

From: Pastors Desk:

A TRUE FRIEND

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Mary and Martha felt this way about Jesus when their brother Lazarus got sick and died. Jesus, their friend, was not far away, and they had sent an urgent message for Him to come straightaway.

So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was two more days. — John 11:6

They waited. And waited. And Lazarus died. Then Jesus showed up. He offered no excuse.

Why hadn't He come? Didn't He love them? They thought He did. Everyone referred to Lazarus as the one Jesus loved (John 11:3). Did He not care after all?

1. He's Weeping

When Jesus hears firsthand from Mary that Lazarus had died, He weeps (John 11:35). Jesus's tears have always struck me as a little strange. Didn't He know He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead? If you know that in less than ten minutes a loved one will be alive, why cry? Instead, why not say to Mary and Martha, "No, no! You don't need to cry! I'm about to fix everything!"

2. He's Saving

When Jesus first heard about Lazarus's sickness, He emphatically declared that this bout of death would not have the final word.

"But when Jesus heard it He said,

This illness does not lead to death. — John 11:4 ESV

But Lazarus did die! Jesus was looking past Lazarus's death to his resurrection. This sickness did not lead to death; it led through death to a resurrection. Death was just a brief stop along the way.

When Martha, Lazarus's other sister, told Jesus about her brother's death, Jesus responded by saying,

I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. — John 11:24

She knew her theology. Jesus says, But I'm talking about more than resurrection on the last day . . .

I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? — John 11:25–26

I am the resurrection and the life right now. In other words, I'm already turning the power of death around, using its powers of destruction to glorify My name and heal you. In Me, even when you die, you don't really die. To her credit, Martha believes. I suspect that many people in the church today don't. We still act like our "illness" terminates in death. What scares us about death is that it feels like permanent loss. Someone we loved is gone forever. But Jesus took all these permanent, bitter parts of death into Himself so that none of it remains for us.

3. He's Glorifying

Jesus told His disciples that the biggest objective He was pursuing in this encounter was God's glory.

Through every episode of our pain God is writing a story for His glory. Like Mary and Martha, we sometimes can't see where that story is going, how our pain fits into it, or why Jesus seems to arrive too late to help us. But because of stories like this one, we can rest assured that He is always working.

In conclusion, I've heard God's work in our lives compared to the weaving of a tapestry. On one side you see a beautiful, intricate work of art. But if you lift the corner and look on the backside, you find an erratic and chaotic mess of strands. If all you could see were the backside of a tapestry as it was being woven, you would conclude that nothing beautiful was taking shape. .