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Inviting all to **COME** to Christ, **GROW** in faith, and **GO** change the world

**John 12:1-11** — “Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. <sup>3</sup> Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. <sup>4</sup> Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, <sup>5</sup> Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? <sup>6</sup> This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. <sup>7</sup> Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. <sup>8</sup> For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. <sup>9</sup> Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; <sup>11</sup> Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.”

## The Gospel of John

### The Testimony, Part 2

I love a good story. When I was little, I loved to sit around and listen to my family tell stories about when they were growing up. Do you know there's no greater story than the gospel message of Jesus Christ! That incredible story we can read throughout the gospels is encapsulated in a 4-verse section in **1Corinthians Chapter 15**. We know the word 'gospel' means 'good news', but Paul defines what that 'good news' is --

- **The Greatest story ever told ...**

**1Corinthians 15:1-4** - *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; <sup>2</sup> By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; <sup>4</sup> And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”*

There's the gospel ... the death, burial and resurrection. If you believe in that, you can be saved! It is the world's greatest story! We may not get as excited about it as we should, but it is great! Sometimes we lose the excitement of hearing that story because we hear it over and over again. We see things like guys coming back to life on TV all of the time. But this is real, and it's a story that the world needs to hear. And there's another story...

## • The 2nd greatest story ever told...

... is **your** story. It is unique to you and no one can deny it. Jesus' story is preeminent, but don't underestimate how impactful your story can be. Many people think, 'my story is boring, run-of-the-mill.' I disagree. I think your story, your testimony, is more powerful than you could ever imagine. I think it's impressive because it parallels the story we're going to talk about.

Remember Lazarus? He was dead for 4 days and Jesus called him back to life. That's impressive, wouldn't you agree? He was dead in the grave. Your story of how you came to know Christ as Saviour is just as significant as that. Turn with me to **John Chapter 12**.

**John 12:1** - *"Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead."*

### The Need for a Resurrected Life

Lazarus had a problem ... he was dead! He had a need for a resurrected life. You and I have the same need. You may be alive physically, but we are all dead spiritually before we come to know Christ as Saviour. All of mankind had no spiritual life, we were dead in our sins.

• **Ephesians 2:4-6** – *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, <sup>5</sup> Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) <sup>6</sup> And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:"*

**Dead in sins** - We are all sinners, and the consequence of sin is death. Our soul is dead to God; there's a disconnection between humanity and God because of our sinfulness. It is for that reason that Jesus Christ came to earth.

**Quickened by God through Jesus Christ.** Quickened=to be made alive. In Christ, we were made alive. As we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, He makes us alive!

### Three important elements in this passage ...

- **MERCY** – We cannot be saved without the mercy of God. 'Mercy' = God withholding our just due. We are due death, not just physical death, but eternal death in the lake of fire, separated from God because of our sinfulness. He withholds that punishment because He is a merciful God. *Without God's mercy we cannot be saved.*
- **LOVE** – We just sang about God's love. Did you know God loves you? It is not because you are lovable, none of us are! Yet God loves us. Not just that He's in heaven shouting down, 'Love you, Buddy!' It's easy to say those words but difficult to *demonstrate* it. God loved us when we weren't lovable and he demonstrated that love by sending His Son to die in our place. Maybe you've never experienced love, but God loves you!
- **GRACE** – Grace = giving us what we don't deserve. We don't deserve eternal life with God, yet because of His grace we get His unmerited favor. Why? Because we were dead in sin.

Every single one of us has a pre-Christ story, that part of your life when you didn't know Jesus as Saviour. Maybe you were saved when you were really young. Some of you would say you got saved later in life. Maybe you were raised in church, brought up in a moral home where your parents did

their best to teach you right and wrong. Maybe you were saved out of a horribly sinful situation. Regardless of your pre-Christ story, one thing is true of every single person: we were all spiritually dead. There aren't degrees of deadness! Dead is dead! We are dead without Christ because we are not perfect. Though we strive to keep the whole law, we are spiritually dead and have a need to be resurrected.

We all have had a moment where we crossed that line of faith and were brought back to life. You have not always been a Christian! You had to come to the point in your life where you recognized the need in your life, that you were a sinner and needed to be saved. You're not a Christian because your parents are Christian. You had to come to the point where you trusted Jesus Christ in your life, where you realized you were not a believer. You realized some dissatisfaction or vanity were in your life. You had a sense of void, of emptiness in your heart and the realization that you weren't content with the things the world had to offer. Maybe you were faced with your own depravity. You were face-to-face with your own sinfulness and recognized there were consequences and it caused you to repent and be saved. Maybe you realized that if you were to die today, you would go to hell. Whatever the reason, you realized you were a sinner in need of a Saviour.

You have to get to that place. If you don't have the assurance of eternal life, that is life's preeminent decision. All important decisions do not compare to the decision to trust Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

Once we've been saved, there's another part of the story.

## **Have you been raised to new life through Jesus Christ?**

### **The Essence of the Resurrected Life**

Did you know in Christ, you are a new creature?

• **2Corinthians 5:17** - *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

If you have been saved, you are a new creature! What a blessed truth, the fact that in Christ you are brand new! Who doesn't love new things? I love that new car smell! But much more, we have a new life in Christ! He's given us a fresh start! Now that we have been given this fresh start, as a Christian, our life should boil down to this: spending time with Jesus. Not necessarily just reading, praying, serving ... but our *whole life* is for Him. Lazarus has this new life and --

### **• Table time with Jesus...\_**

**John 12:2** - *“There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.”*

Lazarus has been called from death to life and now he wants to spend time with Jesus! You can imagine ... put yourself in Lazarus' place. You're dead, you come out of the tomb and are set free. What would you want to do now? He wants to eat, but Who does he want to eat with? He wants to spend time with the One Who gave him life! He doesn't want to spend time doing the things that caused his death. Are you tracking with me here? We need some table time with Jesus, fellowshiping, communing, learning, being discipled, growing in our love and appreciation for Him.

• **Ephesians 2:6** - *“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:”*

He has made us to sit in heavenly places ... that’s speaking of our home in heaven. Are we preparing? We need that communion right now and our life needs to be part of that.

### **The Curiosity About Your Resurrected Life**

• **John 12:9** - *“Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.”*

People are coming from all over the place because they want to get a glimpse of Jesus. They’ve heard about the miracles He’s done and they start to flood there. But they also want to get a look at Lazarus. They wanted to see him with their own eyes. What did he look like? A zombie? What does he smell like? His sister said he stunk! They wanted to experience it for themselves.

I lived and pastored in New Jersey for 18 years. So from my mid-20s, I was there. I didn’t have a lot of interaction with people from my pre-Christ life. Now that we live here again, when I see someone now and tell them what I do (pastor), they are surprised! There’s a curiosity about is this new life in Christ real? Just like people wanted to come and see Lazarus, people in our own lives are curious. They see something different about you! You are not the person you used to be because you have a new life in Christ.

Advertising companies know this. The greatest advertising that a product can experience is a personal testimony. Us hearing someone else’s personal recommendation can sway us or cause us to be curious about whatever product it may be. People want to know what you’ve got that they don’t have.

### **The Influence of the Resurrected Life**

• **John 12:11** - *“Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.”*

By reason of him=Lazarus. He’s influencing people for Christ. They are coming, seeing and believing. Many put their faith in Jesus Christ. We have the same opportunity to be an influence to people. We were dead and now we’re alive, and now we have a chance to be an influence. We can’t save anybody, but we can influence them toward Christ. We are called to be Light. Our Light is to be a witness to that True Light.

• **John 1:7-8** – *“The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. <sup>8</sup> He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”*

That is why you are here right now! Your existence is to bear witness to The Light. We are called to be Light in this world. Not so people would look at you and say how great you are. No! Point them to The One that gave you Light and Life!

I feel safe in assuming that Lazarus pointed people to Jesus and gave Him the credit, the glory.

Jesus called, "Lazarus, come forth." He told the people to loose him and let him go. He has the same call on your life, to come from the place of death and come to a new life. I want you to go and be a witness for me, influence people for me, draw them to me, prepare their heart.

But there's an enemy who wants to stop us from doing that ...

### **The Enemy and the Resurrected Life**

**John 12:9-11** - *"Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; 11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus."*

Here we see the enemy of the resurrected life. Lazarus had a powerful testimony. He was dead! Now he's alive! You have a powerful testimony if you're a believer in Jesus Christ. Nothing can change that. If you've been born again, that cannot be undone! You cannot be unborn! He's brought you from death to life and our enemy can't do anything to change that. But he wants to keep you from influencing others to move from death to life. The religious leaders consulted together that they might kill Lazarus too. People were believing in Christ and they wanted to stop Lazarus' influence. Your enemy wants to kill your testimony! He wants to destroy your influence over people.

**John 10:10a** - *"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, ..."*

He wants to kill your influence, your testimony. He wants to put you in the graveyard again. He wants you to go live in the tomb. Because then you'll have no influence over people who want to go from death to life.

We moved 6 times when we were in New Jersey. One of the houses we lived in was next to a cemetery. The neighbors were quiet! How often spiritually do we lay down in the graveyard? He saved us out of there and we go back into it like a dog to vomit. When we do that, it hurts our influence over people who need life.

### **Our words are weighted with the works of our new life.**

Part of your testimony is speaking truth into the lives of people. But we have to live out our faith. It has to be real and apparent that you're different. I'm not saying you should be perfect. None of us are perfect. But what should be the truth in our life is, 'I'm not where I need to be but thank God I'm not living where I used to be.' Are you living in the graveyard too much?

You have a powerful story! It's the second greatest story ever told ... it's yours ... and it's connected to the greatest story ever told. We need to use that for Christ's sake. The apostle Paul would often share his story. It always involved 3 components ...

### **Three elements of a testimony...**

#### **1) Before: Who was I Pre-Christ?**

Paul was a persecutor of Christians. He talked about how he came to know Christ as Saviour.

## 2) How did I come to trust Christ as Savior?

Paul told how he met Christ.

## 3) After: How am I different since becoming a Christian?

Paul talked about how he is different since accepting Christ as Saviour.

### CHALLENGE: WRITE OUT YOUR TESTIMONY.

Who were you pre-Christ? What was your 'salvation moment' in life? How are you striving to live more like Christ now?

I'm asking you to do that so you'll be prepared to share your story when God opens the door and gives you the opportunity to be Light for Him. Then you can tell them about the greatest story.

We are living in a time where the world desperately needs hope. I think we can all agree with that. We have a tendency to bunker down, but God would have us turn our attention outward and give hope to a hopeless world. Pray and ask God to give you someone to share your story with. We've got the John and Romans booklets here called 'Hope'. Take one and share it with someone that needs the message. In the back of the booklet is the 'Romans Road' that will help you lead someone to Christ.

**God wants us to share our story and give HOPE to a HOPEless world!**

You can be an influence for Jesus Christ! Would you take the challenge this week and pray about an opportunity to share your story? Share hope with someone this week! God is calling us to do that.

If you're not saved, you are under the wrath of God and bound for eternal condemnation. It all begins with a relationship with Jesus. If there's anyone who doesn't know Jesus as Saviour, God has made a way for you to be saved through Jesus Christ. It requires humility. Our goal is to be able to stand before God with a clear conscience. Scripture says that every single one of us were the [enemies of God](#). Guess what God did? He loved you, He blessed you. Why? So that the goodness of God would lead us to repentance; so we could become a child of God.

The consequence of sin is death. Nothing sinful can be in God's presence. Jesus came for the purpose of making a path back to God. He is the only way to heaven. We can have eternal life through Jesus Christ. If you don't have that assurance of spending eternity in heaven, if you've never trusted Christ as your Saviour, [Click here for information on how to spend eternity in heaven](#). Jesus has the ability to breathe life into your dead soul by trusting Him as Your Saviour, by confessing, repenting and calling upon His name to save you.

**Let's take the message to the world ... Jesus saves!**

† Father, You alone are worthy of honor and glory. We thank You for the life we have through Jesus Christ. We were dead in our sins and by Your mercy and because of Your love; through Your grace, You gave us the opportunity to be made alive! I pray that we would be an influence on people. What a beautiful example Lazarus is for us! Lord, protect us from the enemy that is trying to drive us back to the graveyard, back to the old way of life. We pray that we could be prepared to share our story with someone who needs to hear it. Please open a door for us this week, give us a chance to share the hope of the gospel with someone. All through our day we have contact with people who are spiritually dead. I pray our eyes would be opened to see the opportunities before us.

We are seated in heavenly places through Jesus Christ! What a blessing! Help us to be Light for You this week, Lord!

We give Jesus all the honour, glory and praise and ask all of these things in the name of our Saviour. Amen. †

♪ ♪ [Jesus Saves!](#) ♪ ♪

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The preceding notes were taken from a sermon by Brad Nelson, Pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Lee's Summit, Missouri. The notes are in no way endorsed by Pastor Nelson, but are shared for the benefit of furthering God's kingdom. Feel free to share with anyone you are led by the Spirit to do so. Any errors or discrepancies contained in this document, although not intended, are those of the transcriber.