



Jesus' Last and Greatest Miracle, Part 1

Pastor Jon Duncan

Kick Start:

What was the most memorable verse or thought from Sunday's message?

Main Point:

Since God sovereignly controls the time and events of our lives and tells us that our days are numbered, it is crucial that we decide now who Jesus really is. Is Jesus God incarnate—the basis of eternal life—or are you waiting for more proof?

Introduction:

In the midst of increased tensions and intent to kill Jesus, chapter 11 of John's Gospel is pivotal, both theologically and narratively. It presents Jesus not only as the compassionate Savior who weeps with His friends but also as the divine Son of God who holds authority over life and death. God's purposes are often beyond our immediate understanding, but they are always good, perfect, and timely!

Message Outline:

I. God's Glory, Sovereignty and Timing

When Jesus hears the report about Lazarus's illness, His response parallels His comments about the man born blind (9:1–5). The tragedy is not by God's design, but God will use it for an opportunity to glorify His Son. Jesus does not respond immediately and come to Bethany. He waits two days. When Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been dead for four days, and is already buried. His delay is to heighten the significance of His miraculous work. His aim is to reveal the glory of God's work in Him and to increase the faith of His followers.

John 11:1-19

Talk About It:

1. Jesus had “favorites,” an inner circle of disciples and special friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus. What does this tell you about Jesus? What could you do to intentionally shape your thinking so that Jesus is more “real” to you than he currently is?
2. Jesus has larger things in mind than what we're often focused on (v3-6). When have you been able to rejoice in hard times because you saw (or believed you would see) the glory of God in your suffering? If you are currently going through a time of suffering has it been hard for you to see the larger picture? What could help you do so more consistently?
3. Jesus decided to stay two days longer when He heard Lazarus was sick. Have you ever felt like God was delaying in answering your prayers? How does this make you feel and how do you respond?

4. By returning to Judea, what danger were Jesus and the disciples putting themselves in? What do we see in and learn from Thomas' attitude?
5. How does Jesus' statement in v9 encourage you and in what ways can acknowledging that your days are numbered influence your service to God and relationships and interactions with others?
6. Jesus didn't have to be present to heal someone (John 4: 46-54). Why didn't He heal Lazarus from afar (v15)? What do you think were some of Jesus' purposes in allowing Lazarus' death?
7. God's timing is always perfect, even when it stretches our comfort zones or challenges our patience. In what areas of your life are you currently tempted to rush ahead instead of waiting on God's perfect timing? What promises from God's Word inspire confidence that His timing and plans are better for you?
8. How does the communal mourning in v19 reflect the biblical principle of bearing one another's burdens, as seen in Galatians 6:2? What are some practical ways to offer Christ-centered comfort?

Conclusion:

Have you decided who Jesus is and why He came? Have you decided that the evidence in the gospels is undisputable? Is your unbelief fixed or are you waiting for more proof? These are the questions that we can use to initiate our conversations to those we know are struggling with belief. Let us be the ones to start those conversations with gentleness and respect. We may be the conduit God uses and out of love, let the burden fall on us.

Make It Practical:

Waiting and Listening in the White Spaces

By Chuck Swindoll

During times of waiting on God, there is a "white space." That's when nothing seems to be happening—at least nothing visible. You could easily tell yourself at the time, "I'm waiting in vain. Nothing's going to change."

That's precisely what the Adversary wants you to think: "Waiting on God is a waste." Don't you believe it!

When the Enemy's message slips into your mind, you need to kick it out. Reject it. Call it the lie that it is. Take "every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5 NASB). See how practical that is? Every thought.

During those times when doubt and discouragement creep into our waiting periods, the Lord provides us with strong counsel. I love these words from the pages of Isaiah:

*Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. . . .*

For I am the Lord your God, who upholds your right hand, Who says to you, 'Do not fear, I will help you.'
(Isaiah 41:10, 13 NASB 1995)

It's those kinds of thoughts that can strengthen you while you are waiting, praying, and fasting.

White Spaces

This may be one of those “white spaces” in your own life and ministry. Maybe it's time for you to pray and fast and to call upon a few close friends to fast and pray with you. (Sometimes the best individuals for this are those outside your church.) Maybe it's time for you to say, *I can't find the path to walk in this unpredictable situation. So, I'm going to wait . . . I'm not going to rush . . . and in the meantime, I'm going to give it to God. I'm going to listen with a sensitive ear and watch the Lord's leading with a sensitive eye.*

In my more than five decades of pastoral ministry, I have had many, many occasions to wait on God. I still do today. Sometimes it drives me nuts! But honestly, I would have it no other way.

It requires a sensitive eye to watch the movement of God in your life. All He may do is turn your attention in another direction. But that may be all you need. As you wait and watch, also listen to Him with a sensitive ear in the pages of Holy Scripture. Pore over a favorite passage in His Word.

Quietly give attention to His presence, and He will give you direction when it's time.

Prayer Points:

- Thank you for your perfect timing and sovereign control over all things.
- We ask for patience and trust in as we wait with sensitive eyes.
- We ask you to reveal your glory through our trials and to strengthen our faith.
- We pray for a heart that mirrors Jesus' compassion, to weep with those who weep.
- We pray for the courage to speak God's Word into difficult situations, trusting in its power to bring change.
- Give us and help us to see the opportunities to start conversations that will lead to salvation in you.
- Pray for the needs of the group.