

# Jesus, Life Coach: “I’m down”

Reconnect – November 15, 2009

## Series/Morning Intro:

- Welcome to Reconnect Barrhaven, where we want to be a church that loves God, helps people and builds community
- This morning we’re continuing our series called “Jesus, Life Coach”
- But what does the Coach do when it seems like we’re losing?
- When life gets worse, not better, and we can’t seem to DO anything about it?
- We’ve been scared – then frustrated – but this week, we are...
- **DOWN**

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**Jesus:** “Lazarus’s sickness will not end in death. No, it is for the glory of God. I, the Son of God, will receive glory from this.”

**Reader 1:** Although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, he stayed where he was for the next two days and did not go to them. Finally after two days, he said to his disciples,

**Jesus:** “Let’s go to Judea again.”

**Reader 1:** But his disciples objected. “Teacher,” they said, “only a few days ago the Jewish leaders in Judea were trying to kill you. Are you going there again??”

**Jesus:** “There are twelve hours of daylight every day. As long as it is light, people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. Only at night is there danger of stumbling because there is no light. Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up.”

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**Jesus:** “Lazarus is dead. And for your sake, I am glad I wasn’t here, because this will give you another opportunity to believe in me. Come, let’s go see him.”

**Reader 1:** “Let’s go, too – and die with Jesus.” When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, and many of the people had come to pay their respects and console Martha and Mary on their loss. When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus,

**Reader 2:** “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.”

**Jesus:** “Your brother will rise again.”

**Reader 2:** “Yes, when everyone else rises, on resurrection day.”

**Jesus:** “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish. Do you believe this, Martha?”

**Reader 2:** “Yes, Lord, I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God.”

**Reader 1:** Then she left him and returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners:

**Reader 2:** The Teacher is here and wants to see you.”

**Reader 1:** So Mary immediately went to him. Now Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. When the people who were at the house trying to console Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus’s grave to weep. So they followed her there. When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell down at his feet:

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**Jesus (shouting)**: “Lazarus, come out!”

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**Text:** John 11:1-44; Romans 10:9-17

**Key Thought:** God’s answer to sadness is life – the life that comes from trusting Him when everything seems wrong.

When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, he was moved with indignation and was deeply troubled. “Where have you put him?” he asked them. They told him, “Lord, come and see.” Then Jesus wept. The people who were standing nearby said, “See how much he loved him.” But some said, “This man healed a blind man. Why couldn’t he keep Lazarus from dying?” And again Jesus was deeply troubled. Then they came to the grave. It was a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. “Roll the stone aside,” Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man’s sister, said, “Lord, by now the smell will be terrible because he has been dead for four days.” Jesus responded, “Didn’t I tell you that you will see God’s glory if you believe?” So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so they will believe you sent me.” Then Jesus shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” And Lazarus came out, bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, “Unwrap him and let him go!” John 11:3-44

## Pre-Intro: “Don’t Get Me Down” – ELO

### Intro: What’s wrong?

- The question we get asked, and then we grow up, and then we’re the ones asking it – when we see what we recognize as sadness on the faces of our kids, on the faces of those we love, those we care about
- Sometimes the thing that’s wrong is easily fixed – a misunderstanding, a small problem, a need
- But other times, it’s something bigger – something bigger than us, something outside ourselves – or perhaps even worse, something INSIDE ourselves

### Q: What’s wrong? Anyone like to talk about it? Anything wrong here?

- We don’t even like to talk about it, a lot of times – we’re unsure how people will respond – will they find us weak? Or think we’re losers, because we have something wrong? Are we somehow defective? After all, it’s wrong! What if there is something wrong... with us? That’s a euphemism that gets used a fair bit these days!
- Generally people will either bury it so deep you’d never know – put on a happy face and smile away – or they wear it on their sleeve and can’t wait to tell others how wrong their whole life is
- Both responses are unhealthy – but it’s pretty hard to get wrong... right! Because it just keeps gnawing away at you – you feel like all you can do is either ignore it or give in to it!

### Jesus and wrong:

- Experiencing wrong is part of being human – we even invented it back in the garden of Eden
- And Jesus experienced the wrong, too – things didn’t go as he planned, things went against him
- Somehow, in every human way, Jesus experienced what was wrong with the world, even though he never acted against God, ever
- And there were days that were definitely worse than others – like what we’ve been looking at today, from John’s biography of Jesus, chapter 11
- (Is that ironic! Chapter 11? Bankruptcy?)
- Let’s take a closer look:

## Read Text: John 11:1-44

**A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. This is the Mary who poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, "Lord, the one you love is very sick."**

- Lazarus – Heb. *Eleazar* – "God helps/God has helped"
- We don't know how old Lazarus was – if he was much older than Jesus, who would have been about 33 at this point – maybe he was, given that it seems that he is the head of the household – his parents are gone, and it's him and his sisters – and yet, there is an outpouring of grief at his death, which makes it seem like he was young to die
- At any rate, we do know that he's the closest thing to a best friend that Jesus has
- Jesus has his disciples, his closest followers – and of the twelve of them, he is closest with Peter, James and John – but they are still his disciples, those he has called around himself for a purpose
- Lazarus, it seems, along with his sisters, was something different – just a friend – someone who had a home that Jesus could retreat to, someone where He could hang out
- Jesus hasn't been to see him in a while – in fact, right now Jesus is almost 200 miles away, having fled for his life from the Jewish leaders, who had been trying to kill him
- But a messenger comes, exhausted, with the news: "Lord, the one you love is sick"

**But when Jesus heard about it he said, "Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it is for the glory of God. I, the Son of God, will receive glory from this." Although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, he stayed where he was for the next two days and did not go to them. Finally after two days, he said to his disciples, "Let's go to Judea again."**

- Jesus responds with confidence – this is all part of God's purposes – God's greatness is going to be seen through this circumstance – and that's the very positive message with the messenger – but strangely enough, he doesn't move – he stays in place two days more before saying "Let's go back to Judea" – where they had just fled from
- Carson (one of the authors in my basement) says that ironically, Jesus returns to help out Lazarus at risk of his own life – Jesus puts it all on the line, risks his life to bring Lazarus life in return
- But why is he making the family suffer? He loves them – he doesn't want them to suffer, but lining up the episode this way is going to bring the best for them

**But his disciples objected. "Teacher," they said, "only a few days ago the Jewish leaders in Judea were trying to kill you. Are you going there again?"**

- This is turning into a lot of walking... ! And sounding hazardous to our health... !

**Jesus replied, "There are twelve hours of daylight every day. As long as it is light, people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. Only at night is there danger of stumbling because there is no light." Then he said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up."**

- What's he talking about light and darkness for? Only to reassure the disciples that as long as his mission continues, he's got nothing to worry about

**The disciples said, “Lord, if he is sleeping, that means he is getting better!” They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was having a good night’s rest, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died. Then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. And for your sake, I am glad I wasn’t here, because this will give you another opportunity to believe in me. Come, let’s go see him.” Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let’s go, too – and die with Jesus.”**

- Jesus isn’t trying to play a joke on them – but they would never think that Jesus would know that Lazarus has died – there’s been no second messenger, no official word from Bethany or the sisters
- But miraculously, Jesus knows that Lazarus has died – and he starts talking about a topic that gets a lot of play in John’s bio of Jesus – “belief” (almost 100x mentioned in only 28 pages) – more about that later

**When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, and many of the people had come to pay their respects and console Martha and Mary on their loss. When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.”**

- Lazarus died right around the time that Jesus started making his way back – and it’s been four days now – almost a week since the messenger first brought word to Jesus of Lazarus’ sickness
- Jesus has missed the funeral – he’s missed his best friend’s funeral - but he’s just in time for the different times of mourning, strictly laid out by the law as to what should happen
- And for the sisters, it seems like they’re on the hook entertaining a crowd of well-wishers
- They’re on their own now – no man in the house makes them vulnerable
- What will they do? Do they have any other family that they can live with? Until one of them can get married, they are vulnerable in the extreme – Lazarus was their “protection”, their “anchor”
- Clearly Lazarus was well-known in Jerusalem – there’s a steady stream of mourners from the big city, going out to Bethany – a suburb of Jerusalem (only about 2 km outside of town)
- Martha and Mary are very different, like many sisters, I guess – Martha is a go getter, type A, and Mary is much more one to keep quiet and hang back
- But Martha’s got no problem going out to see Jesus, out on the road, and giving it to him straight

**Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise again.” “Yes,” Martha said, “when everyone else rises, on resurrection day.” Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish. Do you believe this, Martha?” “Yes, Lord,” she told him. “I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God.”**

- Martha runs out to meet Jesus first and is rewarded by this incredible talk she gets to have with him
- “I am the resurrection and the life” – beautiful – I haven’t been able to get away from those words this week, and I’m glad
- Jesus ties life – the answer to the wrong all around them, the death that has come at just the wrong time – Jesus ties that kind of life to another concept, and that is “belief” – if you have it, you have life
- Martha believes – in fact, she goes beyond what Jesus is asking, and she tells him that she has ALWAYS believed

**Then she left him and returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, “The Teacher is here and wants to see you.” So Mary immediately went to him. Now Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. When the people who were at the house trying to console Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus’s grave to weep. So they followed her there. When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell down at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”**

- It’s a mob scene, out at the house – there are professional wailers – that’s all they do, except when they’re on lunch break – they weep and wail
- There’s also hangers-on, people who are just excited to be part of a “happening”, and all kinds of others in the middle – curious, there for the food, see what’s going on, etc.

**When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, he was moved with indignation and was deeply troubled. “Where have you put him?” he asked them. They told him, “Lord, come and see.” Then Jesus wept. The people who were standing nearby said, “See how much he loved him.” But some said, “This man healed a blind man. Why couldn’t he keep Lazarus from dying?” And again Jesus was deeply troubled.**

- Different reactions from the steady stream of grief-tourists – some see the love Jesus had for Lazarus, others can see anything but their own unbelief – everything beautiful is tainted, not good enough
- Jesus is trying to grieve – he is awash in the sadness of the moment – this man has died, and that is NOT RIGHT
- Not only is his best friend dead, but the others there that day don’t even believe that he can do anything at all about it

**Then they came to the grave. It was a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. “Roll the stone aside,” Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man’s sister, said, “Lord, by now the smell will be terrible because he has been dead for four days.” Jesus responded, “Didn’t I tell you that you will see God’s glory if you believe?” So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so they will believe you sent me.” Then Jesus shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” And Lazarus came out, bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, “Unwrap him and let him go!”**

- “Believe” – it’s all about believing for Jesus
- John says a little bit later that his purpose for writing this account of Jesus is this: “these signs are written so that you may believe [there’s that word again] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of god, and that by believing in him you will have life” (John 20:31) – for Jesus, it’s all about believing (more on that in a minute)
- “Didn’t I tell you that you will see God’s glory if you believe?”
- An incredible moment for everyone there, including Jesus and most of all, Lazarus

### **Belief and “unbelief”:**

- Belief – and its opposite – what John calls “unbelief” – disbelief? Refusal to believe? – are so crucial for John, and even this story
- Let’s talk about the difference between the two:

## Q: What do you see as the difference between belief and unbelief? In this story? In life?

- Belief – a head thing today – “I believe it’s going to rain today” – not emotionally invested
- But it’s more along the lines of knowledge – certainty – heartfelt certainty, to know something like we know the expressions on our children’s faces – knowledge that becomes a part of us, knowing something through and through
- Belief is a doorway, but unbelief is a dead end – or many dead ends that don’t allow anything further
- There are all kinds of belief in our society – some of them reasonable, many of them not – and the trend is to validate them all, to say that they are all equally good
- John would disagree – for him, the belief that matters is trusting Jesus – the life that comes with that trust – in the middle of everything wrong – light in the darkness, hope in the sadness

## Surrounded by sadness

- But belief is stretched to the limit when sadness comes – when something is wrong
- We have different words for it – grief, when someone dies – depression, when everything seems wrong – being down, in a funk, all the rest – but it’s sadness
- And sadness is a response that we have when something is wrong – when something should not be, and we don’t know what to do, and we’re trying to deal with it – sadness
- It’s ironic that in a society like ours, where there is so much wealth in comparison to the rest of the world, that there is equally as much depression compared with the rest of the world
- We have so much, that is supposed to bring us so much happiness – but we have rocketing rates of depression right alongside – depression that strikes people with no warning, and no apparent reason
- While all the commercials for depression medication play on and on our TV sets, and advertisers market each new experience, each new possession, as something that will bring that sense of fullness, that sense of purpose, that sense of fulfillment and hope – that they will make our lives “right”
- Depression is such a loaded word in our society – I’m loath to use it, because it immediately raises more questions – chemical imbalances, choices or lack of them, genetics or circumstances...

## Jesus and sadness:

- Sadness – a proper response to what’s wrong...
- The pattern again of emotion/prayer/action – Jesus brings life
- Insulation – we want to protect ourselves from sadness, but Jesus embraces it – and works it through – and moves on from it, in courage and truth – because of his connection to God, because he **believes** in something greater
- Belief brings life – you can’t have it without being tied in to Jesus – like a scuba diver with a tank running out of air, or a skydiver falling, pulling one cord with no response
- Sadness / life / trust / wrong

## **Key Thought:**

**God's answer to sadness is life –  
the life that comes from trusting Him  
when everything seems wrong.**

Salvation that comes from trusting Christ... is already within easy reach. In fact, the Scriptures say, "The message is close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart." For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved... Faith comes from hearing this message of good news – and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

**(Paul, in Romans 10:9-17)**

## **Conclusion: Breathe**

- **[play Pfizer video]**
- (Pfizer commercial) – play it in the message – I'm drawn to that commercial - where there's breath, there's life
- We've all felt it – coming up out of the water, after a deep dive – after holding our breath – waking up with the covers over our nose – going outside on a cold day and seeing our breath
- Where there's breath, there's life – where there's life, there's hope – and Jesus brings life, even with death all around him
- What we need to do in the midst of sadness is breathe – breathe the life that Jesus has for us, that he offers us – breathe deeply of His Spirit, His closeness to us – and gain life from that breath

## **Response: Q & A**