

**Text: John 11:1-44 (Pew Bible pg.1063)**

**Title: “When All Hope is Lost”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

I want us to press into this account from Gospels. We have the benefit of looking back through this, seeing it in the light of the Cross and the resurrection. If Jesus can do nothing about death, then whatever else He may do or say would amount to nothing ... if death still has the final word.

**1 Corinthians 15:19,26 - If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men ... The last enemy to be destroyed is death.**

So Jesus demonstrates His power over death in a temporal way here in the story of the raising of Lazarus. Jesus will demonstrate His power over death in an eternal way through His own resurrection from the dead. Remember Lazarus isn't resurrected. He is resuscitated. Lazarus would die again. But Jesus, by His crucifixion and resurrection would make it possible for John 11:25-26 to be true. READ VV.25B-26.

Open your Bibles with me to John 11:1-44 ... to perhaps the most spectacular miracle our Lord Jesus ever performed. Events here happened over the course of 4 days.

**Day 1** – Martha, Mary and their brother are dear friends. Lazarus' sickness becomes so critical that the sisters know the only hope is Jesus. A messenger is sent to Jesus who is days' walk away in a place called Perea, but sometime after the messenger leaves Lazarus dies. READ V.4.

**Day 2** – The messenger, having delivered the message to Jesus, returns to Bethany. Of course, by then Lazarus is dead. Jesus, however, did something that was hard to understand. READ V.6. He waited two more days before leaving for Bethany.

**Day 3** – Jesus is silent as far as Lazarus is concerned. He seems to do ... nothing.

**Day 4** – Jesus arrives in Bethany. Lazarus has been in the tomb 4 days. Martha runs out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. READ VV.21-22. Later Mary comes to meet Jesus and together they all to the tomb where Lazarus was laid. Jesus commanded the stone to be rolled away. Martha says, “Uh, Jesus I wouldn't do that if I were you. He's been there 4 days.” READ V.40. Jesus prayed, and called for Lazarus to come out. Out comes Lazarus all wrapped in his burial clothes. Jesus said, “Take off the graves clothes and let him go.”

Now we know how it ends, but Mary, Martha and the other disciples didn't. Before Jesus comes to town, all hope seemed to be lost. Have you been there? Your health ... health of a loved one ... finances ... struggling business ... failing marriage ... rebellious child ... no hope. You cried out to God ... just knew that God would take care of everything? Instead, God seems to be silent. You've cried and prayed and poured your heart out to God, and there's no answer, no response. Been there? You need a job and you've asked God ... no job has come. You were lonely and asked God for a mate ... nothing has happened.

When all hope is lost: **TWO CERTAINTIES**

**1. GOD IS WORKING FOR HIS GLORY (vv.4,40).**

God always acts for His glory. When we act for our glory it is generally motivated by egotism. But when God does it, it is because it is truth.

When you go through a time when all hope is lost be certain of this. There are some things that God cannot show us about Himself without our going through suffering. We would not have seen the glory of Christ's resurrection had we not also seen the pain of the crucifixion of Christ.

**Psalm 50:15 - Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."**

Jesus works on the timetable of His divine mission, not on the timetable of our expectations.

**2. GOD IS WORKING FOR OUR GOOD (vv.14-15).**

Obviously for Lazarus (the guy is raised to life!). But Jesus is also working for the good of His disciples. READ VV.14-15. Jesus is working for the good of the two sisters. What is the good? He is working for our faith. He knows that the greatest good that can come into our lives is for us to know how to tap into the powerful resources of God through faith ... through believing. So whatever silence we may feel from God, whatever delay we may sense from Him, be certain that whatever He is up to is for our good.

When all hope is lost:

**FOUR STRATEGIES** when it seems all hope is lost:

**1. REMEMBER THAT GOD LOVES YOU.**

READ VV.3,5. But Jesus' actions seem to contradict His love. If Jesus loved Lazarus so much, why did He let him get sick to begin with? Why did Jesus delay in coming to help? Why didn't Jesus heal Lazarus from a distance?

Jesus' love is seen in His response. READ VV.33-35. Two different words here: Indignation and quiet breaking into tears. Why? He loves.

God's love for us is not a pampering love. It is a preparing and a perfecting love. His love does not guarantee that we will be shielded from problems or pain in life.

The fact that we love Him and He loves us does not shelter us from problems and pains in life. Even though God is silent and His delay seems unbearable, no matter what you are tempted to believe, you must never forget that He loves you. READ ROM.8:37-39

**2. TRUST THAT GOD HAS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.**

You find the word “believe” at least 8 times in our text. The situation calls for everyone to trust, to believe and to have faith that God is in control of the situation.

Remember, this is the point of all this in the beginning ... to display the glory of God and to develop the faith of His followers. Faith doesn't grow if it is not exercised.

From Martha and Mary's perspective things are swirling out of control. They must have felt like that they were being tossed around like a can being kicked down the road. But Jesus was working according to the Father's timetable. He is carefully orchestrating all the events.

**ILLUSTRATION** – During the Beauty and the Beast, Erik Williams and his crew were directing all the events that happened here on this stage. There's a time and place for the different characters to come on the stage. There's a time when the lights are to come on, and where darkness needs to fall on the stage. But it's all according to the script.

When all hope is lost trust that God has everything under control.

### 3. **WATCH FOR WHAT GOD IS TEACHING YOU (vv.25-26).**

Spiritual growth is not automatic. God deliberately takes us through circumstances in our lives where He teaches us about Himself.

Think about what Jesus is teaching Martha. It has to do with Himself. READ VV.21-26. Do you see “I know”? At this point she knows a truth; but she needs to know the Teacher better. Doctrine is so important. But knowing it without it taking you to the Person will leave you hopeless. Jesus is saying to Martha, you don't need to know another doctrine, you need to know Me. When you're sick you don't need a medical journal; you need a doctor. When you're being sued, you don't need a law book, you need a lawyer. The answer to the situation is not a doctrine, but Jesus.

LOOK AGAIN VV.25-26. This is one of those amazing statements made by Jesus in the Gospel of John, the so-called “I AM” statements. (“I am the bread of life ... I am the light of the world ... I am the gate, etc.). “Martha, whether Lazarus lives or dies, I will be his life. If he dies he will live.” And if he dies ... I will be your life. Whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” Important thing for God to teach us.

Question: Why did Mary not go out immediately when she learned that Jesus was present? V.20 says that when Martha learned that Jesus was there she went out to meet him, “but Mary at home.” Jesus later asked Martha for Mary. Martha went back to the house and said, “The Teacher is here and is asking for you.” Could it be that Mary is hurt by Jesus' delay? Could it be that she didn't go immediately to Jesus because she didn't understand why Jesus would have not come immediately upon hearing of Lazarus' illness. We pick this up READ V.32. You sort of get the impression that Mary and Martha must have said these words to each other often through this ordeal.

When there seems to be no hope, watch for what God is teaching you.

### 4. **CLING TO THE PROMISES OF GOD (v.40).**

Cling to the promises of God no matter how discouraging or disappointing the circumstances may be. In times like this, the only thing we may have to cling to is the promises of God's Word. Have you grown to a place in your spiritual life where you can cling to a promise and have that sustain you through the trials of life?

Jesus asked (v.26), "Do you believe?" Note: This is the point of the whole event ... READ V.42. "That they may believe that you sent me..." This is the point of Jesus' miracle.

The climax of the story comes ... READ VV.43-44. Jesus speaks and things happen. I'm reminded of what the old black preacher said about this. Why did Jesus mention Lazarus specifically by name? Because if he had not, every dead person in the cemetery would have come forth. And Lazarus does come out; life returns to his body. Suddenly a figure appears in the door of the tomb, bound in grave clothes, still wrapped in white, with a napkin still around his head, stumbling and staggering about. What a sight it must have been! It is probably good that it did not happen at night or the people would have left in droves.

You see, you can trust God because He has the power to back up His promises. We make promises sometimes that we can't keep. Not so with God. Cling to His promises. What about your salvation. Are you clinging to the promises of God? "Whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

The resurrection power of Christ is real.

**Philippians 3:10 - I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...**