“I want to help get medical results to patients,” was Makayla’s response for her continuing to work.

Makayla’s concern for patients was admirable, but her unflinching bravery in the face of her own diagnosis was a bit puzzling.

Traci would like to be confident about an afterlife, but how persuaded could one be?

“Yes, Traci,” Makayla said. “Let’s both take a break.”

The women went to the hospital cafeteria for a snack. It was there at a table in the back that Makayla talked frankly. She mentioned her family and their love and concern, but Makayla spoke mostly about the Lord. While Makayla was anxious about the unknown and death, she was not scared. She said Traci could even see God’s glory in what was happening to Makayla. Christ had taken away the sting of death for her. She knew without a doubt that she would be with the Lord forever and ever in heaven. Could Traci say the same thing?

1. *Why are people who do not believe in God unable to see His glory?*

2. *Why is it not enough to attend church and observe Christian holy days to be able to see God’s glory?*

3. *How has God shown you His glory?*

Jesus Arrives in Bethany

John 11:17-19, KJV

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:

19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

John 11:17-19, NIV

¹⁷On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.

Somehow Lazarus became ill, and his condition worsened to the point that his sisters Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus for help (John 11:3). The sisters undoubtedly had seen Jesus perform miracles and were convinced of Jesus' ability to help.

But when Jesus and His group arrived in Bethany, they learned that four days earlier the body of Lazarus had been placed in a tomb (vs. 17). Since a dead body decayed quickly in the hot middle eastern climate, the family would have had his body anointed, wrapped, and laid in the family tomb soon after he passed. Since Jerusalem was less than two miles from Bethany (John 11:18), a number of Jews from the city paid their respects to Martha and Mary.

4. *What event created the need for Mary and Martha to be consoled?*

Jesus Talks with Martha

John 11:20-27, KJV

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

John 11:20-27, NIV

²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have

22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

died. ²²But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.

The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

²⁷"Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

When the sisters of Lazarus heard that Jesus was approaching their village, Martha went out to greet Him, while Mary remained in the house. On the surface, Martha's first words to Jesus appear to be a veiled rebuke (vs. 21), but it was more likely an expression of regret that Jesus could not be present. Martha then expressed her faith in Jesus, for she was certain that God granted Jesus whatever request He asked.

Jesus declared to Martha that her brother would rise from the dead. Martha agreed since the Jews believed that would happen to all people at the last day (see Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; Matt. 22:23; Acts 23:7-8).

But Jesus' response to Martha is incredible. He could have said that He would resurrect Lazarus. Instead, Jesus asserted, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Jesus, in fact, is the life of the age to come, and all who put their trust in Him will experience the resurrected life.

When Jesus asked Martha whether she believed what He was saying, Jesus was actually asking Martha whether she

believed in Him. He wanted Martha (and all other people) to begin experiencing right now the joys of eternal life.

Martha not only replied positively, but was also clear about what she believed—that Jesus is the Messiah, God’s only divine Son. Furthermore, she affirmed that Jesus left heaven and entered the world by becoming a human being.

5. *How did Martha and Mary’s responses to Jesus’ arrival contrast?*

6. *What did Martha say to Jesus when the two saw each other?*

7. *How did Martha respond to Jesus’ declaration to be the “resurrection and the life” (John 11:25)?*

Jesus Restores Lazarus to Life

John 11:38-44, KJV

38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?

41 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.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of

John 11:38-44, NIV

³⁸Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹“Take away the stone,” he said.

“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.”

⁴⁰Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

⁴¹So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people

the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴The 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.”

One can only imagine the emotions Jesus felt as He approached the tomb of Lazarus and ordered the stone to be removed. Martha did not understand why—after four days the stench from the decomposing corpse would be terrible. But Jesus stated once again that if Martha had faith, she would witness the glory of God (Jesus’ restoring Lazarus to life).

Jesus’ prayer is not so much a petition as it is an expression of thanksgiving to the Father. The Son knew in advance that the Father would grant the request, and so the Redeemer gave thanks for this. Jesus declared in the hearing of the onlookers that the Father always answered His Son’s requests. It was His desire that in seeing the miracle, the onlookers would believe His claim to be the Messiah. In restoring Lazarus to life, Jesus would prove that He is the master of death and preview His power that would be fully displayed in the final resurrection when all who have died hear His voice and live (5:25, 28-29).

After His prayer, Jesus commanded Lazarus to come out of the tomb. He did, still wrapped in his grave clothes. To prove Lazarus was truly alive, Jesus told the people to “loose him, and let him go” (vs. 44, KJV).

8. *How did Martha respond when Jesus ordered the stone to be removed?*

9. *What happened when Jesus commanded that Lazarus come out of the tomb?*

Behold, the Glory of God!

Neil Armstrong was the first person to walk on the moon. More than being an astronaut, however, Armstrong was a devout Christian. In fact, while he walked on the ancient steps where Jesus went to and from the temple in Jerusalem, Armstrong stated to his friend Meir Ben-Dov, "I have to tell you, I am more excited stepping on these stones than when I was stepping on the moon."

When Armstrong stood on the surface of the moon and gazed at the heavenly bodies in space, he must have sensed the glory of God. Nevertheless, he would not have seen God's glory had he not believed so ardently in Jesus and had devoted his life to Him. Such faith in the Lord empowered Armstrong to truly see the glory of God.

We may not ever look at the stars from the moon, or gaze upon Victoria Falls in Zambia, or stare at the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, or observe the Aurora Borealis from northern Norway, or even see at all. But if we believe in Jesus, we will see God's glory in the precious moments of our experiences when we trust Him with our lives.

The privilege of seeing the glory of God is not only a blessing (like a gift or reward), but it is also a power source for enabling us to be more faithful in our devotion to Christ Jesus. Just as "believing" is meant to be active and not merely an acceptance of an idea, the glory of God not only reflects the Creator's divine attributes but also compels us to act according to His holy will.

Therefore, let us "declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples" (Ps. 96:3).

10. *Would you be more excited to step on the surface of the moon or to walk where Jesus walked? Explain your answer.*

11. *What does it mean to you to believe in Jesus?*

12. *Why is it important to you to be able to see God's glory?*

Believe and See

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, He asked Martha whether she believed in Him enough to trust that He had power over life and death. He then raised her brother, Lazarus, from his tomb, thus demonstrating not only His divine qualities but also the glory of God. Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and we see His glory as He shows us the mercy, grace, and love He showed to Mary and Martha.

► *Finish these two sentences:*

I saw God's glory when He _____
_____.

I reflect God's glory when I _____
_____.

KEY VERSE

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?
—John 11:25-26, KJV

Jesus said to her, "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?"
—John 11:25-26. NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSONS

Week of July 25 through July 31

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 34:4-14—Seek Peace and Pursue It.
- Tue.** Matthew 11:25-30—Rest for the Weary.
- Wed.** John 16:23-27, 32-33—Jesus Has Conquered the World.
- Thu.** Psalm 119:161-176—Peace for the Upright.
- Fri.** Isaiah 54:6-10—God's Unmovable Covenant of Peace.
- Sat.** John 14:1-14—Don't Let Your Hearts Be Troubled.
- Sun.** John 14:15-29—Peace to the Disciples.