

The Blessing of Favour: 3

The Fourth-Day Man

John 11.40

“Jesus said to her [*Martha*], “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?””

Last week I finished my message talking about Mary & Martha and the raising of Lazarus. Let us revisit that passage as we continue to develop this teaching.

- **(v1-3)** Mary & Martha were close friends of Jesus.
 - It was the same Mary that during supper a little while later took the very costly fragrant oil and poured it out on Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. (John 12.1-3)
 - The same Mary who on an earlier occasion, sat at Jesus’ feet listening intently to Him teach, while Martha was busy and distracted serving the guests (Luke 10.38-42).
- They were going through a tough time. Their brother Lazarus was sick, which would eventually lead to his death, so they called for Jesus.
 - In their hour of need they called on the Lord, they sought his touch, his favour. They sought the blessing from the blesser.
- **(v4)** On hearing that Lazarus was sick, Jesus makes a comment to His disciples, and (I presume) to the messenger as well:
“**This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.**” (vs4)
 - We know from the passage that Lazarus died – so why did Jesus say that this sickness was ‘not unto death’. Was He just passing a comment, something similar to ‘oh everything is going to be alright’. He wasn’t speaking about natural death here, He was thinking of eternal separation from God.
 - He knew what was going to happen and that this was an opportunity and occasion for a manifestation of the glory and favour of God.
 - I made the comment last week, and I repeat – We do not go through afflictions, trials, difficulties, sickness etc because they bring glory to God. If they did, why would we want to seek help, healing and deliverance. What glorifies God is our attitude toward Him during these times. Like Mary and Martha, when the trouble came they turned to the Lord.
- **(v5-6)** Jesus loved this family. I honestly believe that this family were His closest friends, outside of the apostles with whom He spent every day.
- So why, when Jesus learned that Lazarus was sick, would He stay an extra two days in the place where they were.

- Was Jesus scared of the Jews? They had recently tried to stone Him
- Didn't He love the family enough to drop everything and rush to be with him?
- Were the cries of the sisters not being heard?
- The Lord's not answering the prayer – must be God's will for Lazarus to suffer

- What we do know is that God was going to be glorified through it. To our human wisdom and understanding, we may not always know why there is a delay in getting our prayers answered, we may not know if there is a greater purpose – our duty is to stay in faith, even when things look contrary.
 “We walk by faith, not by sight” 2 Corinthians 5.7

- **(v7-8)** Two days later Jesus said to the disciples – “Let us go to Judea again”
 - Jesus prepares to start the journey to Bethany. The sisters called for Him and He is on the way

- **(v11-15)** “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up”
 - Lazarus sleeps? He will get well – the disciples thought that Jesus was referring to natural sleep and they expected Lazarus to recover.
 - When we are sick we are told to rest – it aids our recovery

- Jesus clearly tells them that Lazarus is dead – He was already dead.

- “I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe.....”
 - what a strange statement this is – I was glad – surely it couldn't be that Jesus was glad his friend Lazarus had died.
 - If Jesus had been there earlier He could have healed him from the sickness.
 - Jesus could have just spoken the word and Lazarus would have been healed – like He did when the nobleman came to Him on behalf of his son (John 4.49-53)
 - These would have been tremendous miracles and worthy of praise, but Jesus had a greater purpose on this occasion – an opportunity for the glory and favour of God.

(Note vs 16 - look at the faith of the one we have named 'the doubter')

- **(vs21)** When Jesus arrived just outside the village he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days, and was greeted with the same response that we have just thought of – (Martha) “if You had been here, my brother would not have died”

- **(v23-24)** “..Your brother will rise again... I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day”
 - Jesus is telling her that Lazarus is going to rise from the dead – and straight away she thinks about the resurrection of the dead in the end times
 - But Jesus is talking about now – He knew what He was going to do from the moment he first heard the news.

- **(v25-26)** “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”
 - Jesus is the resurrection and life – He is the giver of life.
 - Jesus encourages her faith which was beginning to fade and brings her to the point of belief that God’s goodness, favour and blessing is working for her.
 - Martha needed this encouragement, she was different to her sister.

- **(v32)** Mary goes out to meet Jesus and says the same to him – if You had been here my brother would not have died
 - This time instead of repeating the same words to Mary that He spoke to Martha, Jesus was stirred up in His spirit and asked to be taken to the tomb.

- **(v36-37)** These were Jesus’ friends –
 - Jesus loved them, they were close to Him, like family
 - The people that gathered knew about Jesus – the miracle worker from Galilee. He healed the lepers, unstopped deaf ears, opened the eyes of the blind. Couldn’t he have kept this man dying?
 - Of course, but this was going to be an opportunity for the manifestation of the favour and goodness of God.
 - Notice none of them ask Him to do anything – he is already dead, there was no hope for them except for the resurrection at the last day.

- **(v39)** Take away the stone! Martha protests – Lord there is a stench, he has been dead four days.
 - Take away the stone – if we are to see the glory of God manifest we must remove every stumbling block

- It is probable that Lazarus died on the same day that the sisters sent to Him
 - The custom was to bury the dead the same day they died – he had been dead and probably in the tomb for four days
 - If this is the case why did Jesus still stay an extra two days before coming? If Jesus had left immediately, Lazarus would have still been dead and he could have raised him then.
 - Four days – is significant. The Scripture uses an idiom here – *he is a fourth-day man*.
 - There was a common Jewish tradition from the writings of the Jewish Sages (*Beresh. Rabba*) that the soul hovered around the body for three days hoping to return, but when corruption began on the fourth day, it leaves. (*Lightfoot/Vincent*)
 - Jesus stayed two extra days in order to silence the sceptical Jews who gathered to mourn. In the natural this man was beyond help but Jesus was about to raise and give life to a fourth-day man.

- **(v40)** Jesus appeals to Martha’s faith again, to encourage her - “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”
 - Jesus referred her back to what He had said – (v25) ‘even though he dies, he shall live’

- (v43-44) Lazarus come forth!
 - Lazarus come out of the tomb – alive
- **(v45)** Many of the Jews believed in Him. This was the whole purpose behind Jesus staying an extra two days

The favour and goodness of God was on this family

Psalm 84.11

“For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly.”

The blessing of favour is upon us today. God gives grace and glory – His favour and His goodness.

He will not withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly (#8549) – in truth and integrity (BDB (1e) in accordance with the truth)

Do you feel like you're in a fourth-day man situation. Don't lose heart but believe – you will see God's goodness and favour

Psalm 27.13

“I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living.”