

2/1/12

Heartstrings

The Resurrection and the Life

Opening Question: What feelings do you get when you talk/think about death? Why? Have you ever had anyone close to you die? If so, how did that death affect your own feelings about dying?

LESSON: The Story of Mary, Martha and Lazarus

Introduction: Studying the Bible

Ask two questions:

1. What does this teach me about God/Jesus/the Holy Spirit?
2. How should I live as a result of that teaching/truth?

Lesson #1: There are times when Jesus doesn't respond as quickly as we would like. When that happens, it may look like He doesn't care. Verses 1 - 16

And what does Jesus do? He waits. Not the picture of someone who deeply loves.

Oh, how often God's timing is so different from ours!

Question: Have you had times in your life, or someone you know, who had a situation where Jesus didn't respond immediately upon the request? Time when it didn't look like He cared? How do you tend to respond when Jesus doesn't jump at your request? When have you tried to hurry God?

How should I live as a result of that truth?

1. Trust Him anyway.
2. Always remember that this isn't the end of the story.
3. Live to glorify Jesus, regardless of what you currently see. Verse 4 & 14

NT: The revelation of the character and presence of God in the Person and work of Jesus.

This illness and the way Jesus handles it will serve to reveal God and God's Son for who they are – the authors of life. (Witherington) The death of Lazarus brought a crisis to Jesus and He was glad because it gave him the opportunity to demonstrate what God can do. That's what God wants to do in and through our lives - even in the crises times of life. For us, every crisis should be an opportunity to reveal the glory of God: who He really is.

"I do not like crises; but I like the opportunities which they supply." (Sir John Reith)

Question: Do you view your problems as opportunities to honor and glorify God? If not, what keeps you from doing that?

Lesson #2: Jesus cares...deeply. Verse 17-37

- Four days: The Jewish belief of the day was that the spirit of the departed hovered around his tomb for four days, seeking an entrance again into the body. But after four days the spirit finally left because the face of the body was so decayed that it could no longer be recognized. (Barclay) Jesus delayed to be sure they knew there was no hope.
- Remember that this gospel is written primarily to Greeks. John had written his whole gospel on the theme that in Jesus we see the mind of God. But to the Greek the primary characteristic of God was what he called *apatheia*, which means total inability to feel any emotion whatsoever.

The Greeks believed in an isolated, passionless and compassionless God.

But what are we seeing at this event? A staggering and incredible picture: Someone who claims to be God, showing deep emotion!

Three words describe his emotions:

- Verse 33: He was deeply moved – It's a very hard word to figure out exactly its meaning. It's a very strong emotional reaction. "In classical Greek it describes the snort of a horse (in war or in a race)." (NIV Commentary) For humans it describes anger, outrage or indignation (In his deepest self)
- Verse 33: He was troubled – Jesus troubled himself. Jesus stirring himself to action, shaking himself to action.

That leads to some interesting questions: Jesus was moved to anger in his spirit. Why? Why was he outraged at the deepest core of his being? Was he angry at death and the devastation it brings? Perhaps at the ravage it brings?

- Verse 35: He wept - The word here is a more quiet crying. What a different picture Jesus gave than the Greek view of God! A God whose heart is wrung with anguish for the anguish of his people. Jesus brought us the amazing news of a God who cares! To a Greek reader that the Son of God would weep would be the most astonishing thing in an astonishing story

How should I live as a result of that truth?

Question: What difference does it make in our lives if we truly believe that Jesus cares this deeply over our own heartache?

Lesson #3: Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He has final, total power over death. Verses 38-44

With a shout! “A shout of raw authority!” (NIV Application Commentary)

How should I live as a result of that truth?

Question: What difference does that truth make for you?

I Thessalonians 4:13-17

“Life is ours beyond the grave; we won’t suffer death in eternity.” (NIV App Commentary)

Responses vary. Verses 45-54

- Some put their faith in Him. Verse 45
- Some turned even more against Him. Verse 46 They have to go underground. His public ministry is done till Passover Feast.

“Signs alone cannot provoke faith. Miracles do not of themselves transform lives.” (NIV Application Commentary)
- Mary shows a beautiful love – 12:1-9

Assignment Sheet

Mary, Martha and Lazarus: In order to understand how close Jesus was to Lazarus and his family (Mary and Martha), let's take an overview look at their relationship.

Remember to take some time in prayer before opening God's Word. Don't just jump into the study without first laying your heart and mind before the Lord, asking Him to help you really grasp spiritual truths.

- We first find out about this family in Luke 10:38-42. Read it slowly, trying to picture the scene. What do you learn about each of the characters?
- What was Martha's problem in verse 40?
- The word "distracted" in the NIV literally means, "to drag around, as a burden". What was Martha dragging around?
- Martha was probably the older of the two, since she's listed as the owner of the home. It sounds like she felt a lot of responsibility for making sure everything ran smoothly. I don't think Jesus was rebuking her for wanting things to go smoothly, but rather because of a more significant issue. Any ideas what it might have been?
- I think the issue was that Martha was concerned about things that weren't the most important. (See verse 42). Do you ever get distracted by the activities and stuff of life and leave your relationship with Jesus out? If so, in those times, how do you feel?
- The word "worried" in verse 41 is the same word that Jesus used in Matthew 6:25, 28 and 31. Read Matthew 6:25-34 to see how Jesus wants us to approach the worries of life. Sum up what He told us in these verses.
- Are you a worrier? What are some of the things you are currently worried about? Read 1 Peter 5:7 and write it down so you can get it deep in your memory. What does it mean to you to "cast your worries" on Him? Do you need to take some time right now and cast those worries on your Savior? If so, don't go on any further until you've done that. Remember, "He cares for you."

- Another time we read about this family in John 12:1-8. Read this story slowly, trying to picture it.
- Why was Judas so upset over this love act according to verses 5-6?
- We can assume from this story that this was a fairly wealthy family. (See verse 3 and verse 5). Mary seems to love Jesus so much that a year's worth of money wasn't too much to lavish on Jesus! What an amazing story. How about us? Do you see any of your own "wealth" (however much you may have) as a love offering to Him? Is there any way you could be more "lavish" with your resources? Pray about it for a few minutes and ask Jesus how loving you are with your financial resources. Does He want to change you today?
- All four gospels tell of a woman anointing Jesus. John's account here seems to tell of the same incident recorded in Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9. (The incident in Luke 7:35-50 is not the same woman.) If you have time, read the other accounts to get an even better picture of this event.
- Now the final time we get a glimpse of this family: Read John 11, verses 1-44 for the overall story. What are the two or three things that stand out to you in your mind?
- Take some time to pray for the next meeting of Heartstrings. Here are some specific things to pray about:

Pray for your table. Ask God to help you all to draw closer to one another. Ask Him if there is any way you could change in order to allow your table to do just that.

Pray for yourself that you'll allow God to make you into a disciple who truly knows what it means to "remain" in Him.

Pray for your teachers. Ask God to give them great wisdom as they write the lessons and great ability as teachers as they present the lessons.

Pray for life change in all of us!