

*When Pigs
Fly* 

April 5, 2020

"Why, God, Why?"

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for John and his courage. Thank you for the men and women who pleaded with him to write down this story for future generations. And Thank you for this sign which reminds us 'like Lazarus, we too will die but we won't die. Because Jesus lives we too will live.' Father, during difficult times we all ask 'why?' Would you remind us and help us to see that you did more for us than just eliminate evil things, you placed them on the back of your Son so we could have eternal life. We pray this in the matchless and powerful name of Jesus. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

John 11:1-17

11 A certain man, Lazarus, was ill. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (2 This was the Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped his feet with her hair. Her brother Lazarus was ill.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, saying, "Lord, the one whom you love is ill." 4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This illness isn't fatal. It's for the glory of God so that God's Son can be glorified through it." 5 Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus. 6 When he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was. After two days, 7 he said to his disciples, "Let's return to Judea again." 8 The disciples replied, "Rabbi, the Jewish opposition wants to stone you, but you want to go back?" 9 Jesus answered, "Aren't there twelve hours in the day? Whoever walks in the day doesn't stumble because they see the light of the world. 10 But whoever walks in the night does stumble because the light isn't in them." 11 He continued, "Our friend Lazarus is sleeping, but I am going in order to wake him up." 12 The disciples said, "Lord, if he's sleeping, he will get well." 13 They thought Jesus meant that Lazarus was in a deep sleep, but Jesus had spoken about Lazarus' death. 14 Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died. 15 For your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there so that you can believe. Let's go to him." 16 Then Thomas (the one called Didymus) said to the other disciples, "Let us go too so that

we may die with Jesus." 17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

John 11:20-27

20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, while Mary remained in the house. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. 22 Even now I know that whatever you ask God, God will give you." 23 Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha replied, "I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die. 26 Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She replied, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, God's Son, the one who is coming into the world."

John 11:20-27

33 When Jesus saw her crying and the Jews who had come with her crying also, he was deeply disturbed and troubled. 34 He asked, "Where have you laid him?" They replied, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus began to cry. 36 The Jews said, "See how much he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "He healed the eyes of the man born blind. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?" 38 Jesus was deeply disturbed again when he came to the

(John 11:20-27 continued)

tomb. It was a cave, and a stone covered the entrance. 39 Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said, "Lord, the smell will be awful! He's been dead four days." 40 Jesus replied, "Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you will see God's glory?" 41 So they removed the stone. Jesus looked up and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. 42 I know you always hear me. I

say this for the benefit of the crowd standing here so that they will believe that you sent me." 43 Having said this, Jesus shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his feet bound and his hands tied, and his face covered with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." 45 Therefore, many of the Jews who came with Mary and saw what Jesus did believed in him.

INTRODUCTION

At different points in our lives, many of us wonder why a good God would allow bad things to happen. And without a clear response, that dilemma could cause us to question God's existence altogether. The Gospel writer John documented an occasion where Jesus not only brought his friend Lazarus back to life but also demonstrated how God can exist in the midst of a world of evil and suffering.

God not only exists in the midst of a world that has evil and suffering—he chose to engage with it. God didn't eliminate the evil; he placed it on Jesus so we would not perish but have eternal life.

QUESTIONS

- 1) What's a notable real or fictional story that appeared to be heading in a bad direction but ended up turning out well?
- 2) Read the story of Lazarus on page one and two and answer the following questions:
 - What are some details about this story that would lead a reader to believe this actually happened?
 - In verse 35, Jesus showed emotion about this situation. What does the fact that Jesus wept—even knowing Lazarus was about to be raised—say about him?
 - Read verse 43. Imagine for a moment what onlookers would have been thinking after hearing Jesus say this. What words come to mind to describe this scene?
 - What's your biggest takeaway from this story? What is something that sticks out to you about God when reading this?
- 3) In what ways does the story of Lazarus parallel the story of God's relationship with people?
- 4) In your mind, how does the story of Lazarus address the question, "Why would a good God allow bad things to happen?"
- 5) Do you have a personal example of when something that was tragic helped strengthen your faith? If so, explain.
- 6) Read John 11:4, where Jesus claims that Lazarus died so God may be glorified. What about the story of Lazarus can inspire you to have a better perspective in the midst of difficult circumstances?