



Encountering Christ, Experiencing Community

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John 11:38-44 So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. **39** Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days." **40** Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" **41** So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. **42** "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." **43** When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." **44** The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

I. Relationship; John 11:3

This family was among the most devoted followers of Christ. Occasion for this event was rooted in Jesus' history with this family. He had repeatedly come by and stayed with them and they had cared for him and the needs of his disciples. They had willingly helped him and those with him. At one point, Martha got mad at her sister for listening to Jesus when Martha was working hard to feed everyone.

This was a family with means: they could feed Jesus and his disciples; Jesus apparently stayed there when He came to Jerusalem. The fact that Lazarus was interred in a tomb spoke of the wealth they must have had.

We must always know that Jesus loves us. Question is always: do we love him? If we do, it is evidenced by our care for his body – Martha & Mary served Jesus'

physical body. How we serve & care for his people – his BODY – evidences our love for him. There are things we do for family we don't do for others. Jesus cared for Martha & Mary out of his love for them.

However, when Lazarus became sick, Mary & Martha sent to Jesus to come and heal him, he didn't come in response to their request. By the time Jesus and the disciples got to Bethany, 4 days had passed. This was the only planned miracle in the NT. Jesus intentionally let this family come into difficulty; God wants us to go thru situations because He is building something in us:

- To learn to persevere; to learn to hope – beyond hoping. God uses difficulty, hardship to fashion us and grow us in our faith in himself.
- We don't like going "thru" things because He loves us and knows what is best. Going "thru" means passing through a process that has a beginning, middle & end. But in the middle, we think God has forgotten. This miracle Jesus intentionally set up for the sake of showing His glory.

When you have a relationship with Christ, there must be growth – we must grow up! This is a story about how Mary & Martha grew up. He loves us enough to make us wait and to allow us to go thru difficulty. Jesus loves & blesses those who care for his BODY – Mary & Martha & Lazarus cared for him physically. He blessed them as He will all who care for his BODY now, his CHURCH.

When Jesus came to Bethany, Martha was critical and unbelieving for Jesus hadn't come to heal her brother and hadn't come to his funeral. Her "pastor" hadn't seemed to care enough to help in a time of need. "If you had been here..." is an accusation; a statement of unbelief.

He challenges her with the need to believe, but her character was critical. Jesus called her to faith in that moment to which Martha responded with what appears to be religious platitudes. She confessed her faith in him, but apparently didn't believe in the way He intended and called to her to believe.

II. Resurrection; vs. 43

Jesus was touched by the pain of Martha and those who were weeping. He may have been grieved by the unbelief in Martha & Mary and wept in response to this. He was touched by the pain, the loss, & remorse in the hearts of humanity. It's also possible that He anticipated his own death and the impact of grief it would have.

They went to the tomb and Jesus said to "remove the stone". Jesus prays, know the Father heard his prayer, but wanting the people to see what happened was of God. He prayed to the Father, not for his benefit, but for the sake of those heard his voice.

The resurrection of Lazarus took some time to come about and he remained

bound – He directed those around him to “unbind” him. He needed not only to be raised, but he needed to be unbound!

III. Restoration; vs. 44

Restoration is a function of community to unbind us. Are we availing ourselves to the people who can help unwrap and unbind us.

Community is about LIVING this way – open, transparent, drawing on the relationships of those we walk with. Who are we drawing upon? Who are we living in relationship with? This is what our Life Groups and pastoral care are for.