

# Jesus Raises Lazarus – Time to Mourn

John 11:1-44

## Opening Activity

He Stinkith!

Items needed:

- Rolls of toilet paper

*Leaders Says:* Our story for today is the story of Jesus raising Lazarus. For this game, you're going to break up into groups of four and choose one person to be a Lazarus. During the first round, you'll take toilet paper and wrap the Lazarus. The first team to wrap their person, gets 50 points. For the next round, the person has to stay wrapped and when you shout out "He Stinkith!", the person wrapped in toilet paper has to break free so no toilet paper is on them, and sprint to a designated line. First person to cross the line gets 75 points. The team with the most points wins.

## Introduction

*Leader Says:* Mourning something we all experience at some point in our life. Maybe you're in a season of mourning right now. Before we get in too far, let's talk about what exactly mourning is. We know that mourning is often equated with death...when someone close to you dies, you mourn and are sad about their death. But this feeling of mourning spans the loss of anything significant...a relationship (whether it be romantic or friendship), a dream that doesn't get to become a reality, a season of life you'll never get back. It is also not something that has a time frame.

We may experience mourning and loss our entire lives, particularly if we have lost someone important to us. We all haven't had someone close to us die, we have probably experienced a loss of some sort (*author's note: it's also important to note that mourning looks different to literally everyone. I have often said that we mourn the way we mourn in order so that we can heal.*)

When we are mourning, no matter what we're mourning, there is a comfort when someone is experiencing it with you. When someone sits with you in the heaviness. When they don't try to fix what is going on, but they look at you and say, "I may not have the answers. But if you keep talking, I'll keep listening." You should look to the Bible and see stories of the importance of showing up for your people in a way that reflects God's love.

God did make us to mourn in isolation. Instead we have a community who can point us continually back to God and His promises. When Moses' arms grew tired and he knew he had to keep them raised so the Israelites would continue to win, Aaron and Hur came and held up his arms for him. When Job lost literally everything, his friends came and sat with him. When Jesus died, the disciples gathered together in the Upper Room and mourned. When Lazarus died, Jesus mourned with Mary and Martha.

## Bible Exploration

*Leader Says:* When we look at the gospel of John, you see detailed Jesus' interactions with those around him. You see Jesus with the disciples. You see Jesus experience anger, joy and sadness. You read of Jesus having human interactions with the people around him. Through John's gospel, we're reminded that the Son of God, the second part of the Trinity, was an embodied, walking-around, human.

Today, we're going to look at the story of Jesus and Lazarus. In this story, Jesus performs a miracle that only Jesus can do. But in this story, we also see Jesus model how to process seasons of mourning.

The reading for today is a long one, so we're going to break it up into three chunks. As we read through this story, pay attention to how you see Jesus react to the loss of one of his friends. Listen for how Jesus points forward to the time when all will be resurrected because of Jesus' own resurrection.

Read John 11:1-16

Jesus receives word that his friend Lazarus is sick. But instead of leaving the second Jesus received word, he waited for a bit. Why? Because God's glory would be revealed through Lazarus. Here we see this important precedent set: even in our hardest seasons, we still live and trust in our God. In all of the seasons of life, the good, the bad, the in between, God will work through us to show His faithfulness and His grace. Take a couple of minutes and discuss this with someone near you:

- Who would you want Jesus to bring back to life and why (could be someone you know, could be a historical figure)?
- There are multiple times in the New Testament where Jesus makes it obvious what He came down to do and yet the disciples are still confused. Why do you think this was?

Read John 11:17-27

Jesus arrives at Bethany four days after Lazarus died. Commentators note that the number of days was important because in Jewish tradition, they believed that the soul hovered above the body for three days. By showing up four days later, Jesus was proving that the healing that was about to happen was truly an act of God.

Jesus shows up on the scene and is greeted by Martha. Martha tells Jesus that Lazarus is gone but she believed that he would be raised on the final day. Jesus then speaks these well-known words, "I am the Resurrection and the life". That's a bold and important statement. This is one way that Jesus was giving comfort to Martha. Jesus is reminding her that he would die to pay for our sins and restore us to God so that we may live eternally.

Read John 11:28-44

Mary comes to greet Jesus and a crowd of mourners follow her (*authors note: I think mourning is one of the loneliest, most isolating moments one can feel. Think of what a game changer this would be if, when someone in your life died, all these people showed up to mourn with you. Mourning probably wouldn't feel so lonely then*). When Mary gets to Jesus, she falls at his feet. In that moment,

Jesus show comfort in a different way now. He shifts from saying, "I am the Resurrection and the life" to showing very real emotions. Jesus knew that Lazarus wasn't going to be dead for much longer. He knew that he just had to say the words and Lazarus would walk out. But in that moment, Jesus mourned His friend. "Jesus wept." Think about the weight of that two-word long Bible verse. Jesus, the Son of God, wept. He mourned. Then he brushed himself off, called out to God, and told Lazarus to come out. Let's take a couple of minutes and discuss this question with the person near you:

- Jesus showed comfort by pointing to how He is the resurrection and the life and by crying with His friends. How can the Holy Spirit help us to model both when people around us are mourning?

### Life Application

*Leader Says:* We can look to the Bible to know how God is and what God has done for us. We see our sin and how God can work through us to live, love, forgive and serve. The Bible also teaches us is how to respond to our emotions and how to navigate through those seasons of life that knock us off our feet. It shows us the importance of taking the emotions we experience, feeling them, but pointing ourselves and others to Jesus in the midst of everything. Being a follower of Jesus doesn't mean pushing any hard feelings or seasons of life to the side. It doesn't mean using platitudes to try and make ignore how we feel. Instead, we sit in the brokenness of sin, navigate difficult things, mourning, but praising God for the fact that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Through Jesus, we can be confident that God's light will shine the brightest in our darkest of seasons.

Just like last week, we're going to spend some time in small group discussing some questions from our Bible story for tonight and then we'll come back together for some reflection time.

### Small Group Discussion

1. Who is the person (or people) you turn to when life is hard?
2. How do you react when you are mourning something important?
3. How can God's Word and Sacrament be a comfort when life is hard?
4. How can the Holy Spirit help us to point people to Jesus without dismissing their feelings in difficult times?
5. John 11: 35 is the shortest verse in the Bible. Even though it's only two verses long, it's a powerful one. What does it mean to you that Jesus mourned his friend?
6. Multiple times in the New Testament, the disciples are surprised when they see Jesus do these incredible things. Why do you think they were so surprised when Jesus raised Lazarus?
7. Share highs and lows and pray as a group

## Closing Activity

*Leader Says:* Just like last week, we're going to spend some time on our own pondering or journaling the same three questions we looked at last week:

1. What does this story reveal about God?
2. What does this story reveal about me?
3. How does this story prompt me to pray?

If you need a refresher on the story, spend some time looking through John 11. Then after the time is up, we'll close in prayer.

*After reflection time,* as you head into this week, look for ways that the Holy Spirit can help you to give comfort to others in everything you do and in all seasons. Let's pray:

Dear God,

We thank you for this time together. We thank you that we can look to your Word for everything: from how to praise to how to mourn. Thank you for sending Jesus to the part to teach us and show us how to respond in all of life's seasons. Remind us it's ok to mourn. Remind us that your light can still shine in the darkest of times.

In your name we pray,

Amen.