

“The Follow Jesus Project”

Monday, August 31

Scriptures to read: Luke 16:19-31, Revelation 21:1-4

Thoughts to consider:

This is an interesting parable, but is troublesome to some people. This is not the Lazarus of Bethany, brother of Martha and Mary. The rich man is sometimes called Dives (rich man in Latin). Abraham's bosom is Paradise, the home of the righteous. Hades is composed of two sections: Paradise (the place for the righteous) and Tartarus (the place for the wicked). This parable teaches us that beyond life there is another existence. Individuals will be conscious, will remember their former life. They will be blessed or cursed according to their life on earth. Unbelief was the real sin of the rich man. At the day of Jesus' return the souls of those in Paradise will be joined to their bodies (from the graves) and then will spend eternity with God in Heaven. May we remember that this world is not our home. May we acknowledge that we are children of the King and eagerly await His return and our reward.

Tuesday, September 1

Scripture to read: Luke 17:1-10

Thoughts to consider:

The world is such that opportunities for stumbling will come. However, we should be careful not to be the cause of someone stumbling. It seems impossible to forgive others over and over again, but Jesus indicates that with adequate faith we can do just that. Jesus taught that if your faith grows and strengthens, you can perform difficult undertakings. Verses 7-10 shoot holes in the belief that we can “stockpile” good works. We will receive our reward by grace and not by merit. May we say with the apostles, “Increase our faith!”

Wednesday, September 2

Scripture to read: John 11:1-3

Thoughts to consider:

For the next four days we will consider the events of this important and exciting miracle. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were very close friends of Jesus. Bethany was located near Jerusalem and apparently provided a convenient stopping place for Jesus and His apostles. When Lazarus became critically ill, his sisters sent a message to Jesus. They did not make a specific request, perhaps trusting that Jesus' love for Lazarus would bring Him to Bethany. Perhaps they did not want to use their friendship to impose upon Jesus. Perhaps, realizing the danger facing Jesus, they did not want to be responsible for His coming to Judea. They did include the words, “the one you love is sick.” Obviously Mary and Martha were aware of Jesus' healing many sick people. Undoubtedly they hoped that Jesus would come and heal their brother. When we have a loved one who is ill, we often offer prayers to God. We should remember that there is one perfect prayer, “Thy will be done.”

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Thursday, September 3
Scripture to read: John 11:4-16

Thoughts to consider:

At first reading, we might credit Jesus' delay to indifference. After all Jesus was divine and He knew the perfect timing for the perfect result. This delay created greater suspense—greater expectancy among His disciples. He tested the faith of Mary and Martha. Had Jesus arrived before Lazarus' death and had healed him, He would not have had the opportunity of proving His power over death. We have all experienced occasions when we felt that our prayers "had not been answered." We do not have divine knowledge. Our choices are not God's choices. Our timing is not His timing. Can you think of a time when you were very low—grief over the loss of a loved one; serious illness; loss of employment; divorce? Was your faith strengthened? Did you grow spiritually?

Friday, September 4
Scripture to read: John 11:17-37

Thoughts to consider:

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, first Martha and then Mary met Him. They did not hide their disappointment and hurt that Jesus had not arrived before Lazarus' death. Jesus did not hide His compassion for His friends in their grief. As children we all quoted "Jesus wept" as the shortest verse in the Bible. But did we realize the depth of feeling in that verse? This reminds us that it is not improper to be sorry at the death of a loved one. John's gospel includes seven of Jesus' "I am"s. This is the most dramatic one. Notice Martha's trust in Jesus and then her "Good Confession" as an answer to Jesus' question, "Do you believe this?" It is interesting to see that Martha identified Jesus to Mary as "The Teacher." Just like Martha and Mary we often play the "What if" game. May we come to the same trust in Jesus' wisdom and deity as Martha did.

Saturday, September 5
Scripture to read: John 11:38-48

Thoughts to consider:

Today we reach the climax of the narrative contained in John 11. The past three days the intensity has grown until it reaches its peak today in the mind-boggling miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. Mind-boggling because this man had been dead for four days, wrapped in grave clothes, sealed in a tomb. Mind-boggling unless you know that Jesus is the embodiment of God's miraculous powers. Jesus' prayer is most interesting. It shows His certainty in the use of the past tense. He triumphed before the victory. Undoubtedly Jesus used a loud voice for the benefit of the hearers. As with many of His miracles, there were mixed results: it gave some more faith; it increased hostility in others. For us today, it reminds us that we all face physical death, but for believers physical death is not the ultimate end.

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