

## **THREE PEOPLE; THREE PLACES; ONE NEED**

John 11:17-44

When I first identified these three, each reminded me of a guy named Roy Larson.

Roy Larson thought the most difficult part of his day would be maneuvering the unfamiliar stick shift on a "loaner" electric wheelchair as he ventured into downtown Glen Ellyn, Illinois, for a haircut.

But his day was about to become much more trying.

As he was crossing the railroad tracks on Main Street, one of the chair's wheels became lodged in the track. As Larson struggled to free the wheel, something went wrong with the chair's electrical system, and the chair refused to move.

Suddenly the lights began to flash, and the signal bells started to ring. The gates in front of Larson and behind him began to lower.

The first person Larson saw as he frantically looked for help was Mark Bade. Bade had been running an errand when he saw that Larson was in trouble. He sprinted to Larson's side and began to struggle with the chair.

At almost the same moment, Don Burgeson had stopped his car at the gates and saw what was happening. He leaped out of the car and helped Bade wrench the chair free from the track and drag it out of harm's way.

The three men looked up, just in time to see the train was less than 20 yards away.

"After the train went by, I just said thanks," Larson said. "The only reason I am here today is because these two guys saved my life."

Like Roy Larson, you may find yourself in a difficult place. Whether it is physical, mental, emotional, dealing with family, it will always affect your spiritual life. If you find yourself there this morning, this message is for you.

The passage is John 11:17-44. It is a long passage. Let's read it together and see what God has to say to us this morning through it.

There are many sermons in this passage. This is the greatest of the sign miracles Jesus did as recorded in the Gospel of John aside His own death and resurrection.

What I sense needs to be done for this morning is to look at three kinds of persons that are found in this passage. These three kinds of persons find themselves in three different places spiritually. Yet, they have one need. So you will find yourself identifying with one of these three persons this morning. If so, I pray that you will have your need met this morning.

### **Lazarus**

The first kind of person is represented by Lazarus. The place where we find him is quite simple, isn't it? He is dead. He is in the grave. He was dead. He had been dead for four days. One pastor preached a sermon detailing the state of our bodies after being dead for 4 days. It ain't good.

Lazarus needs a resurrection. Lazarus needs life.

The truth for him is "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even if he dies." That statement was directed at Lazarus.

Hear me out. Lazarus was a believer. The statement applies because he is a believer. There are other deaths that are encountered or experienced that are devastating. Some are of our own making. Some are not.

First and most obvious is dead spiritually. This is where we are when we are born. We are dead in our sin. It takes God to awaken us to this reality. Once we are awoken, we understand the reality of our sin. We have on us the guilt of sin. We come to understand that our eternity is hopeless. We understand clearly that the soul of the one who sins will die. We need a resurrection.

There are other ways we can identify with Lazarus. Some of you may have had your character take a huge hit. Some harsh words were said to you. An evil deed was done to you. You are wounded. You want to withdraw from society. You feel like no one cares, and you are an absolute zero. You need a resurrection.

Others identify with Lazarus because of an addiction. It may be drugs or alcohol. Those are the two biggies. But there are others. Addicted to a hobby; addicted to these things. Addicted to pleasure. Addicted to sex. Addicted to work. They seem to be no big deal. But over time, you start seeing they are sucking the life out of you and find the addiction is like being in a grave. You need a resurrection.

A relationship with a person is strained. A relationship of marriage, a relationship of a friend, or family. It is really starting to play on you. You find yourself in a grave of loneliness. You need a resurrection.

You may have strayed away from God. You started toying with other gods. Enjoyed their pleasure for a while. Now you are finding yourself empty, and see where your relationship is with the Lord. There no more spiritual energy like you once had. It may involve more than on to the point it is affecting the body of believers. You need resurrection. You need revival.

Jesus loved Lazarus. He loves the Lazaruses. He showed love by dying on the cross so that through faith in what He has accomplished, we might have the resurrection with Him.

Give yourself to Christ. Let Him speak your name to come forth and receive new life.

### **Martha, Mary, and the Disciples**

A second group of persons is represented by Martha, Mary, and the disciples. These are believers. They are living physically. I am the resurrection and the life. The second statement Jesus makes applies to them. "And everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" It is evident they did, but didn't. Their faith was lacking. They made good faith statements along the way. Yes, my brother will rise again, in the resurrection. Yes. We recognize you as the coming one. Yet, there is a harshness in the tone of their voice. If you would have come, my brother would not have died. He got it first from Martha. Martha went in the house where Mary was and said, "He is calling for you." No he wasn't. Mary went to him. He got it again. "If you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Trusting, but not fully trusting. That lack of full trust caused them to limit God in working in their lives. It may have been one reason why Jesus wept. He may have been hurt emotionally by these statements. Jesus was a human being. He is still a person. We can still grieve Him. If so, how often does Jesus weep now because of our unbelief in Him? We trust Him with the spiritual. Do we trust Him with other stuff? That was the place they were in. God, I don't know how you are going to do this, because you didn't do it before now. We're going to have to take over and call our own shots. What they needed was a resurrection. It was the need of resurrection of faith in ways that had never been experienced.

Jesus could have easily said, "Forget it." However He loved them. He loved them enough to let Lazarus die, because He wanted them to experience the greater glory that was about to happen, glory that goes beyond the healing. They were going to see the glory of resurrection. He wants to do the same for you and me today. He wants us to experience a greater glory than we already know.

He wants you to grow in faith in Him. He wants to take you beyond the faith that saved to the faith that depends, trusts, and relies on Him fully as a child does his or her father.

### **The Chief Priests and the Pharisees**

There is one other group of persons represented. We didn't read about them. This group is the chief priests and the Pharisees.

These guys rejected Jesus. They want no part of Jesus. They want to do away with Jesus. He has upset the status quo. He is taking away their power and control over the people. Their motto would be, "I am in control so that God doesn't have to be."

Their religion had become institutionalized and ritualistic. Their hearts have grown cold and callous. The eyes of their heart had become completely blind to whom Jesus is. In fact, the raising of Lazarus has no effect whatsoever except to embolden their resolve to do away with Jesus.

A pastor once went into a church. He started something in the church that went against the constitution and by-laws of the church. What he was doing was making a difference in the kingdom of God. He was called on the carpet by the church leaders. You must stop this because this is against church policy. The pastor said, "This is what the Word of God says. What the Word of God says contradicts what the by-laws say." Believe it or not the church leaders responded, "The by-laws are more important than the Word."

What did these people need? They needed a resurrection. Jesus showed great love for them. This chapter 11 is a continuation of what started in chapter 9. Jesus healed the man born blind. The religious leaders could not see that by this act, Jesus was demonstrating that He is God. Jesus tried to get them to understand that by telling them the illustration of the shepherd and the sheep, not one time, but three times. Jesus left Jerusalem in fear of the Jews killing Him. Jesus showed enough love for these people that He risked one more time going into Jerusalem and raising Lazarus from the dead. Not only did Jesus want the needs of Lazarus and Martha, Mary, and the disciples to be met, He also wanted the spiritual needs of these religious leaders to be met as well. The depth to which Jesus shows love for us. It went so deep that a few days later, Jesus died for their sins!

Only if they would have awoken up to what they were seeing. They are to be most pitied. They had it and didn't see it.

Who are you? Are you a Lazarus facing the debilitating situation that is like a death? You need a resurrection. His name is Jesus.

Are you a Martha, Mary, and disciples? You are believing but your faith needs a shot in the arm. Your faith has limited God to what you know Him to have done. You need a resurrection.

Are you a chief priests or Pharisee? You need your eyes open to the reality that Jesus is Lord.