

Here we are, ending week 3 of different. It seems like a good time to pause and think about our lives and how we are doing with all of the changes. We talked about how to manage the “different” two weeks ago. Last week, we were all encouraged by Mrs. Pam talking about how Satan wasn’t winning the battle, no matter how unsettled things are. I loved that reminder and was glad that she shared it with me.

This week let’s go back to the story of Lazarus. You may know it well, but if you don’t, check out John 11. It recounts the story of Lazarus from the time of his sickness to his death and tells how he was called out of the grave by Jesus. If we look closely, it reveals more about who we are, who Jesus is and how he responds to us.

Lazarus was very sick, and Mary and Martha called for Jesus to come. They knew He was the Messiah and had enough faith to call for Him, trusting that He would heal their brother. I imagine that once the message was sent, Martha began to plan what she would prepare for their meal together. Mary was excited and was probably more lost in her own thoughts than anything. Both had enough faith to know that Jesus would make the difference. But then, Lazarus dies, and the faith that they had is shaken. They are lost in grief and doubt and don’t understand why Jesus didn’t come immediately.

When Martha received word that Jesus was finally coming, she went out to meet him. Isn’t that just like Martha...on the move, ready to meet the task at hand? She tells Him that He could have saved her brother and that she knows that even now, God will give Him what He asks. When they talk, Jesus doesn’t give her the quick solution to the problem at hand. He doesn’t immediately say that He has come back to raise her brother from the dead. Instead, He gives her a greater hope...and it is the hope that we need to carry us through uncertain days. Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this, Martha?” Oh, the great HOPE that is in these words! Martha confirms her belief to Christ – hope in resurrection and eternal life in heaven with Him.

Mary, called by Martha to see Jesus, is in a different place. She is deeply consumed by grief. Upon seeing Jesus, she says simply, “Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Mary is deep in despair and doesn’t see a way out. Jesus’ response to Mary is completely different. In His humanity, He joins her in her grief. He knows that she is hurting and meets her where she is. And he meets the rest of the mourners in the same way. He weeps. Jesus knows the fragileness of human life and the suffering of humanity. When we are weeping, He is weeping, too.

It’s important to know that Jesus meets us where we are. When we are sad, He is sad with us. He doesn’t dismiss our feelings. He was fully human, and He knows what our struggles are like. He struggled all the way to the cross for us. And after His terrible, painful death, He gave us the ultimate hope by rising again. He is the resurrection and the life! We will not be in our broken world forever. Right now, we want to be delivered from this virus and its impacts – saved from our immediate circumstances, but God’s plan is bigger than that. It’s for His glory to be revealed through this situation – just as His glory was revealed when He raised Lazarus. We will not be quarantined forever, and there is a hope so much bigger than that. Hope that is eternal...a home in heaven with Jesus forever!

KEY VERSE: Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”
John 11:40 (NIV)