

**Theme:** As You Are Going: The Church on Mission (Matthew 28:16-20)

**Title:** – Graveside Manner - John 11:38-57

**Aim:** Walk thru John's account of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

**Intro:** Paul wrote in II Timothy 3:16 that "**All Scripture is breathed out by God...**" It is alive & life giving. That being said, it seems to me that some passages of Scripture need little explanation or exposition. It simply speaks for itself, although as pastor/preacher, part of my responsibility is to highlight what I believe God wants us to hear/know from a particular passage (so you don't get off that easily). Such is the passage which includes our text this morning – John 11. I don't plan to read the entire chapter (57 verses), tho I encourage you to do that, perhaps this afternoon. For now, let's just walk thru the chapter & seek to get the full picture, understanding the context as well (as we should always seek to do). **A man named Lazarus** was a friend of Jesus & brother to Mary & Martha. John pointed out that Mary was one who anointed the feet of Jesus w/ointment & wiped His feet w/her hair (John mentioned here & the actual event is recorded in 12:3). There seems to be 2 separate occasions of the anointing of Jesus' feet & drying w/hair – the other in Luke 7:37-38. Evidently Jesus (& the 12) often stayed at Lazarus, Mary & Martha's house when they were in Bethany, which is just 2 miles from Jerusalem. At this time, Lazarus became ill & Mary & Martha sent for Jesus, which made sense. Jesus had healed many throughout His earthly ministry. We're told that Jesus, at this time, was on the other side of the Jordan River, at the place where John had baptized at 1<sup>st</sup> (maybe where Jesus had been baptized). That would have been northeast of Bethany, probably at least a couple of days' journey. Mary & Marth's message was, "Lord, he whom You love is ill." The clear implication was, "Please come & heal him." However, Jesus had higher things in mind – He always did. His desire was to do the Father's will always & to bring Him glory. Jesus knew what the Father had in mind. He said, "**This sickness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified thru it.**" What do you mean Lazarus' sickness didn't lead to death? He died,

didn't he? But it didn't lead to eternal death. God's glory & triumph would be seen! Then we read an amazing statement, a number of which are found in this chapter. ***"Jesus loved Martha &...Mary & Lazarus. So...He stayed 2 days longer...where He was."*** What? It seems possible that if Jesus had left immediately, He could have gotten there before Lazarus died & healed him, avoiding a lot of heartache for his sisters & friends. After those 2 days, Jesus said to His disciples, "Let's go to Judea" – that's where the religious leaders had recently sought to kill Him, after Jesus had made what they considered a blasphemous statement: ***"I & the Father are One"*** (10:30). But He escaped their grasp & their stones. His disciples argued w/Jesus base on that last encounter, but Jesus then said, ***"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep."*** "Well, that's no big deal. If he's asleep, he'll wake up after his rest." Jesus: "You don't seem to understand. Lazarus has died." Then He added, ***"For your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe."*** "I want to show you something!" Thomas said w/angst: "Let's go w/Him & probably die w/Him." Rather, Jesus would show them His power over death. By they time they got to Bethany, Lazarus had been dead 4 days! Jewish custom, out of necessity, was same day burial. Jesus had raised Jairus' daughter, who had just died. He raised the widow's son, being carried to the tomb. But 4 days? John recorded that "Many" Jews had come to mourn w/Martha & Mary & console them. It seems that Lazarus was well known. Martha was told that Jesus was coming & was near, so she got up to go meet Him. Interestingly, Mary knew the same thing but "remained seated in the house." The 1<sup>st</sup> thing Martha said to Jesus was "If only You had been here..." But then she added, partly in faith & partly in desperation: ***"But even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You."*** Jesus, in essence said, "You're right. Your brother will rise again." Then Martha, a good Advent Christian, replied ***"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."*** Then Jesus made the 5<sup>th</sup> of the 7 "I AM" statements found in the gospel of John: ***"I am the Resurrection & the Life..."*** In other words, "Life & resurrection depend on Me! I decide life. I give life. I restore life.

I have come to defeat death. Believe in Me & you will live even if you die (because I will raise you). Resurrection is sure. Live & believe in Me & you'll never die (obviously eternally, because many believers have died & await the resurrection). Death will not defeat you. Death will not have the final word. I defeat death!" Martha: "Yes, Lord, I believe. You are the Christ..." Martha, stirred to faith by this conversation, went to get Mary. Evidently Jesus had asked, "Where's Mary?" Mary went to Jesus & she made the same, somewhat accusatory statement. "If only You had been here..." Mary was weeping, as surely Martha had been & others. Jesus "was deeply moved." Even knowing what He would do, Jesus was moved by their sorrow & what His friend Lazarus went thru. Jesus asked, "Where have you laid him?" "Come & see." Then we read, "Jesus wept." Not only is that the most favorite vs to memorize but it shows us the heart of Jesus in our times of sorrow & struggle. Hymn: "Does Jesus Care?" "Oh yes, He cares! I know He cares; His heart is touched w/my grief. When the days are dreary, the long path weary, I know my Savior cares!" Those around them had the same sentiment the sisters had: "If only He had been here..." Now we come to our text: John 11:38-57 [READ]. I) Jesus' Graveside Manner is marked by Compassion & Control. He was "deeply moved again" as they approached the tomb where Lazarus had been lain. Perhaps He was moved w/sorrow over the pain & loss death brings. These were His dear friends. And perhaps He was sorrowful & even angry over the power of death & the curse of sin, which He had come to defeat & reverse. He told them, "Take away the stone." Practical Martha, even in her sorrow & even after her conversation w/Jesus, said, "**By this time there will be an odor.**" Captain Obvious, right? 4 days – certainly decay would have begun to set in, no matter how much spice & ointment was used. I love the KJV here: "By this time he stinketh..." Then Jesus made another remarkable/powerful statement: "**Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?**" Jesus had waited for this very reason, so that the glory of God would be seen. Perhaps we should remember that in our sorrow/struggles. If God is waiting, it is for a reason, for His

glory. After they rolled the stone away, Jesus stepped forth & prayed. “Father, I know You always hear Me, but I say this for the sake of those standing here, that they may believe that You have sent Me, that I am Your Anointed One, the Messiah” (remember Psalm 2?). Then Jesus spoke w/authority over death. W/a loud voice He shouted, “**Lazarus, come out!**” It was enough to raise the dead! Lazarus came out(!) still bound. Jesus commanded, “**Unbind him, & let him go.**” When Jesus brings life, death & bondage have to go! But we may need to help each other put off those things of our past that have bound & impaired us. One day Jesus will again see the graves of those who have died opened before Him – not by the hand of man, but by His command & trumpet sound. Tho Lazarus was raised to die again, he shall not die eternally. And those in Christ, raised by Christ when He comes, will never die again, but live eternally. II) **The Priests, Pharisees & Council’s Graveside Manner** was quite different. It was characterized by Denial & Dissension. Many who saw this great miracle believed – how could they not? Others took it upon themselves to go tell the Priests, Pharisees & Council – the same group which later arrested Peter & John. They did not rejoice in Lazarus’ resurrection. They did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, in spite of this miracle. They denied Jesus. They did what they did best: they gathered. “We’ve got to do something! If we let this go on, everyone will believe in Jesus & we the Romans will take away our place & our nation.” Note that they thought of their “place” – prominence – 1<sup>st</sup>. Then Caiaphas, the high priest, prophesied against Jesus but he unwittingly prophesied God’s plan – vs49-50. John wrote – vs51-52. Jesus died for those who sought to kill Him (& would succeed), but it was God’s plan! So, “from that day on they made plans to put Him to death.” This was the last straw, the last nail in the coffin. They had to get rid of Jesus. We’ll hear it next week, but in 12:9-11 we read that they also made plans to kill Lazarus because his resurrection stirred up faith in Christ in many. Because it was not quite time (tho just a little longer), Jesus “no longer walked openly among the Jews.” His next open appearance would be on what we call Palm Sunday (next week). People

were looking for Jesus - & many still are. We must show them Jesus. We must tell them of Jesus. The chief priest & Pharisees were looking for Him, too, & wanted informers to disclose His whereabouts that they might arrest Him. But no one took His life! He gave His life, laid it down on His own accord, for us – all who believe. Praise God – the One who raised the dead still gives life to all who believe! The One who raised Lazarus would Himself rise from death. The Resurrection & the Life is our Lord! Let us know Him & make Him known!

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