

John 11:7-16. Christ Sets Out for Bethany.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

Jesus prepares his disciples for a great trial of faith by strengthening their faith and revealing spiritual truths through figurative language.

Scripture: John 11:14

Topics: "Faith Development", "Miracles Of Jesus"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches about the disciples' continual misunderstanding of Jesus' words, highlighting how Jesus used figurative language to teach them sacred truths and strengthen their faith. Jesus, as the light, walked safely in the day and knew when it was time to work miracles, even if it meant falling into the hands of his enemies. He prepared his disciples for the great trial of seeing Him in the tomb by strengthening their faith through various methods, foreseeing their future trials and inflicting strokes to prepare them.

Transcript

It seems amazing that though the disciples had lived with the Lord three years, they continued to misunderstand his words. They supposed that his motive for not going to heal the afflicted Lazarus, was fear of the Jews. For when he said, "Let us go into Judea again," they expressed their surprise. He replied by a short parable. He compared himself to a man who walked in the day, and who walked safely, because he enjoyed the light of the sun. He himself was light, and therefore could never fall into unforeseen danger. He knew that his hour was come, and that it was time to work his most stupendous miracle. When his hour was not come, he took pains to conceal his glorious works, that he might not too soon exasperate his enemies; but now he desired to fall into their cruel hands, that he might finish the work his Father had given him to do.

We do not possess foreknowledge; we do not know what things will happen to us in any place to which we are going; yet if we follow Jesus, we do not walk in darkness. It is true we are blind, but our guide is not; therefore we are as safe as if we ourselves possessed eye-sight. When we are going to take a step in life, if we find that the word of God pronounces it to be right, and that the providence of God opens the way, we need not fear evil. How safe were the disciples while conducted by their Master from place to place! Yet they knew not their own security. Thomas seems to have said with a wavering faith, and a fearful heart, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

How was it the disciples did not comprehend their Master when he said, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps?" He taught them by this figurative language many sacred truths. He showed them that the commonest actions (such as sleeping) represent spiritual truths. Jesus was patient with his dull scholars, and explained his meaning, saying, "Lazarus is dead." These words could not be misunderstood--but those that followed were mysterious. "I was glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you may believe." The raising of Lazarus was to effect more than one purpose. It was intended not only to convince unbelievers, but also to strengthen the faith of believers. The disciples were on the brink of an event that would call for the exercise of the strongest faith. Soon they would see their own Lord lying in his tomb. Never since the beginning of the world were the people of God exposed to so great a trial of faith, as the disciples then endured. To see Him on whom all their hopes for eternity depended, to see Him a breathless corpse--was there ever any trial to be compared to this? Therefore, before the trial came, the Lord by every method sought to strengthen the faith of his poor weak disciples.

He foresees our trials, and often, before he inflicts a severe stroke, he prepares us for it by various and wonderful methods. Sometimes he prepares us by leading us to the sick bed of a sufferer, and by letting us hear him tell how the Lord sustained him; sometimes by shading one of our props without removing it; and sometimes by bestowing great and astonishing mercies. The whole process cannot be understood now, but it will be made plain to the saints in glory. What delight it will afford above to trace the Lord's dealings with our souls, and to discover the secret causes of the events of his providence!

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