

(John) 15 - the Life Saving

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon explores the miracle of Lazarus, emphasizing the transformative power of faith and the importance of recognizing Jesus as the source of life and resurrection.

Duration: 44:59

Scripture: John 11:1-47, John 11:49-50, John 11:57

Topics: "John"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on John chapter 11, which tells the story of the resurrection of Lazarus. The sermon is divided into four sections: the occasion of the miracle, the approach to the miracle, the performance of the miracle, and the consequences of the miracle. The speaker emphasizes the importance of personal confrontation with Christ and how it can have a profound effect on individuals. He also highlights different reactions to Jesus' miracles, including mere talk, fear of vested interests, seeking an easy way out, and clinging to religious ceremony. The sermon concludes with a division of opinion among the Jews, representing faith and unbelief.

Transcript

Praise the Lord. John chapter 11, having time to read the whole chapter, I'll take from verse 38, verse 38, and then we'll quietly sing, Thank you God for sending Jesus. Ready? Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb.

It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, Lord, by this time there will be an elder, for he has been dead four days.

Jesus said to her, Did I not tell you that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God? So they took away the stone, and Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. I knew that thou hearest me always, but I have said this in account of the people standing by, that they may believe that thou didst send me. And when he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

The dead man came out, his hands and feet were bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, Unbind him, and let him go. Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary, and had seen what he did, believed in him.

But some of them went to the Pharisees, and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and Pharisees gathered with counsel, and said, What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.

But one of them, Cephas, who was high priest that year, said to them, You know nothing at all. You do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish. He did not say this of his own accord.

But being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation. And not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on, they took counsel how to put him to death.

Jesus therefore no longer went about openly among the Jews, but went from there to the country near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples. Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus, and saying to one another, if they stood in the temple, What do you think? That he will not come to the feast? Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so they might arrest him.

This is the word of God. Let's sing our chorus quietly in prayer. Thank you God for sending Jesus.

Thank you Jesus that you came. Thank you. Now we get into this chapter.

A number of you were away last night on outreach and so on. It would help if you took time, whenever you can, to pick up the first part of the chapter. We divided it, I'm just, I haven't time to go back through the whole thing, but we divided it.

You get where you are in your notes, in your outline, and we divided this chapter into four parts. In the outline it is the controversy concluded. And we've divided it into four parts.

It all centers around the raising of Lazarus. The occasion of the miracle, verses 1 through 16. If you didn't have this last night, we won't put it down.

The occasion of the miracle, verses 1 through 16. The approach to it, verses 17 to 32. The performance of it, verses 33 to 44.

And the consequences of it, verses 45 to 57. Those four sections of the chapter as a whole. A wonderful chapter in God's Word.

The occasion of it, verses 1 to 16. The approach to it, verses 17 to 32. The performance of it, verses 33 to 44.

The consequences of it, verses 45 to 57. And last night we didn't get any further than the occasion of the miracle. The occasion of it.

Verses 1 through 16. Now today let's turn to the, what I call the approach to the miracle. Verses 17 to 32.

The approach to the miracle. It's important that you look at the first 16 verses, because we saw the confidence of these, this home, in a crisis, and why they were confident. And their claim upon Jesus, and

how they made the claim.

And then the challenge to their faith. Jesus stayed where he was, an extra two days. Now the approach to the miracle.

What an interesting study it is, in two sisters, Martha and Mary. You get the picture a little more clearly, if you remember the other incident concerning them. If you look just for a second at Luke chapter 10.

We find them again there. Luke chapter 10, verse 38. Now as they went on their way, he entered the village, and a woman named Martha received him into her house.

And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went to him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.

But the Lord answered her, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things. One thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.

Mary, and that chapter stays in Luke. Mary was distracted with much serving. If you've got the King James Version, it says, Mary was cumbered about with much serving.

That's a bit, Martha I beg your pardon, that's a bit archaic. Cumbered about with much serving. On the other hand, they're not very happy with the Living Bible.

They need to have this, it says, Martha was one of the jittery kind. Well I don't think that's quite fair to us, quite frankly. I don't like that very much.

I think saying, Martha, Martha, you're anxious and troubled about many things. I think that Martha was in danger of what we were talking about last night. This failure to recognize in her life the necessity of being in and out.

The in and out life. I should say that Martha did as well as thought. But Mary thought, I'm sorry, I'm doing things the wrong way round.

Mary did as well as thought. But Martha thought less than she did. She didn't stop to think, before she did something.

And these characteristics of the two come out in John chapter 11. Mary did as well as thought, but Martha thought less than she did. And here in John 11, it's amazing really, how trouble often results in a new understanding of the Lord Jesus.

Trouble results in a new understanding, a revelation of Christ. We never see the rainbow, but for the storm. And notice in verse 26, 25 and 26, what Jesus says.

I am, another of his friends, got them all, he makes never more in his gospel, I am a phrase that's unique to John. I am, here is friends, got the others, better watch it, once you have them. Right, here's another one, tremendous claim, I am the resurrection and the life.

He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me, shall never die. Do you believe this? She said to him, yes Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who

is coming into the world.

Do you believe this? Martha expected something from Jesus. Verse 21, if you had not been here, my brother would not have died. And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.

She was expecting something from Christ. The greatest truth about the Lord Jesus, he is, he hasn't, simply he hasn't got what we need, but he is what we need. Not the gift, but the giver.

He just, it's not that he has what I need, he is what I need. He doesn't point to some future gift, but to himself. I am the resurrection and the life.

Get this down, I've just got slurry. Resurrection isn't a future prospect. It's a life-giving power for today.

A life-giving power, incarnate in Jesus. Incarnate in Jesus, in us. So may I repeat.

Resurrection, not a distant prospect, but a life-giving power, incarnate in Christ, right now. Colossians 3.3, you have died and your life is hid with Christ in God. That's it.

Life is hid with Christ in God. Resurrection life. So if I'm alive in Jesus, I shouldn't live in a grave.

Notice how Martha's faith became, well it was a very little faith that became great here. What she'd learned from trouble. I'll give this, just put it down, will you? Fine.

She had a new grasp of faith. Verse 22. Even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.

Verse 27. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who's come into the world. Her faith took a great big leap forward.

I know that you are Christ, the Son of God. Martha's faith took a big leap forward. And therefore she had a new grasp of Jesus.

Something new for her to say that. She was ready to receive that word from the Lord, and she went away to call her sister. And said to her, verse 28, the teacher or the master is here, and is calling for you.

A great step forward as a result of trouble. Great step forward in her faith. Now look at the performance of the miracle.

What a situation at the graveside of Lazarus. Everybody's crying. When Jesus, 33, when Jesus saw her weeping, that is Mary, and the Jews who came with her, also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

And he said, where have you laid him? They said to him, Lord come and see. And Jesus wept. Just look at that.

The sisters weep, the Jews weep, and Jesus weeps. But for a different reason. Verse 35, notice this, the tears of Christ made them all say, look how he loved Lazarus.

But they were wrong. Oh yes he loved him, but that wasn't why he cried. He's going to be risen from the dead again in a few minutes.

So he wasn't crying because of Lazarus. I'll tell you why he's crying. Because he loved Martha, Mary, and the Jews, who would not learn the lesson he wanted to teach them.

His tears were not for Lazarus, but for unbelief. Get that? Verse 35 again, Jesus deeply moved in spirit, troubled, and wept. And they all said, look, he's crying, how he must have loved him.

But he wasn't crying because he loved Lazarus, because they wouldn't learn the lesson he wanted to teach them. It was unbelief that made Jesus weep. And it is unbelief which is so often exposed in our lives, in the discipline of delay.

Let me repeat that. It's unbelief which is often exposed in our lives, in the discipline of delay. When Jesus doesn't turn up.

When he doesn't give me instant healing, or instant blessing, or do something for me instantly. It's unbelief that is exposed in the discipline of delay. He was about to do something they couldn't do.

But you notice, he won't do what they could do. Verse 39, Jesus said, take away the stone. Verse 39.

He was about to do something they couldn't do, but he wouldn't do what they could do. Get that? And today, answer some of your prayers. Answer some of your own prayers, by doing what you can do.

Just don't sit around and expect him to guide and do something for you, when you can do something yourself. There's some tremendous words here, in verse 43 and 44. Lazarus, oh just look at it.

When he said this, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come out. The dead man came out, hands and feet bound with bandages, face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said, loose him and let him go.

Great words. As a matter of fact, I'm rather sorry for poor old Lazarus, because he had to go through the same thing again, presumably, a few years later. What a wretched experience, having to go through all that twice.

Not many people do that. Dead, alive, bound, then free. That's great.

Dead, alive, bound, and free. If all Christians who are bound were to get free from their grave clothes, the world would sit up and listen. This is never done.

Don't be an enslaved Christian. He who can release us from death, can release us from sin. May that be your experience.

Dead, alive, bound, free. Great words. A performance of the miracle.

Poor old Lazarus. Look at the consequences of the miracle now. Verses 45-57.

I've given to you, just in three short paragraphs. First, a division of opinion, meaning the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary, and had seen what he did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees, and told them what Jesus had done.

So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, What shall we do? For this man performs many signs. A division of opinion, which represents faith, in verse 45, and unbelief, in verse 46. And when the Lord passes by, you've got to be on one side or the other.

A division of opinion, which represents faith on the one hand, and unbelief on the other. And you notice the Sanhedrin, or the Jewish rulers, they commit themselves. Verse 47-53.

What a bunch they were. There's a sort of tragic humor in what they said. Verses 47 and 48.

This man performed many signs. If we let him go on thus, everyone will believe in him. And the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.

They admitted much, they anticipated worse, more, and they thought badly. Just jot that down, and we'll observe that. They admitted much.

This man performs many signs. They anticipated more. If we let him go on thus, everyone will believe in him.

And they argued badly. The Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation. Very well.

A man named Caiaphas, who was high priest, tried to come to the rescue. But he was a very subtle guy. One of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, you know nothing at all.

You don't understand, it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, better that way, and that the whole nation should not perish. Just pause for a moment, because the rest is John's commentary on what he said. He said to them, you know nothing at all.

You don't understand, it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish. Never for a moment allow yourself to think that he had any sympathy with Christ. I'll just give you time to jot that down.

Never allow yourself to think that this man had any sympathy with the Lord, nor that he understood what he was saying, what Caiaphas was saying himself. He didn't understand it. He was making a suggestion.

Suggestion was this. Better make a victim of Jesus. For if we do, we might prevent a popular rising, and also show our view for the honor of Roman Empire, and see them.

You see, it is expedient for you, better for you, that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish. Better let Jesus die, better make a victim of him, so prevent a popular rising, and show our view for the honor of Caesar. Now this is his way of hiding interest in himself.

Playing it safe. Under the cloak of being a patriot. Under pretense.

And verses 51 and 52 are John's expansion of what he was saying. John says, this was a memorable day, verse 53. So from that day, they took counsel how to put him to death.

I can't forget that. It was a memorable year, too. Verse 49.

It was Caiaphas who was high priest that year. And verse 51. He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year.

What a year it was, and what a day it was, that they took counsel to put him to death. I can't forget that. And it's tough to think that sometimes, always in life, there's one year, and another year, and another, which you can't forget.

It's a memorable year. And there's a day in that year when something happens. A real crisis.

Two years ago, a student was here, a fellow, and we had a chat together. And I noticed he brought with him, whenever we did have a chat, a big book. A great big book.

And I was so intrigued about this book, because it seemed to get bigger every time I saw him. And I ventured to ask him, I say, what's that book? Oh, he said, that's my spiritual diary. Would you like to look at it? And I said, thanks.

And I looked at it. I've never read anything so marvellous. I said, brother, brother, never, never lose that book.

And keep on writing it. Your spiritual diary. Because when you get to my hairy old age, when you get to my old age, wow, you look back on that, and what a biography.

Of what Jesus has been to you for years and years and years. Keep a spiritual diary. Some days you'll never forget.

Some years, very special. As you look back on them. You don't look at them now like that, but you'll look back on them.

That was the year that was, that was the day that was. Oh, I can never forget it. Get me? You can get a spiritual diary at Woolworths, get a loose leaf edition, and you can enlarge it year by year.

And it'll be thrilling reading. And one day, you'll write your biography. And everybody will just marvel, not at you, but like Hudson Taylor, the growth of a soul, his diary.

Days when he wept on the beach at Brighton, threatened to give up being a missionary, to turn home, give it all up, pack it in, no use. And then suddenly he saw, it's not what Hudson Taylor does for God that matters, it's what God does in and through Hudson Taylor. And that changed his whole life.

You can read it. It's in the library. No, it isn't.

It was last week. I've got it out at the moment. It'll be back.

But, oh, you can't let these books just happen, eh? Now, what's all that about? Oh, yes, here we are. Sorry. This division of opinion.

Now, just look, in conclusion, at both these lots of people standing by. Verses 54 to 57. There they are.

Jesus and his disciples are at Ephraim, and the Jews are at Jerusalem. A moment of suspense. They have thought to put an end to Jesus.

Verse 53. From that day they took counsel how to put him to death. You might as well puff at the sun, or take a brook down to Morecambe Bay to keep the tide back, as try to put an end to Jesus.

There's nothing so stupid, so powerless, as unbelief. Nothing so powerless. And you know, would you believe it? Verse 55.

They were going to purify themselves. Purify themselves. You don't clean your heart when you wash your hands.

Your skin is no good if it hides an unclean heart. But look here at the tremendous effect of confrontation with Jesus. I want you to get this down.

I'm staying down. Fast. When a confrontation with Christ happens.

Some people engage in mere talk. Verse 46. Some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

Mere talk. And they leave any action to religious experts. Some people just chat.

Leave all the action to religious experts. They told Jesus. They told the Pharisees what he had done.

And some people are afraid of vested interests. Verse 47 and 48. What are we to do? Let him go on like this? Everyone will believe in him.

He'll come and destroy a holy place and nation. Some people are afraid of vested interests. Jesus may upset my bank account, my career, my ambition, etc.

What am I to do? More? That's another lot. Another lot here. Some people seek an easy way out.

Verse 49 and 50. That's Kephas. By sacrificing truth for expediency.

They seek an easy way out. Because they sacrifice truth for expediency. Some people cling to ceremony.

Verse 55 and 56. The Passover was at hand. And he went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.

Cling to ceremony. Maintain the trappings of religion. Verse 55.

Without having any commitment to Christ. Verse 56. The effect, this is the effect of, the different effects of confrontation with Christ.

Some people join Jesus' followers. Verse 45. Many of the Jews therefore who had come with Mary, and had seen what he did, believed in him.

There are two things which win the answer outsider. Two things. Personal friendship.

Verse 45. Many of the Jews who had come with Mary. Personal friendship.

And seeing what Jesus does. They had come with Mary, and had seen what he did, and they believed in him. Now who got all those things, because I want you to write one little sentence underneath it.

The effect it is of personal confrontation with Christ. You see it all in this chapter. If you think into it.

I'll just give them again quickly. Right? Some people engage in mere talk. Verse 46.

Leave all reaction to religious experts. Some people are afraid of vested interests. Verse 47 and 48.

Jesus may upset my bank account. Ambition, career, etc. Some people seek an easy way out.

Verse 49 and 50. By sacrificing truth for expediency. It's expedient for us.

Some people claim to ceremony. Maintaining the trappings of religion. Some people find that desperately hard to give up.

Trappings of religion. Verse 55. Without having any personal commitment to Christ.

Some are Jesus, join Jesus followers. Verse 45. They came with Mary.

Two things which win an outsider for Christ. Personal friendship. Tragic when you hear Christian people say we don't have any unconverted friends.

Tragic when you're brought up in a Christian primary school, Christian day school, go to a Christian college, Christian university, then turn up to preach the word. Without ever having known how the other side of the fence lives. Never having known it.

Don't be afraid to identify with people. It's making friends of people that counts. And seeing what Jesus does.

Now the sentence that I want you to conclude with and you put it down in your notes is this. Lord, may it be clearly seen what you've done in my life. Let it be clearly seen what you've done in my life.

A friend of mine was going to take an evangelistic campaign in Norwich. Norwich is. Norwich.

East Coast. And he was going to stay with a very lovely family. Brethren.

With a capital B. Beautiful home. Husband and wife. But they had in their home a German girl who was au pair girl.

You know what I mean by that? Somebody had come in to look after the home etc. In response in return for learning the language and the customs and so on. Well she was there.

And she hated it. Absolutely loathed it. Being in a religious atmosphere in a godly home.

Hated it. She almost squirmed on it. Wanted to get out of it.

Loathed it all. But she had to go ahead with it. So before this preacher came and said we have a preacher coming next week and we want him to have red carpet treatment.

Wanted to be sure to get the best beat, best stuff from the store when you go and order it. So she went on that Saturday morning before he'd come and she ordered the beat and she gave absolute details of every bit of the carcass she had to take home. The butcher was very intrigued.

He said have you somebody very important coming today? Oh she said no, only some preacher or other. Oh. And then she took the parcel of meat and went out the door.

She turned and sort of flung at him. You'd think the Lord was coming, the fuss they're making. Slammed the door behind her.

He was quite intrigued. My friend was in the home for a week and then she came back to order the meat for the next weekend. And the butcher recognised her.

And she said by the way, how are you getting on with that friend, that preacher friend? Oh she said do you remember I said you'd think the Lord was coming? Oh he said I sure did. Oh she said yes, he came. That was all.

One man, one ordinary person, came. And Jesus, she saw through him the fact, the loveliness of Christ. And she was born again.

That's what people need to see isn't it? I hope that when you go to all those homes, that's what people will see. And that's what counts. May they see Christ and what he's done.

Pray to God. Father, the things we've been talking about are absolutely impossible. It's not a difficult life to live, it's impossible.

You're the only one who can live it. By your grace. In lives that are utterly abandoned to all the will of God.

Lord answer prayer, for your namesake. Amen.

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