

## JESUS GIVES US WHAT WE NEED

When I was a kid, I wanted to be a scuba diver. A friend had brought over his scuba gear to our pool when I was 12 and let me try it, and from that moment I was hooked. I wanted to be the next Jacques Cousteau. For those of you who do not know who that was, he was a French explorer and conservationist. He helped pioneer the Aqualung, the precursor to today's scuba tanks. In the 1970s there was a TV show called the Underwater Adventures of Jacques Cousteau that I always watched. You had to be 16 years to take scuba training but I begged and pleaded and they let me do it when I was only 14. I wanted my own scuba equipment so bad, it dominated my life. I would lie awake at night dreaming about it. Maybe you understand what I mean. We can laugh now at those childhood desires, but what is it that you are wanting today? What is your deepest desire? I do not know where you are at with your relationship with Jesus today, but I do know that probably most of us here want something. There is something that you are longing for, something that you are praying about.

Some are praying for a job or a more meaningful career right now. Maybe you are trying to get pregnant and for whatever reason can't right now. There are parents here this morning who have kids that have wandered away spiritually and your desperate prayer is that they would come back. There are people here whose marriage is in trouble. I am sure there are people here today who want physical healing. If not for themselves, for loved ones. There may be people here trying to kick an addiction.

You are wanting something and you are waiting for something to happen, but the answer to your prayers seems to be taking a long time coming.

John 11:17-27 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 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. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 Yes, Lord, she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

Today we are continuing in our series Walking with Jesus. What does Jesus offer us in our hours of greatest want and need? In this story Jesus offers us 5 things;

1. Punctually— always on time

It's surprising that Jesus doesn't go to Lazarus right away. It may be even disturbing. His friend is sick and he seems to be in no rush. Let's look at the background of this story;

John 11:1-7 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." 4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." 5 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. 7 Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

It took a few days for the messenger to reach Jesus. Then Jesus stayed where he was for 2 days. Then he travelled back to Bethany, so that by the time Jesus arrived Lazarus had been dead 4 days.

Put yourself in Mary and Martha's place. Our brother is dying! Where is Jesus? Why is He not here? Did He get our message? Doesn't He know what is happening? For many of us this is the most frustrating part of trusting our life to Jesus. That he doesn't operate on our predetermined time schedule or do everything the way we would. Delay for many is torturous.

Think about your desperate prayer for a minute. Maybe you're feeling like Mary and Martha. Where is Jesus? Has He heard my prayer? Why is nothing happening? Does Jesus still love me? Maybe there's only one of you who needs to hear this. But while Jesus' timing may be unique, he never stops loving you. He can't stop loving you. Because the character of God is love.

Here's what I see with a lot of people. A lot of people say, "Oh God, I want you to show up in this area of my life." But then what we do is we actually stop trusting him because we put a deadline on it. God, I need this prayer answered by such and such a time, and if not I am taking matters into my own hands. Remember the story of Saul;

1 Samuel 13:8-9 He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter. 9 So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering.

Saul waited but when things did not happen as he thought they should he took matters into his own hands. How often we do the same thing. One of the things we have to learn in living the Christian life is that trusting Jesus means trusting His timing. For people who are very punctual like me that can be difficult. Trust is trusting his timing.

When we were on the Doulos there were many times when things did not go according to plans. At one point we lost our doctor. Just before departure a doctor showed up so that we could leave. Another time we had several doctors and nurses all show up at the same time. We were wondering what that meant – why we had so many medical staff on board when we were usually glad to have just one. We headed out to sea and the next morning heard that there was a ship nearby that was sinking. Our medical staff was critically needed. They were there exactly on time. Not before or after.

Whatever happens to you in life remember this first lesson, God's timing is always perfect. Jesus is always on time.

## 2. Purpose – a bigger life

Jesus offer us a bigger life. He wants more for you than you even want for yourself. His plan for you is bigger than you can even imagine.

In this story, Martha actually has the courage to say what many of us feel. "Jesus, where were you? Why didn't you show up? If only you had been here, if only you had listened, if only you had come when you were supposed to, then none of this would have happened."

Jesus does not try to correct her, He simply goes to the focus of her need and says "Martha, your brother will rise again. Do you believe this?" Martha understood the realities of life. She knew that dead people did not rise again.

There was a widely held view at that time that when a person died, their spirit stayed close to the body for a few days. There was always a glimmer of hope that the person could return. But this was 4 days later and all hope was gone. Dead people didn't rise. When Jesus asks if she believed her brother would rise again she assumed that Jesus was talking about spiritual resurrection. Yes, she would see him again eventually in heaven, some day...

But Jesus was not talking just about eternal life – life after death. He was also talking about life now. Because He knew what He was about to do.

What comes to your mind when you hear the words “eternal life?” For most people that means heaven. It does, but it also means more than that. Eternal life starts now. It begins the moment you believe and put your trust in Jesus. Too often we see Christianity as just a pie in the sky when you die. They go through life just holding on, waiting for heaven. That is not the life Jesus wants us to live. That is not the Spirit led life. If your focus is only on heaven you are going to miss what God is doing.

Years ago, we went to Disney World. Imagine if we had gone to the Magic Kingdom and walked into the park but then sat down on the first bench we saw. You can see the castle. You can see people with balloons. You see in the distance Goofy and Mickey coming out to be greeted by children. You see places that sell food. But you spend your whole day sitting on that bench. Let me ask you a question, even though you may have been IN the Magic Kingdom, did you really experience the fullness OF the Magic Kingdom? The answer is no. There is more to see and experience than just that one bench. And sometimes I want to say that to people who call themselves Christians. My friends! You're not experiencing the kingdom.

The kingdom of God is not just when you die. The kingdom of God is now. Do you believe this Martha? Whatever your name is... Do you believe this? The kingdom is now.

Maybe Jesus is saying to someone here today, I have such a bigger view of life for you. Quit sitting at the entrance, go further. Read the bible and put it into practice. Quit relying on your own power. Jesus is the resurrection and the life, start living your life to reflect that.

Jesus is always on time and offers us a bigger purpose than we can imagine.

### 3. Passion – a broken heart

Jesus reveals here a heart that breaks. Perhaps the easiest verse to memorize in the whole bible is John 11:35. It is also the most profound. Jesus wept.

Why was Jesus heart broken? Was it for Lazarus because he had died? No, Jesus knew what he was about to do. He knew that Lazarus was about to walk out of the tomb alive. I think Jesus wept because the Scripture says “He saw her weeping.” His heart broke for the pain that was in Martha's heart. His heart broke for those who were grieving and mourning. The pain that they were experiencing broke the heart of Jesus. And Jesus sees your pain as well.

I know that there are people here today that are grieving. There are people here today who are dealing with broken hearts. It is OK to grieve. What you need to remember is that Jesus is grieving with you.

Jesus sees our pain. He knows our heart. He has been through what you are going through. He knows the pain of loneliness, sickness and loss.

Hebrews 4:15-16 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

I read about a young boy who was sent by his mom to the corner store to buy a loaf of bread. He was gone much longer than it should have taken him. When he finally returned, his mother asked, "Where have you been? I've been worried sick about you." "Well," he answered, "there was a little boy with a broken tricycle who was crying. So I stopped to help him." The mom said, "I didn't know you could fix tricycles!" The boy said, "I can't, so I just stood there and cried with him!" You don't have to be good with words. Just being there to share someone's pain and grief will be more appreciated than you'll ever know.

Jesus is always on time, offers us a big purpose and understands our pain.

#### 4. Power – the ability to change

Jesus has given us the power we need for transformation. Have you ever felt what it is like to touch a live electrical wire in the house? That is power. Power has a way of transforming us. Like a Taser in the chest, there is a reaction.

John 11:39-45 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?" 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." 43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 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.

Why did Jesus say "Lazarus come out." Because if He had just said COME OUT all the graves everywhere would have been opened!

For Jewish burials during that time, they did not embalm bodies. So, in not embalming a body, they would wrap you in linen. At every wrap they would add a layer of spices. So... wrap, spice, wrap, spice. It wasn't as tight as a mummy but kind of think of it like that. So that's where Lazarus is. He's wrapped in linen and spices. Then Jesus says come out!

I wonder during the wait what do you think was going on? There had to be some delay between him shouting and Lazarus coming out. What did people think was going to happen? Did anybody expect him to really come out? Were some people there mocking Him? What was going on?

The question for us is not whether Jesus had the power. It might be a question for some of you. But the majority of us in here have already put our faith and trust that Jesus does have the power. That's not the question. The question is this: Do you believe that you can trust Jesus with your life. Do you have the faith to say that you will obey and follow him even when you do not understand His plan?

I see this in my own life. I have faith and know that Jesus is God and that He is able to do all things. It is not that I doubt if Jesus CAN do something, the question is WILL He. Can I trust that Jesus will show up when I need Him to? Can I trust Him to make the best decisions concerning my life? Do I trust my own plan for my life more than His?

Jesus is always on time, offers us a big purpose, understands our pain and has the power to help us.

## 5. People – a community of care

One of the many things that brings me great joy being a follower of Jesus is that I don't have to follow Jesus alone. God created us to be in community. You are not simply accepted as an orphan; you get adopted into a loving family.

John 11:44 ... Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

What's the key word there? He told *them*. He told the community. He told the friends and the family. He invites the community to get involved. Why did Jesus instruct other people to take off the burial clothes? Why didn't he do it himself? It was his miracle. Perhaps there is something that the community gains by actually touching, physically touching the pain. Getting so close to the odor of their once dead friend. Something happens to us when we connect with each other in the deepest, rawest moments of life. Something that does not happen with just going to a Bible study.

I believe that every follower of Jesus Christ needs to have people in their life who are saying I'm with you! You can do it. I know your marriage sucks right now. But I'm praying for you. I'm encouraging you. I know you want to get pregnant. I am grieving with you. I know your kid is wayward. We're going to cheer you on. We're not going to let you be alone. I know you're in chemotherapy right now. I'm going to hold your hand through the whole thing. We're in this battle together. I'm not going to let you be alone.

Unwrap him and let him live. Don't be held captive by the garments of death.

Friends, so many of us in here have been given a new life. Yet we continue to live our life like we're still in the grave. We dress ourselves in clothes of doubt and fear and shame and guilt and self loathing. Those are not the right clothes. If you're doing this alone, you be around people who are following Jesus, who have been unwrapped. Who are living this new reality of Jesus filled, Spirit led, living. That's what the church needs to be.

When we were at Disney's Animal Kingdom we went and saw the Finding Nemo stage production. In the movie, the little clown fish Nemo is separated from his father. Eventually they find each other, but then Nemo is caught in a net with lots of other fish. The only way that they are going to make it is if they all work together, swimming in the same direction downward. Nemo's dad keeps yelling 'keep swimming' until the net breaks and the fish are free. That is not bad theology. We need each other. When we all do our own thing, there is simply confusion. When we unite around a common pain and purpose, there is not end to the things that can be accomplished.

We started this conversation with me asking you about your deepest longing, deepest prayer. While I can't promise you that God will answer your prayer the way you want him to answer your prayer, I can promise you from my experience and from the stories of many people that I've come alongside of, Jesus may surprise you. He may surprise you! But he will never disappoint you.