

John 11.1-53 - Meet Jesus Find Hope - of Resurrection & Life

Clint Le Page

Main Point – Jesus gives hope and resurrection life, so trust him.

Thinking about grief and loss, a woman called **Lee** shares her story(**SLIDE**)

When he collapsed on the bed, struggling to [breathe], I knew what was coming.

Paul and I had gone through the same thing 4 yrs earlier, and yet that time he survived. That time when his heart stopped they got it started again. That time I stayed married.----

[52 year old Paul], had been the model heart patient, fitter than 95% of his peers, but it wasn't enough.

And when our son and daughter came in to kiss and weep over Paul's lifeless body, I wanted to tell them, urgently and desperately – though my heart was breaking – that his death was not an accident or a mistake. I needed them to know from the outset that our heavenly Father was in control of this devastating event, he hadn't stopped loving us even though we could scarcely breathe, and life now looked bleak, empty and hard.----- (Letters to Emma, Lee Carter)

Lee says: nothing prepares you for the physicality of grief... for the weight of [it]. Nothing prepares you for the emotional intensity of grief and the sense you have been taken-over by a foreign power you cannot control.

But most of all, nothing prepares you for the finality of death – the shattering, insurmountable barrier that cuts you off from your loved one.

I looked for words that could span the...depths of my sorrow.

I'd been robbed by death...

Death had brought undone the oneness of my marriage, ripped it up and tossed it aside, and my heart with it.-----

I don't know what your experience of grief has been?

Maybe you know it all too well ? Or maybe you will one day?

In our Bible passage, it's a similar grief-filled situation, that Jesus enters.

We'll think about what we can learn from his interaction with two grieving sisters.---

And I hope you'll see that Jesus is still the one who can give us hope in the midst of grief.

We're looking at this biography and eyewitness account of Jesus' life, written by one of his followers, the apostle John.

I'll have 3 points in my talk – on the **screen** – the **first being, Dead and Buried.**-----

Our passage starts in **v1**, telling us that Lazarus was sick.

Lazarus was from this village about 3 k's from Jerusalem, and Lazarus' sisters send word to Jesus that, (**SLIDE**) 'the one you love is sick'.

Now we're told in **v5** that Jesus **loved** Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

Jesus cared for them personally and individually.

And yet **v6** says, (**SLIDE**) "So, when he heard Laz was sick he stayed where he was 2 more days'.

That's confusing, isn't it?

Jesus has performed many miracles already – turned water into wine, he's healed people of deformities, sickness, demons, disease.

His friends know Jesus could heal Laz, but he doesn't. What's going on?-----

Jesus does say in **v4**, that Lazarus' sickness will not end in death.

And that God will get the glory when his Son, Jesus, is glorified.

But we're wondering what Jesus is doing?

Like that, I think we get disappointed when God doesn't act how or when we think he should?-----

Often the Lord's plans differ from ours, and it's challenging.-----

So Jesus stayed where he was for 2 days, then decides to go to Bethany, eventually telling his followers plainly in **v14** that Lazarus has died. (**SLIDE**)

And when Jesus finally arrives, in **v17** how long had Laz been buried for?-----

4 days.

A man called **Roberto** was an Italian mountain climber, trapped by ice in 2017. The Guinness World Records(**SLIDE**) say he was in cardiac arrest for over 8 hours, then was resuscitated.-----

Lazarus has been dead and buried for 4 days.----- So he's definitely dead.-----

Next, we see, Jesus' love and power.(SLIDE)

In **v20** Martha hears Jesus was near the village n' goes to meet him.

Martha said,(**SLIDE**) "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. ²²Yet even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

She regrets that Jesus came too late, and yet still has confidence in his power to do something; anything.-----

Jesus responds, 'Your brother will rise again'.

Like Christians, Jews believe in a future end-time resurrection, which the Old Testament speaks of.(eg Daniel 12)

That's Martha's future hope.

But Jesus is about to do something amazing in the present.

And he says, I am the resurrection and the life, which we'll look at later.

Martha goes back to call her sister, then Mary rushes to meet Jesus.

She falls at his feet in **v32** and says,(**SLIDE**) "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died'.

Notice, that it's exactly the same words her sister said in v21.

Then, Jesus responded to Martha with truth, with a **ministry of truth**.-----

Often grieving people just need our presence and listening and love.

Sometimes grieving people do want answers, and we need wisdom to know when, and what to say.-----

But Jesus doesn't offer Mary truth.

When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews crying, he was 'deeply moved in his spirit and troubled'.

Facing Mary's grief and tears we see Jesus' compassion; his **ministry of tears**.-----

V35 simply says, Jesus wept.-----

When Jesus saw Mary and those with her crying, he cried too.-----

The Bible says, with compassion and empathy we should weep with those who weep. And Jesus does that here.[Romans 12.15]

Jesus stands beside Mary in her grief and he enters it.-----

Like I hope the other family and friends gathered were doing too.(v19)

But Jesus is not crying because he's powerless and frustrated.

He is not crying because he misses his friend.

For in a matter of minutes he'll perform one of his most spectacular miracles, bringing Lazarus back to life.

There is love and compassion in his tears, but more than that.

V33 and 38 say Jesus was 'deeply moved'.

But the original Greek word is better translated as anger.

And could describe the **snorting** of horses (**SLIDE**).

And surely Jesus is **angry at death** itself, that ugly enemy which generates such endless and incalculable anguish.

Jesus is raging against death.

He doesn't just say, 'Get used to it. Everybody dies. Just accept it'.

Jesus is looking at our greatest nightmare – the loss of life, the loss of loved ones-and-of love – and he's incensed. He's mad at evil and suffering, and death.-----

While tears of sympathy may fill his eyes, with anger in his soul he advances to the tomb as a champion prepared for conflict.-----

Jesus asks for the stone to be rolled away.

Martha thinks the decaying corpse will wreak, but Jesus replies in **v40**:

"Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"

He prays, wanting people to believe in him, then shouts(**SLIDE**) "Lazarus, come out!"-----
 Talk about powerful words. For the dead man comes out, wrapped in cloths.
 But he's no undead Mummy, no zombie. He's been restored to life.
 Lazarus he is alive, raised from the dead, by the powerful and loving Lord Jesus.-----

Yet what difference does this make to us?

This brings us to my final & main point, Jesus gives hope.(SLIDE)

By 'hope', I don't mean something you wish for, like I hope to win a million dollars one day.
 Or, I hope they'll find a cure for this cancer.

Or the wishful thinking of many Aussies who think, when you die, if you were a relatively good person, you'll go to a better place up there.

But what is that hope based on?-----

In the Bible 'hope' is something sure, you just don't have it yet.

And we can have hope 'cos we know how the story ends.-----

Come back please to **v25**.

Jesus said to Marth(**SLIDE**): "**I am the resurrection and the life.** The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."(NIV)

Jesus is saying, 'Listen to me! Don't despair. I'm here. Resurrection and Life. That's what I am.'

Resurrection is literally rising up, in this case from the dead, back to life.-----

Jesus is saying he has the power to give spiritual life now, relationship with God now, forgiveness of sins and salvation now.-----

And by 'never die' in **v26**, Jesus means his people will never suffer eternal spiritual death – the judgement of God.-----

When people who trust Jesus physically die, our souls go to be with the Lord in heaven.

And we await Jesus' return, when our souls will be given new resurrection bodies for the new heavens & earth.-----

So Jesus is saying he is God, and He can bring us from death to life.[John 5.25-29]

He can give Life now and life forever.-----

But the question you might be grappling with is, **Why do any of us have to die?---**

God didn't make a world filled with sickness, suffering and death.

But the Bible says, we all reject God, we all live our own way, or try to get to God on our terms.

And death is God's insistence that human pride and rejection will end.

It's God's judgement upon our sin against him.

We will die because we reject the God of life.-----

And yet, when Jesus came 2000 years ago he did not come with a sword of judgement in his hands, he came with nails in his hands.

He did not come to bring judgement but to bear judgment.

Jesus dies in our place, so all who truly trust him can live.-----

As one preacher and writer **Timothy Keller** put it, (**SLIDE**-Encounters with Jesus)

Jesus knew if he raised Lazarus from the dead, the religious establishment would try to kill him.[see v53]

And he knew the only way to bring Lazarus out of the grave was to put himself in the grave.

If he was going to save us from death, he was going to have to go to the cross, and bear the judgement we deserve.----[see v50-51]

When Jesus approached Lazarus' grave he was shaking with anger and with tears on his cheeks. He knew what it would cost to save Lazarus from death.

And yet knowing, he cried out, 'Lazarus come out!'

See how he loved Lazarus.

And oh how he must love us.

He became human, mortal, vulnerable, killable – all out of love for us.-----

Tim Keller lived through thyroid cancer and its treatment from 2002.

In 2020 he announced he had stage 4 pancreatic cancer. He died last year.

He wrote in(**SLIDE**) Walking with God through pain and suffering:

Do you believe that when you die, you rot? That life in this world is all the happiness you will every get?

Or do you believe in the new heavens and new earth?

Do you believe you are headed for a future of endless joy?

They are two utterly different futures, and depending on which you believe, you are going to handle your suffering in two utterly different ways.-----

When we've trusted in Jesus, it changes everything, and you find hope.

And **Hope** helps us handle our hardships – whether financial, physical, emotional, relational. Hope can help you hang in there.

Lee Carter, who lost her husband remember, she shares of her hope, that when Christ comes again,

he will 'wipe away every tear from [our] eyes, and death shall be no more, no mourning, crying or pain, for the former things have passed away' (Rev 21.4). This is the glorious hope set before us. We currently live in a world infected with sin, and therefore with death, but a day is coming when they will be no more, and every tear will be gently wiped away by our loving Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We grieve in this life, but we do so as those who will be raised from the dead to a new life with our Saviour!

But who is this certain and real hope for?

Jesus says,(**SLIDE**) 'the one who believes in me even if he dies, will live'.(v25)

There's lots of people who believe the man Jesus existed, and even died

But when Jesus speaks of believing in him he's talking about trust.

Philosopher **Jordan Peterson** rightly says, in the Bible 'belief' is about 'commitment',(**SLIDE**) a total and radical, all-of-life commitment.----

And Jesus is asking us all to commit ourselves to, and rely on him.-----

To put our total confidence in him.-----

He shows he can bring the dead back to life by raising Lazarus.

V15 & v42 tell us he did it, so people would believe in him.----(**SLIDE**)

And then he again shows he has the power over death by coming back from the dead himself.---

Come back on Sept 8th to think more about that.-----

Today, in this passage God is inviting you to believe in Jesus as Martha did.

Jesus asked her if she believed that trusting in him would give her life, and she did.

(**SLIDE**)v27, 'I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God'.

Messiah or Christ, and Son of God, was her way of saying Jesus you are the King of the world, the Lord over all, the Saviour of God's people.

And today in this passage you're being ask the same question:

'Do you believe this?'-----

Jesus rules over all, and he died and rose again to save all who will trust in him.

Do you believe this?-----

Only Jesus can give you relationship with God now, and the sure hope of eternal life in heaven to come.

And that blasts away a fear of death, and it changes how we grieve.-----

Someone who has met and trusted in Jesus can grieve with hope.

Trusting in Jesus gives comfort, and hope. Hope in a world of death.

Jessalyn Hutto in her book (**SLIDE**-Inheritance of Tears) shares of her hope in the face of gut-wrenching, debilitating grief after her miscarriage, at 17 weeks.-----

Jessalyn speaks of a peace in the midst of gut-wrenching sobs. Grace in the midst of overwhelming grief, and God's very real presence in terrible days.

Jessalyn said, When we finally held our little girl in our hands... we praised God for such a precious gift... We named her Anastasia, which means "resurrection".

Jessalyn says, her hope of resurrection is based on Jesus' true, physical, historical, eye-witnessed, factual resurrection, and it's a wonderful reality Christians live in.

How will you respond to Jesus?-----

I've spoken with many people over the years who've said, 'Clinton, if God showed himself to me, or proved he was real, I'd believe.'

After the Jews saw Jesus bring Lazarus back from the dead, many of them believed in Jesus, **v45**.(SLIDE)

Mary n' Martha did too.

But the passage goes on to say in **v46**, others who saw the miracle, didn't believe.

They went and doxxed to the Jewish leaders, who respond with a mixture of jealousy, fear, and anger at Jesus.

They want Jesus dead, and in **v53** they plot to kill him.-----

I'm not saying you want Jesus killed, but I am saying many people see miracles and don't believe.

Many hear the good news about the life and hope Jesus gives and don't believe it.

If that's you I encourage you to keep investigating, keep an open mind.

Maybe you'd like to read all of John's Gospel with someone? (SLIDE)

Maybe you could do a Christianity Explored course to find out more, and help make an informed decision?

Maybe you want to do Christianity Explored because you want to open your heart and mind to the life and hope Jesus gives?

Or maybe you're ready to commit to him right now.

If that's you, it starts as simply as **saying a prayer from your heart like this (SLIDE)**

God I know I deserve death and judgement.

I'm sorry for turning away from you, please forgive me.

I trust in Jesus, who died and rose again.

And I thank you for sure hope of eternal life he gives.

Help me keep listening to Jesus and following him as Lord

Amen.

I'm going to pray that prayer again now, and if you'd like to pray it with me and repeat every line in your mind, you are welcome.

If you don't want there's no pressure, but if you do, please join me and say this in your mind after me. [Pray]...

If you sincerely prayed that prayer and have trusted in Jesus, you have been given eternal life. Welcome to the saved people of God who have a sure hope of heaven.

If you prayed that please tell someone, come up to the Meet Jesus table after.

And if you have questions please come and ask.-----

I want to **close** but saying that Hope changes the way you can face your own death.

Two months back my wife Kirsti's **uncle Peter** died at 83.

He'd lived a good long life, though the past 7 years with cancer was tough.

But as I visited him in palliative care in the days before he died, we spoke of the resurrection hope from John 11.

Peter had trusted in the Lord Jesus for many years.

And he said he could die with peace, cos he knew where he was going.----(SLIDE)

It's like Ryan shared, he doesn't need to fear the afterlife now, he knows he is eternally protected and loved by Jesus.

Jesus knew all about death. He wept over it, he experienced it, he conquered it.

Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life.

He promises to set you and I free from it, if we trust him.

Then you can live and even die., with hope.(SLIDE)

Meet Jesus, and find Hope.

Let's pray.