

Anguished Sisters

Encountering Jesus--part 6

March 16, 2014

DAY 1

1. Jesus had some very close, personal friends. They were two sisters and a brother. Lazarus, the brother had grown gravely ill. Mary and Martha send word to Jesus to come ASAP. Yet, Jesus, after hearing their plea stayed where He was for another two days before leaving at their home in Bethany. By the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus had been dead four days.

John 11:20 When 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 died...."*

2. Who goes out to meet Jesus?

3. How would you characterize what she says to him?

4. In her statement to Him check any of the following you hear behind her words:

You've really disappointed us.

Why didn't you come sooner?

You could have prevented this.

What could possibly have been more important than getting here ASAP?

Was Lazarus your friend? Really?

Other: _____

John 11:22 (Martha) " But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

5. What do you hear in the rest of her plea? Check all you think apply:

Well, now that you're here, you can fix this.

Surely, it must be God's will for our brother to still be alive.

Certainly, you can bring our brother back to life.

You may have been late, but God wouldn't turn us down, would He?

Other: _____

6. What attitudes toward God, Jesus and life do you see displayed in this conversation?

7. In what ways do you relate to Martha, here?

DAY 2

1. Yesterday, we saw a very distraught sister, suffering with the loss of her brother and how Jesus didn't respond. Today, we'll see Jesus' response to Martha.

John 11:23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

2. What do you think Jesus means by these words? Is He talking about physical life? Spiritual life? Life after death? Both?

John 11:24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

3. What does Martha understand Jesus' answer to mean? Physical life now? Spiritual life? Life after death? Both?

John 11:24 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

4. How does Jesus respond to Martha's statement?

5. To what is He referring? Is He referring to her brother? Is He telling her something about Himself?

6. What kind of "help" does Jesus see Martha needs? What does He want her to see? What does He want her to believe?

John 11:27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

7. This ends the brief conversation between Jesus and Martha. How would you characterize Jesus' approach with Martha? Check all that apply:

Logical: "You doubt; there's reason for faith."

Teaching: "I want to give you hope, not despair."

Warm and fuzzy???

"He is for me. He is with me. He feels my pain."

Other: _____

8. Does anything surprise you about His approach with Martha?

9. Do you think He met her "where she was?"

DAY 3

1. The scene shifts to a conversation with Martha's sister, named Mary.

John 11:28 And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you."

²⁹ *When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him....*

³² *When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

2. Do these words from Mary sound familiar? If so, how?

3. Below is Martha's first words to Jesus that we studied on DAY 1:

John 11:21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died...."

4. What strikes you about the first words out of each of the sisters' mouths?

5. How would you "expect" Jesus to respond to Mary? Exactly like Martha? Similar to Martha? Maybe a little "tweaking," but the same flow of thought? Other?

John 11:33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

6. John records three responses from Jesus. Underline each one.

7. What strikes you about His responses?

John 11:34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied.

³⁵ *Jesus wept.*

³⁶ *Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"*

8. Why do you think Jesus' response was so different between Martha and Mary?!

9. Have there been times in your life when you were "Martha" and needed a "logical" response? Have there been times when you were "Mary" and needed Jesus to "enter" your grief?

DAY 4

John 11:37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸ *Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.*

1. Why do you think Jesus was "deeply moved"?

2. Jesus is about to raise Lazarus from the dead, but before He does, Jesus wants to ensure that all the witnesses to this event know (1) The reason for it, and (2) Who the One is who could do this.

John 11:39 "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."

⁴⁰ *Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"*

3. What was His first stated reason for raising Lazarus from the dead? Why is this important?!

John 11:41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

4. What is His second stated reason for raising Lazarus?

John 11:43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

John 11:44 The 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."

⁴⁵ *Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.*

5. What was the response of the witnesses?

6. What is your reaction to this story? Are you more caught up with the actual miracle or Jesus' stated reasons that drove the miracle?

7. Look back at the two stated reasons, above. How important are each of them to you?

DAY 5

1. There is a golden nugget embedded in this story.

*John 11:33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was **deeply moved in spirit** and troubled.*

*John 11:38 Jesus, once more **deeply moved**, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.*

2. The phrase is from the same Greek word in both verses. The word is usually translated “groaned” or “angered.” (*enebrimēsato*). The word usually implies anger or sternness. This verb appears only five times in the New Testament.

Each time it is used with respect to Jesus' feelings or words. (IF you want to study these other times, look at Matt. 9:30, Mark 1:43; 14:5; plus the two episodes here in John 11).

3. What reason or reasons provoked this deeply visceral response?

4. There are likely a number of things that prompted this internal response, but I'd like us to look at one. AFTER Lazarus is raised from the dead, word spreads to the Pharisees. They already had a target on His back, but now things become deadly serious.

John 11:46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

⁴⁷ *Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs.*

⁴⁸ *If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."*

5. What did the Pharisees fear if Jesus was not stopped?

John 11:53 So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

6. Undoubtedly Jesus knew what the ramifications would be from raising Lazarus from the dead, **before** He did it. By raising Lazarus from the dead what did Jesus now have to face?

7. Standing in front of Lazarus' tomb, Jesus was "angered," "raging" at **death**. He's raging at the power of **evil** and the awfulness of **suffering**. But in order to defeat all three, *He Himself will have to face and defeat all three!* This would happen at the cross! When he said, Lazarus, come forth!" He was putting the noose around His own neck!

a. He could only defeat death by surrendering to His own death.

b. He could only stop Lazarus' funeral by beginning His own.

c. Within days, the hands that created life would receive the nails of death.

8. What is your biggest take away from this week?