

When we live in the IF, we are living like God is not in control, like life is random, and God gets surprised by what comes our way! Nothing further from the truth. God has a plan...we need to get on board with His plan...not ours!

*Jer 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

IF is a word that many times will lead us down the wrong path! That's what happened to Mary and Martha. Both of them said exactly the same thing...and they were both wrong...because they made the wrong assumption:

- Martha: 11:21 *"If you had been here my brother would not have died"*
- Mary: 11:31 *"If you had been here my brother would not have died"*

They assumed that Jesus missed the opportunity to save Lazarus, when in fact He intentionally stayed away long enough for Lazarus to die...so that He could do something much greater than HEAL Lazarus...RAISE him from Dead!

- Jesus 11:1-7 *"So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days."*

#### Four Spiritual Truths You Need To Embrace From John 11

##### 1. God Can Be Glorified By What We Consider "Bad" Things!"

Vs 4

Jesus had a plan from the very beginning! Lazarus death was not a mistake...it was a PLAN!

- Jesus: 11:4: *"This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified!"*

Jesus has a plan for you too! And, Just like with Mary and Martha and Lazarus, it probably doesn't look ANYTHING like what YOU have in mind. But in exactly the same way Jesus used the awful situation surrounding Lazarus death to glorify God, so He can use whatever YOU are going through for the same purpose! It's just not easy!

Appl: Here is the mindset change we have to make:

- FROM: *God, WHY did you let this awful thing come into my life?*
- TO: *God, HOW do you want to use this for good in my life and in others?"*

Ex: Joseph: Gen 50:20 *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."*

##### 2. Just Because Jesus Loves You Doesn't Guarantee Your Life Will Be Easy.

Vs 11-15

- Lazarus DIED! Vs 11-15: Fallen Asleep: *"Lazarus our friend is DEAD!"*

Listen, you cannot doubt God's love just because hard, difficult, and painful things come your way! Jesus TOLD us they would! John 16:33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

We live in a broken, sinful, ugly world. As disciples of Jesus, we are not immune to what is all around us...and often times still IN us. We know addiction, we know lust, we know anger, we know bitterness: BUT GOD CAN REDEEM!

WE KNOW the end of the story with Lazarus. We know Jesus showed up. We know the stone was rolled back, we know that Lazarus was raised from the dead and everyone was amazed at this incredible miracle. That's the END

- Mary didn't know the end result when she was caring for Lazarus, watching him waste away...and die!
- Martha didn't know the end result when she stood by the bedside, and at the tomb, watched it be closed!
- Lazarus didn't know what was going to happen, as he waited for Jesus, getting worse...took his last breath!

They had to WALK that awful road...they had to live through it...they had to look down the road...not see Jesus coming! They said their last goodbyes, they held the funeral, they grieved their loss. Lazarus FACED DEATH!

They did not escape one single part of the pain, doubt, confusion and disappointment of Jesus NOT showing up the way they expected. BUT HE STILL LOVED THEM...JUST LIKE HE LOVES YOU IN YOUR TRIALS AND STRUGGLE AND PAIN

The difference is NOT that you ESCAPE the pain: BUT God can give PURPOSE to your PAIN! USE IT FOR HIS GLORY!

THAT'S why we ask the question, God, How do you want to use this in my life...and in the life of others.

Today, at the invitation time...If you have been asking WHY...COME TO ALTAR, pray a different prayer: PRAY HOW?

Illus: 15 Years ago...On a bike in in gym: Praying: You say you can bring GOOD...TELL ME GOD...one good thing...

He spoke...and I didn't like what He said...but he gave me an answer

Last Monday started new job, Director of Operations for Habitat for Humanity: Investing life in helping others

### 3. Everyone Get's It Right Sometimes!

Vs 16

I love this story about Thomas. We all know him by the name...: "DOUBTING THOMAS" *Unless I see nails, put hand in*  
That's not all that unreasonable! From where we stand, yea, no faith... but we know end of the story...He didn't  
THOMAS HAS BEEN Known for centuries by his WORST moment.

Look at this one though... Vs 8: Can't go there, just tried to stone you: All disciples said, don't go: Out to get you!  
FAITHFUL THOMAS says: Vs 16 *"Let us also go, that we may die with him!"*

Parents, Husbands, Wives: Bosses: What if you saw people based on their BEST moments, NOT their WORST?  
Challenge you this morning...Start seeing people DIFFERENTLY...Know them by their BEST...NOT WORST!

### 4. We All Need Help Becoming What God Has Declared Us To Be In Christ.

Vs 38-44

Notice what Jesus says when Lazarus came out of the tomb. It is something that we need to pay close attention to, because it gives us some insight into how God works in our life. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Lazarus was 100% alive. It wasn't possible for him to be MORE alive than Jesus made him at that point.

But, notice what Jesus said: Vs 44 *"Take off the grave clothes and let him go!"* "KJV: *"Loose him and let him go!"*  
When Lazarus came walking out of the tomb...He was alive: But he still had the graveclothes, binding, on him! Who would want to go through life that way! There is old Lazarus...Jesus brought him back from dead you know...Shame he never got rid of those gravecloths. Not very flattering! Stumbling around...looks like an Egyptian Mummy!

Lazarus needed the help of those around him to fully become free! What a beautiful picture of discipleship!

- Lazarus was made alive in Christ: And So are We! 2 Cor 5:17  
*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"*  
The moment you confessed your sin and your need for Jesus, accepted His forgiveness, made alive in Christ!  
But those that have walked with Jesus for a while can testify...we all still have some of the grave cloths!  
Some of the old habits, old sins, problems, they stayed with us. Like Lazarus, still bound up!  
Illus: Some of our issues were amazingly, miraculously removed instantly: Some still hanging around 40 yrs
- Just like Lazarus, we need others to come along side us and help us do what we cannot do alone!  
We need others to "unwrap" us! And help us unwrap ourselves!

Because of that, I want to describe for you a 5 step process of "Unwrapping"

1. You have to do YOUR part! You have to be an ACTIVE participant. Can't just wait for those grave cloths unwrap self

- Starts with PRAYER: 1John 1:9: If we confess our sin He is faithful and just....  
First step is bringing your sin to God in confession: God it's still HERE!  
If you are struggling with some left over gravecloths...come to the altar!
- PERSONAL ACTION Eph 4:22-32 Put Off/Put On: YOU TAKE RESPONSIBILITY  
Put Off: Word used to take off coat, shirt!  
Put On: Word used to describe putting on  
You have to say, I am going to do everything I can. I am going to do my part
- ACCOUNTABILITY: Prov 27:17 *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."*  
Every person that has ever struggled with sin in this way tell you...  
TRANSPARANCY and ACCOUNTABILITY: Find Someone you can trust  
Give them permission to hold you accountable.
- COUNSELOR: Prov 11:14 Pr 11:14 *"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."*  
There is NO shame in going to a counselor saying: I NEED HELP!
- REPLACEMENT: Biblical principle of replacing a bad, sinful habit, of the old, dead man, with a new beneficial habit which glorifies God and builds you and others up!"

CONCL: Got some graveclothes hanging off you? Most of us do. Some of us are just better at hiding it than others. We keep it tucked away, hidden, stuffed down. Every once in a while...pops it's ugly head up. Has never gone away. Jesus has a message to the church today: LOOSE HIM...LET HIM GO! We as the body of Christ have the privilege of joining Jesus in this miracle of new life! He invites us into the process: Prayer; Accountability; Counselor; Group help  
BUT HERE IS THE KEY: IT ALL STARTS RIGHT DOWN HERE AT THE ALTAR: OVER AT THE PRAYER TENT