

# **A Living Hope**

**John 11**

**Pastor Guy Gray**

## **In the Presence of Suffering, Sorrow and Death**

The story of the raising of Lazarus is one of the most powerful and beautiful stories in the entire Gospel. Part of what makes it moving is the way the scene is set for us. When they sent for Jesus they said, “Lord, the one you love is sick.” Everything about this story is personal and deeply emotional - the love of Lazarus’ sisters, the love of Jesus, the tears, the anguish, the disappointment and even the doubt.

This story touches our hearts because it highlights the struggles each of us must face in this life...the pain of loss, the challenge of seemingly unanswered prayers or the “delay” of God’s answers. This story takes aim at our hearts. It wrestles with the greatest hurts and mysteries of human experience, especially the looming threat of death itself.

But this is a story about hope—ultimate hope, living hope. The hope that it presents is not an idealized escape from reality. This is hope right in the face of suffering, sorrow and death. This is what we need. This is what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is really all about.

## **The Ultimate Attitude Adjustment**

Everyone in this story has to wrestle with their attitude. The disciples don’t want to go to Lazarus because they are afraid the Jews will kill them if they go back to Judea. Martha spouts out theological truths but her faith in Christ is not deep enough to move her past the bitterness of her heart at the loss of her brother. Even Mary is given over to depression, she doesn’t know what to think or do. In the midst of all this Jesus speaks life changing words of truth for all to hear, “I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me will live, even though he dies!” (John 11:25). And then, the all important question, “Do you believe this?”

This is the heart of the story. Jesus is using the raising of Lazarus to teach us how ultimate hope transforms our lives, not just in the future, but in the here and now. Hope is an outlook about the future that impacts our attitude in the present. Christian hope is an outlook about the future that is built 100% on the miracle of the resurrection victory of Jesus Christ. Look at 1 Peter 1:3-8. We have been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we must let that faith perspective color our attitude about absolutely everything we face in this broken hurting (dying) world. Jesus IS the resurrection and the life. Believe. Jesus is with you, right now, by faith. Believe this.

## **It’s Your Choice**

It’s a radical claim that Jesus makes. It’s a radical hope that He brings to those who believe. But we are left with a choice. Will you embrace this radical hope? Each of us must choose a perspective from which to live our lives in this broken dying world. The Gospel perspective is radical hope through Jesus Christ. Will you embrace this faith perspective? Will you trust Jesus the risen Lord with your life, your hurt, your suffering, your future, your death and your own resurrection? If you do, your life will be transformed in this world. There will still be hurt and tears and disappointment. But there will always be hope outshining all these things. Do not give in to the voices of despair and hopelessness. Go ahead and mourn when life hurts and there is loss, but never mourn as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Go ahead and read the John 11 again. Read it several times. Feel the pain. Then hear the astounding words of Jesus. Believe Him. See Christ as the risen victorious Lord. Choose Gospel hope. It is the

only hope that can transcend all things. It is the only hope that is anchored in a real person and a real event – Christ’s own resurrection. It is a hope that has substance. You can grab on to it. It will hold strong. Make your choice. Live in the hope of Christ!

**For Further Reflection:**

This week, spend time in John 11. As you reflect and pray, let these questions guide you.

How is Jesus’ declaration in 11:25&26 meant to encourage Martha?

How should the living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3) transform our thoughts, our attitudes, our behaviors in the here and now?

To what degree is your life perspective guided by the Christian hope of the resurrection?