

Series: Jesus 7 'I AM' Statements

"I AM the Resurrection and the Life" – Pt. 1

John 11:1 - 16

Big Idea – Sickness can be for the glory of God.

Intro: The glory of God is the reason for everything in the universe. And the raising of Lazarus will be the greatest display of His glory yet seen. So the real purpose for this miracle is for men to recognize Christ as God and God as the glorious God that He is.

At the end of John chapter 10 the Jews asked Jesus if He was the Christ, the Messiah? (vs. 24)

In His answer He again asserts His Deity and also shows that believers, those who are truly His sheep, have "double security" (vs. 25-30)

This is a defiant miracle because it's like God is saying, "Ok world, so you don't want Him, you hated Him, you rejected Him – that won't deter Me from My purpose to glorify Him. Satan did everything he could to try to defeat Jesus Christ. Yet Jesus said in Matthew's Gospel, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

The raising of Lazarus will be greater than Jesus raising Jairus's daughter from the dead in Mark's Gospel, and the raising of the son of the widow of Nain in Luke. In the case of Lazarus, it's going to be even more monumental because by the time Jesus gets there Lazarus has been dead four days and decomposition has already set in. This miracle gives glory to God three ways:

1. It points to the deity of Jesus Christ
2. It confirmed the faith of the disciples.
3. It leads directly to the Cross of Christ. Even though the world thought it was the end of Jesus, the Cross was the greatest glorifying act in the life of Christ because He is bearing the sins of the world on His body, your sins and mine.

Notice these events in the beginning of chapter 11 leading up to the miracle.

1. The critically ill man – vs. 1, 2

“A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord’s feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick.”

(John 11:1-2)

Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha who all lived in Bethany was extremely sick. Mary was the one who had anointed Jesus’ feet with the perfume oils. They were all dear friends of Jesus and their home was the closest thing He had to a home.

2. The concerned sisters – vs. 3-6

“So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, “Lord, your dear friend is very sick.” But when Jesus heard about it he said, “Lazarus’s sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this.” So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, he stayed where he was for the next two days.”

(John 11:3-6)

They knew Jesus could heal him if He got there, but He was nowhere around. We know where He was from comparing 10:40 with 1:28. Jesus was at Bethabara (the place where John the Baptist was baptizing), about twenty miles from Bethany (John 1:28; 10:40).

They knew Jesus’ power and they also knew of Jesus’ love for Lazarus. Notice they didn’t say, “the one who loves you...” They didn’t tell Him what to do because they knew of His love for Lazarus and them.

The sisters sent a messenger to tell Jesus the troubling news about their brother.

Jesus sent him back the next day with the encouraging message recorded in [John 11:4](#). Then Jesus waited two more days before He left for Bethany; and by the time He and His disciples arrived, Lazarus had been dead for four days. This means that Lazarus had died *the very day* the messenger left to contact Jesus!

The schedule of events would look something like this, allowing one day for travel:

- Day 1—The messenger comes to Jesus (Lazarus dies).
- Day 2—The messenger returns to Bethany.
- Day 3—Jesus waits another day, then departs.
- Day 4—Jesus arrives in Bethany.

Vs. 4 This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified through this.

Vs. 5 gives testimony to Jesus' love (phileo) for the 3.. Greek word for love here is "phileo" meaning brotherly love – Jesus as a human being needed the fulfillment of human love. He's been there so He understands our needs because He's a sympathetic Savior – (somewhere there's a Mary or Martha or Lazarus for you to love and be loved by).

Vs. 6 – God cares – His timing is not our timing

1 Peter 5:7 "Casting all your cares on Him, for He cares for you."

8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

9 Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are.

10 In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.

The hymn writer said, "Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there."

3. The compassionate Savior – vs. 7-17

"Finally, he said to his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea." But his disciples objected. "Rabbi," they said, "only a few days ago the people in Judea were trying to stone you. Are you going there again?" Jesus replied, "There are twelve hours of daylight every day. During the day people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. But at night there is danger of stumbling because they have no light." Then he said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up." The disciples said, "Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!" They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died. So he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And for your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there, for now you will really believe. Come, let's go see him." Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let's go, too—and die with Jesus." When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days."

John 11:7-17

When the messenger arrived back home, he would find Lazarus already dead. What would his message convey to the grieving sisters now that their brother was already dead and buried? Jesus was urging them to believe His word no matter how discouraging the circumstances might appear.

No doubt the disciples were perplexed about several matters. First of all, if Jesus loved Lazarus so much, why did He permit him to get sick? Even more, why did He delay to go to the sisters? For that matter, could He not have healed Lazarus at a distance, as He did the nobleman's son? ([John 4:43-54](#)) The record makes it clear that there was a strong love relationship between Jesus and this family ([John 11:3, 5, 36](#)); yet our Lord's behavior seems to contradict this love.

God's love for His own is not a pampering love; it is a perfecting love. The fact that He loves us, and we love Him is no guarantee that we will be sheltered from the problems and pains of life. After all, the Father loves His Son: and yet the Father permitted His beloved Son to drink the cup of sorrow and experience the shame and pain of the Cross. We must never think that love and suffering are incompatible. Certainly they unite in Jesus Christ.

Jesus could have prevented Lazarus' sickness or even healed it from where He was; but He chose not to. He saw in this sickness an opportunity to glorify the Father. It is not important that we Christians are comfortable, but it is important that we glorify God in all that we do.

In their "prayer" to Jesus, the two sisters did not tell Him what to do. They simply informed Him that there was a need, and they reminded Him of His love for Lazarus. They knew that it was dangerous for Jesus to return to Judea because the Jewish leaders were out to destroy Him. Perhaps they hoped that He would "speak the word" and their brother would be restored to health.

Our Lord's message to the sisters did not say that their brother would not die. It promised only that death would not be the *ultimate* result, for the ultimate result would be the glory of God. (Note that once again, Jesus called Himself "the Son of God.") He wanted them to lay hold of this promise; in fact, He reminded Martha of this message when she balked at having the tomb opened ([John 11:40](#)).

When we find ourselves confronted by disease, disappointment, delay, and even death, our only encouragement is the Word of God. We must live by faith and not by sight. Their situation seemed hopeless, yet the sisters knew that Jesus was the Master of every situation. The promise in [Psalm 50:15](#) finds a parallel here:

"And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

What about our Lord's delay? He was not waiting for Lazarus to die, for he was already dead. Jesus lived on a divine timetable (John 7:30; 8:20, 59) He was waiting for the Father to tell Him when to go to Bethany.

The fact that the man had been dead four days gave greater authenticity to the miracle and greater opportunity for people to believe, including His own disciples

Vs. 9, 10 In the light is always a safe place – John 8:12

When our Lord announced that He was returning to Judea, His disciples were alarmed, because they knew how dangerous it would be. (Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem.) But Jesus was willing to lay down His life for His friends ([John 15:13](#)). He knew that His return to Judea and the miracle of raising Lazarus would precipitate His own arrest and death.

The Lord calmed their fears by reminding them that He was on the Father's schedule, and that nothing could harm them. As we have seen, this is an important theme in the Gospel of John ([John 2:4](#); [7:6](#), [8](#), [30](#); [8:20](#); [12:23](#); [13:1](#); [17:1](#)). But the disciples not only misunderstood the schedule, they also misunderstood the reason for the visit. They thought that, if Lazarus was sleeping, he was getting better! It was another example of their inability to grasp spiritual truth. "If he is sleeping, he must be improving—so let's not bother to go to Bethany!"

Then He told them openly that Lazarus was dead. (Death for the believer is compared to sleep. See Acts 7:60; 1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) He did not say He was glad that His friend died, but that He was glad He had not been there; for now He could reveal to His disciples His mighty power. The result would be glory to God and the strengthening of their faith.

If Thomas' attitude was any indication, the faith of the disciples certainly needed strengthening! The name Thomas means "twin" in the Aramaic language; the Greek equivalent is Didymus. We do not know whose twin he was, but there are times when *all of us* seem to be his twin when we consider our unbelief and depressed feelings! It was Thomas who demanded evidence before he would accept the truth of our Lord's resurrection – John 20:24

Thomas was a doubting man, but we must confess that he was a devoted man: he was willing to go with Jesus into danger and risk his own life. We may not admire his faith, but we can certainly applaud his loyalty and courage.

“Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.”) No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

(Romans 8:35-39)