

Love's Delays
John 11:1-16
Pastor John Miller

We come to John 11 tonight. It is indeed a remarkable chapter. The whole Bible is the Word of God, and it's all remarkable, but it's a standout chapter. If you were doing a book on the great chapters of the Bible, you would include John 11. John 11 gives us the record of the seventh miracle or sign miracle performed by Jesus in the gospel of John. Now, it is the last miracle, and John writes and says in John 20, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name," so John's book lays out seven miracles.

Let me rip them off for you real quick. The first is turning water into wine, John 2. The second is the healing of the nobleman's son, John 4. The third healing or sign was the healing of the impotent man, John 5. The fourth healing was the feeding of the five thousand, John 6. The fifth healing was the walking on water, John 6. The sixth healing was the blind man, John 9. Now, we come to the seventh and last sign pointing to the deity of Christ, it's the raising of Lazarus from the dead, John 11. There are seven signs pointing to Christ's divine nature. Of all the seven signs, this one is irrefutable, it's so overwhelming in its evidence that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Lazarus was dead for four days. Jesus raised three people from the dead as recorded for us in the gospels; and those three people are the widow's son of Nain, Jairus' daughter, and then Lazarus. It's interesting that the widow's son of Nain would have been dead for a few hours (they buried the same day they died). The daughter of Jairus would have been just for within an hour or so, just within minutes, since she died when Jesus arrived in the home. But Lazarus has been dead for four entire days. When He asked the stone to be rolled away and commands Lazarus to come forth, his own sister said, "Lord, by this time he stinketh," that's King James English, "stinketh." Decay had set in and it's a hopeless case. But Jesus Christ is the Lord of life. Amen?

If you've ever thought your situation was hopeless and that God could not rescue you or answer your prayers, be encouraged tonight—all things are possible with God. Amen? There's nothing too hard for God. It doesn't matter if you've been dead for an hour, if you've been dead for a day, if you've been dead for four days, and in our cases, our bodies will have lain in the grave perhaps for some years and we will be resurrected from the grave. Amen? Even as He called Lazarus from the grave, so our bodies will be resurrected, and we will have new glorified bodies in heaven.

This miracle is only recorded in John's gospel—it's not in Matthew, Mark, Luke—which is what makes it so unique. It's the only place that we read this story, and it also includes the fifth "I Am" statement of Jesus Christ, "I am the resurrection, and the life," John 11:25, and we'll get there next Wednesday night. Jesus is seen in His power to be God and have power and victory over death.

The first 16 verses are merely the background and setting for the miracle, so we're just going to look at these first 16 verses. Let me outline them for you. The first section is verses 1-6, and what we have there is Lazarus was sick. If you're taking notes, you'll want to write that down. Let's read that beginning in verse 1. "Now, a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha." Now, in verse 2, John points out in parenthesis, "(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)" 3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. 4 When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. 6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was."

These first six verses of John 11 are packed with some very marvelous and practical application for us as believers. The first thing we're introduced to in verses 1-2 are the Bethany family—the family of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. I want you to notice them. It says there was, "a certain man was sick, named Lazarus." This is not the Lazarus of the story of the rich man and Lazarus. This is a different Lazarus. We know the story about the rich man and Lazarus, where the rich man died and went to hell and Lazarus was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. This is not the same Lazarus, so you don't want to get them confused. The name Lazarus means God helps. Then, there was his sister, Mary, and her sister, Martha. There was a family. Now, it's believed that Martha was the oldest, she always seems to be kind of taking the lead. The reference in Scripture to the place where they lived was Bethany—it's sometimes referred to as the town of Martha—and the house was believed to be owned by Martha. It seems as though there was living in this house Martha, her sister Mary, and it's just a guess, but it's an educated guess, that Lazarus was the younger of the three, so older sister Martha, then Mary, then perhaps Lazarus. We know probably the least about Lazarus of this group.

This family is mentioned three times in the gospels. They're mentioned in Luke 10, John 11, and then we'll see them again in John 12. There's three episodes there. We all know the episode when Jesus came to the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. By the way, Bethany means house of figs. I have a daughter named Bethany, and I think it's a pretty name, a cute name, a cool name. But it means house of figs, so I don't know how flattering that is. Anyway, she's an amazing person, one of three daughters, and I almost forgot (it just popped in my brain) we had a granddaughter born yesterday by daughter number two. I'm sorry I didn't get the picture up for you. I've been busy all day getting ready, and I forgot. Maybe I'll bring it on Sunday, but 7 lbs. 14 oz. Her name is Ella Elizabeth, and she's healthy and doing great. My wife is back in Alabama for the birth of the baby and I'm out here, so I'm FaceTiming with them. Anyway, we're blessed. I've had three daughters, now I have three granddaughters, so what a blessing that is.

The city of Bethany, a small suburb of Jerusalem, is east of Jerusalem. If you're in Jerusalem, and you look east, you'll see Mount of Olives. There's the Kidron Valley between you and the mountain Jerusalem's on. On the back side, the east side (this would be in the West Bank area), sits two miles east of Jerusalem this little town of Bethany. Evidently, it had a lot of figs

there or fig trees there; and these three individuals, this family, were very near and dear to the heart of Jesus. He loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. This speaks of the human touch of this story. As I said, there's just so much running through my mind that we can touch on that isn't even in my notes, but I love the idea that the Son of God, came from heaven, took on humanity, now He was God in the flesh, but He actually liked people. He liked hanging around people. Even though He was the Son of God and could do miracles and everyone thronged Him, He liked to just go over to His friend's house and kick back, you know. If there were phones, He would call them up and say, "Hey, what are you guys doing tonight? Can I come hang out with you? Maybe we can make some Mexican food and just, you know, kick it or hang out together?" Jesus just loved these people. He liked hanging out with these people. That's because Jesus was a real man, a real human, and He loved hanging out with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

I started and got a little sidetracked, we know the story of when He was there for dinner that Martha was busy serving and getting frustrated because her sister Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to His words and wasn't helping Martha in the kitchen getting the meal prepared. Martha came out and said, "Jesus, don't you care that my sister's left me to serve all by myself? Tell her to come help me." Jesus said, "Martha, Martha," anytime He says your name twice you know you're in trouble, "you are careful," or worried or anxious, "about many things, but Mary's chosen the better part." He actually subtly and lovingly kind of rebuked her. Now, Martha's Martha. She's serving and that's a commendable thing, but she was getting her eyes off of why she was serving and Who she was serving and the fact that her sister wasn't helping her.

You know, we can do the same thing. "I'm busy serving, why don't more people serve? Why aren't more people helping? Why don't more people do this. Why aren't they doing this?" and we get our eyes off of Jesus and on what other people aren't doing, instead of doing what God's called us to do in love for His glory. It's very easy to get discouraged serving the Lord because, "Why aren't more people helping," and "Why aren't more people doing this," and "Why aren't they coming helping here," instead of just saying, "Lord, I'm serving You because I love You," and that's the better part. We know Martha was the doer, she was busy, and that's a fine thing. God gave her the gift of service and hospitality.

Mary was more contemplative and more worshipful. She's the one that poured the oil on Jesus' feet at the dinner, took her hair down and wiped them with the hair of her head and the perfume filled the room. Just the different personalities within the family, but Jesus loved them just the same. I think it's important that we, as Christians, have believers that are friends and companions that we can accompany with and go through life together. You don't want to be an alone Christian. You want to reach out and develop good, godly friendships to be able to encourage one another. The family is made up of Lazarus, Mary, and her sister, Martha. The parenthesis of verse 2, just mentioning, "(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)" These individuals lived in Bethany, and Jesus is hanging out with them.

Now, I want to point out something that's very very important about this family. Lazarus, we're going to see, was loved by Jesus yet was sick. Notice in verses 3-4 the urgent summons for Jesus to come, not using that term but conveying the need. "Therefore," because he was sick, "his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." I want to point out, lest I forget, in verse 1, at the end of verse 2, the end of verse 3, and in the middle of verse 6 you have reference that he was sick. Four times he is referred to as being sick, so you get the idea that the Bible wants us to understand two things: Jesus loved him, but even though He loved him, it didn't prevent him from being sick.

Verse 3, "Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold," the one that You love, "is sick." They didn't say, "The one that loves You is sick." They said, "The one that You love is sick." We would often pray and say, "Lord, they love You, they've served You, they've lived for You, so You ought to heal and help them." They didn't do that. They actually said, "Lord, You love them." Many times when I come in contact with parents that are distraught about their prodigal children and the problems they are having with children, I like to remind them, "God loves your children more than you do," that "He cares about and loves them, and we need to trust the Lord's love in that situation." They just sent a message saying, "he whom thou lovest is sick."

Let me bring out some important points that I don't want to miss. The first is that Christians get sick as well as non-Christians. Jesus loved Lazarus, but it did not prevent him from getting sick. We sometimes get the idea that God loves us, and because He loves us, nothing bad could ever happen to me; that God loves me, and because He loves me, nothing can ever go wrong in my life; because God loves me, you know, I'll never be sick, be bereaved, never have disappointment or experience loss. We know that doesn't happen, and it certainly isn't promised in the Bible. It's very clear, "he whom thou lovest is sick." I love in verse 3, it's all in one line there at the end of the verse, this man is loved by Jesus, but he's allowed to get sick.

Why is it that God could love us and we could still have sickness, troubles, and trials in our lives? Well, for starters, we live in a fallen world. Even though we are children of God, the world has not been redeemed. That won't happen until we have the Millennium and then the new heaven and the new earth. Right now, we live in a fallen world of which satan is the prince and the power of the air. He's called the spirit that works in the children of disobedience. Now, that doesn't mean that he's in control or the whole world is demonic. It does mean that the world is still under the curse, that satan is still on the loose, he's still working in the world and through the flesh of individuals, and he's working to oppose God and attack God's people. That's why Jesus said that as believers, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," but it comes from the world, the flesh, and the devil. I think that is so very important to remember.

What do you expect to happen in a fallen world? Well, we get sick and we die. There's cancer, crime, loss, bereavement, sadness, and tragedy because we live in a fallen world. You say, "Well, what good does it do to be a Christian?" Well, you have God to comfort you, God to strengthen you, God to be with you, God to help you, God to watch over you. Even though He allows things in our lives, and we're going to break that down a little bit, He's got a purpose.

He's got a plan. He knows what He's doing, and the earth will be eventually redeemed—God will reverse the curse—but right now we live in a fallen world—a lot of the crime, violence and all the evil. I believe that what we're seeing in our country right now is spiritual, that we're watching the spiritual battle between good and evil, and we're "children of the day, children of the light." We live in a world that is fallen and as a result of that...and our bodies have not yet been redeemed, they will be redeemed, but our bodies are not yet redeemed, so we're still subject to disease and sickness.

This sickness turned them to Jesus, verse 3. What do we do when we are sick or suffering? We need to send word to Jesus. They sent a messenger, verse 3, unto Jesus. Again, a basic but fundamental point is that when you face trouble and difficulty, where do you turn? to Jesus. It's okay and wise and good to go to the doctor, but put your faith in Jesus, okay? Put your trust in the Lord. Whenever you're going to the doctor, going to the hospital, taking your medicine, just turn to the Lord in prayer and say, "Lord, I'm doing what I can. I'm obeying the doctor, but I know that You're the One, the only One, that can heal my body." Doctors can prescribe medicine, but Jesus is the Healer. Amen? He's the One who can heal us and deliver us. One of the good things about sorrow and suffering is that it can drive us to Jesus. The scene in this story where they sent word to Jesus, I love that idea that when sorrow comes into my life, I want to seek my Savior. That's one of the benefits of weakness and suffering, it drives us into dependence upon God.

Thirdly, Christ still loves us even though we are suffering. Don't doubt that love. Don't question that love. Don't try to interpret your circumstances by whether or not God loves you. God loves you no matter what your circumstances. Don't ever ever doubt the love of God, and satan would want you to doubt God's glorious love. We're going to see in verse 4 that Jesus says, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Even before He goes to Bethany and raises Lazarus from the dead, He makes it clear that this sickness will not end in ultimate death. He does die. As a matter of fact, it's most likely that Lazarus had died by the time the messengers got there, but Jesus said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." If God allows sorrow and suffering in our lives, He does so for His glory that we can glorify Him in our suffering. Read again the first epistle of Peter.

I want you to note the delay of love as recorded in verses 5-6. "Now Jesus loved Martha," again, the repetition there of His love for Martha, "and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick," notice this, "he abode two days still in the same place where he was." Wouldn't you expect Jesus to say, "Wow, that's a bummer! Let's pack our bags. Let's run to Bethany. Let's help as soon as we can. It's time to go. It's an emergency." If you're the Son of God, no need to be in a hurry. If you're the Son of God, you don't have to panic. Notice that Jesus doesn't go, "Oh, that's too bad. I didn't know that." Do you know when the messenger arrived, he didn't tell Jesus anything He didn't already know? Do you know that when you pray, you're not telling Jesus anything He didn't already know? When you pray, Jesus doesn't go, "Wow," or "Oh, man, I didn't know that. Thanks for informing Me." He already knows before we even ask Him. You say, "Well, why even ask Him?" Because He wants to hear from

you. He wants communion with you. He wants you to live in dependence upon Him. He wants to be involved in your life. I think it's interesting that Jesus found out that he was sick and delayed for two days. This is what I call love's delays.

The two days is that the messenger would take one day to get from Bethany down to where Jesus was, and we know from the end of chapter 10 that Jesus was in Perea on the east side of the Jordan River down where John the Baptist had been baptizing. It was about a day's journey for them to leave Bethany and go down into the Jordan Valley, cross the river, find Jesus there. Then, Jesus tarried for two days. Jesus finally goes back to Bethany, so we have three days. When He gets there, He finds out that Lazarus was already dead for four days. You have one day to get to Jesus, two days that Jesus tarried, and then you have His trip back—four days by the time Jesus shows up.

The Son of God is never in a hurry, so you might want to write that down: God is never in a hurry. Don't you wish that He was on our timetable? "Lord, we needed that last week. God, you blew it. It had to be done by last Friday, 5 o'clock, and, God, You didn't come through." You know, God's timing is perfect, and you see it so beautifully in this story. Jesus was tarrying not because He didn't care, not because He didn't love Lazarus...when you pray, and you don't get the answer that you want, God's delays are not God's denials. If you've been praying about something or for someone for a long time and God hasn't answered prayer, keep praying. God's timing is perfect. We can't dictate when God does what we ask Him to do, but His delays are used to test our faith and to teach us to trust in Him. If every time we prayed, listen carefully, God gave us exactly what we asked for the minute we asked, we would not have faith. We would lack in faith, and we would lack in character. We wouldn't grow the way God would really want us to grow.

In verses 7-10 we move to the second division. We actually see here the disciples are alarmed. In verses 1-6, Lazarus is sick, and Jesus, in His love, delays going for the greater glory of God in the miracle that could affect the disciples' faith. In verses 7-10, the disciples were quite concerned and worried about the idea of going back to Jerusalem, to the area of Judea. Verse 7, "Then after that saith he to his disciples," after He had tarried for two days, He knew that Lazarus was sick, He says, "Let us go into Judaea again," being the region where Jerusalem and Bethany was as well. "His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" Back in John 10, as I said (verse 31), the Jews tried to stone Jesus. "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. 10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."

Isn't it nice that the disciples counseled the Lord, "Master, did you forget that they're trying to kill you there?" Jesus said, "Oh, yeah. Thanks guys, I would've been toast. I'm sure glad I have you on My team." Sometimes we counsel the Lord. We're His counselors, "Lord, this is what You need to do. This is how You need to do it." I almost picture God up there taking notes, "Okay, when do you need that?" He's writing it down, "What was that third thing you wanted Me to do?" as He's writing it down. We start telling God all the things we need, when we need it,

how to do it, and how God ought to work.

Go back to a minute when his sisters sent the message to Jesus, and notice the content of what they said to Jesus, "...he whom thou lovest is sick." They didn't even ask Him to come. They didn't ask Him to do anything. All they did was let Him know that Lazarus was sick. They knew that Jesus would do what He wants to do and how He wants to do it. That's faith. That's faith when you can say, "Lord, You see my situation. You know what's happening in my life. You know the needs in my marriage. You know my financial needs. You know what's going on. I'm not going to tell You what to do. I'm not going to dictate how to work it. Lord, I just want You to know that I need Your help," and you commit it to the Lord. The Bible says, "Roll thy burden on the Lord and He will sustain you," so they sent a messenger and left it there. They didn't dictate to Jesus how He should work or what He should work. They just left it in the Lord's hands. What a beautiful picture that is.

The disciples are freaking out. They're anxious. They're alarmed, "Don't you realize the Jews are trying to kill You?" Jesus gives them kind of a little parable in a way. He gives them a metaphor saying (verse 9), "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. 10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." You think, What in the world is Jesus talking about? I think it's quite simple and quite profound. I think Jesus is saying, "When you are in the will of God," and in this case of His Father, "doing the will of God, you're walking in the light." When you're doing God's work God's way and obeying God's Word, you're in the light. You don't have to worry. You can't be destroyed or wiped out. He'll protect you. I'm convinced from the Scriptures into my own life that if I'm obeying, following, serving God, and walking in God's will, it doesn't mean that I can't have things happen to me, but I know that they're in the will of God. They have to be filtered through the hand of God.

One of the standouts for me was many years ago when I was kidnapped in Los Angeles. I experienced being kidnapped, car-napped at gunpoint, and I was held hostage for many hours and threatened they were going to kill me. I was with two other pastors. I thought, This is it. I'm going to die. I won't see tomorrow, but a great peace came over my heart and I said, "Lord, Lord, I'm Your servant. I'm Your child, doing Your will. I'm doing Your work. I'm going where You want me to go and doing what You want me to do, so, Lord, You've got a problem right now. You're going to have to take care of this situation." When they finally took us to this dark location and lined us up and cocked the guns like they were going to execute us there in this park, we all actually raised our hands. I'll never forget it—you don't forget getting kidnapped—so I raised my hands and we all just said to each other, "Lord, we belong to You. Lord, we're in Your hands. Lord, have Your way." A couple seconds later we heard the car start, and they drove off and left us standing there. It was kind of like, "Wow, they didn't shoot us, we're still alive," you know? We grabbed our bags and ran for the hills, but just the awareness of, you know, God will take care of us. God will watch over us.

If you're walking in the daylight, you won't stumble. Jesus is talking about being in God's will, doing God's work, and God watching over us. He was walking in obedience to where the

Father wanted Him to go, what the Father wanted Him to do, so you don't have to panic. You don't have to be afraid.

Back in John 9, when they encountered the man that was blind and the disciples said, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither...but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work," Jesus said in John 9. We all live in the daylight right now. This is daytime, and we need to be walking in the will of God, serving God, living by His Word, and trusting that He'll take care of every aspect of our lives. And, if He sees fit or chooses that we get sick and die, then we go to heaven. If He doesn't, if we live, we die, we are the Lord's. Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." We need to have the same outlook. If I die, I'm in heaven with the Lord; if I live, I'm on earth, and I'll keep serving Him, walking in the daylight while it is day, so the importance of walking in God's will. A great cross-reference for this section is Psalm 91, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

Thirdly, we now move from Lazarus was sick, the disciples were alarmed, to verses 11-16, Jesus had a purpose. Notice in verse 11, "These things said he," that is, Jesus, "and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. 12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. 13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. 14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly," these guys are a little slow. He's got to say it real careful and plain. It's kind of a, "read My lips, guys," "Lazarus is dead. 15 And I am glad for your sakes," think about that, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe," that's the whole reason this miracle would take place, "that...ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him."

Verse 16, "Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus," which means twin, evidently Thomas had a twin brother, "unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him," oh great, Thomas, that's what we need a word of encouragement, "Come on, let's all go die together!" "Alright, let's go." That's why Thomas is known as the doubting disciple. Every time he speaks, he's got some kind of a negative thing to say, but I think that Thomas should be commended here that he's willing to die with Jesus, "He's going to go, we're going to go; and if we all die, so be it."

Notice that Jesus, back in verse 11, said unto them, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," this is a section where Jesus uses the term for the believer's death to be sleep. Now, I know that I've spoken about it, taught about it, and we touch on it when we look at the Scripture on the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, but you really ought to think about this picture, this metaphor, of the Christian's death. It's a marvelous, marvelous, marvelous, marvelous, marvelous thing! Whenever I conduct or officiate a funeral for some believer that has died, this concept thrills me. They're not dead, they're only sleeping. Sleep isn't bad is it? It's good. The older you get the more you like sleep. Praise God for sleep. The Bible uses this concept of sleep only for the believer. Never, ever ever is it used for the nonbeliever, and it only uses it for the physical body,

never the soul or the spirit.

The Seventh-day Adventists have a doctrine called soul sleep, and they believe that when you die you go to sleep and you're unconscious and won't be in the presence of the Lord consciously until the resurrection. That's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches, "...to be absent from the body," which is what physical death is, soul and the spirit leave the body, the immaterial part leaves the material part, "and to be present with the Lord," that you are in the presence of God instantly. I believe the second a believer leaves their body, they are in the presence of the Lord with Jesus face to face instantly. They fall asleep here, they wake up there, but their body is still sleeping. Why would He use that metaphor sleep? Well, when someone is dead, they look like they're sleeping, so that's for starters. Secondly, sleep is a temporary state. When you go to bed at night you don't kiss your family good-bye and give them your will and testament and say, "I'll never see you again." You say, "Good night. I'll see you in the morning," right? When your friends and family and loved ones who die in Jesus they say, "Good night, see you in the morning. I'll see you in the morning when the resurrection happens." This is why I said this picture just thrills me. It's so awesome! It's only for the believers, it's only for the physical body, and it's a picture of temporary state.

Lastly, it conveys the idea that we will be awakened. That our bodies...when I say we will be awakened, since the metaphor sleep only pertains to the body, the soul is already alive in the presence of the Lord, but your body will be quickened. It will be resurrected. Read 1 Corinthians 15. It's so clear that our bodies are going to be resurrected, and Christ is the firstfruits of them that sleep. You cannot disconnect the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ with the physical bodily resurrection of the believer. If you do that, you have made a big mistake. It's completely unbiblical. Christ, the firstfruits of those that sleep, afterward those that are Christ's is coming. Jesus was phase one, the rapture is phase two, we'll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will ever be with the Lord. There's a lot of confusion about the body, the resurrection, the soul and the spirit in heaven. I believe that the moment you die, you're with the Lord, but you're waiting for the resurrection to be reunited with your body to have a glorified body in heaven, but you're with Christ in heaven waiting for that resurrection body. It's an awesome picture.

Lazarus isn't dead, he's only sleeping. Now, the disciples, as I said, were a little slow and go, "Oh, well that's good, he's getting better. You know when you're sick and you sleep, it's an indication you're improving, you're doing better." Jesus said, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no wait. You guys, you don't get it. Lazarus is dead." They must've thought, Oh, wow, bummer. But He said, "I am glad for your sakes that," you might see the glory of God. It's kind of like, "Hey, hang on, guys, you're going to see something that you've never seen before. This is going to be fantastic." I think the same thing is true of us. We're going to see the resurrection of our bodies, and it's going to be a glorious, glorious experience. If we're alive and remain when the Lord returns for the church, "the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." What a beautiful picture we have here of the believer's death of being only that of sleep.

Jesus has a purpose in what He's going to do. He says that "ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas...Let us also go, that we may die with him." God's purpose is in verse 15, our good and His glory.

Now, let me wrap this up. Let me give you three kind of end lessons and wrap up of what we covered in these 16 verses. Write them down. First, God's love permits pain. It doesn't exclude us from pain, it allows and permits pain. God has a purpose and a plan, so interpret your circumstances by the love of Christ not the love of Christ by your circumstances. When things go wrong in your life, don't conclude that God doesn't love you; remember God loves you in spite of what is going wrong in your life.

Secondly, we learn that God's love permits delays. When He permits pain, He does so in love; when He delays answering our prayers, then He does that to increase our faith. It's not because He's indifferent to our plight, but He wants us to grow in faith and learn to trust Him.

Thirdly, God's love purposes two things: It purposes our good, and it purposes His glory. In Romans 8:28 it says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," so God is doing what He wants to do for His glory and for our good. We read that in John 11:4, "When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

Never forget that it's all about the glory of God. He saves us for His glory, He protects us for His glory, He sustains us for His glory, He guides us for His glory, He leads us in glory; and even if we die, our death can bring glory to God. "Whether by life or by death, it's that Christ is magnified in my body," Paul says, "I rejoice." Amen?