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Resurrection purpose

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Resurrection purpose

By J. Scott Duvall

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Humanly speaking, besides a few of the disciples, Jesus's closest friends were undoubtedly Mary, Martha and Lazarus. They were like family, and their house in Bethany was a place of safety and refuge.

One day the sisters sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was extremely sick and about to die. After a two-day delay Jesus began his four-day journey to Bethany. I don't always know what to make of God's delays, but I'm convinced they don't mean he doesn't love us. We hope for a greater purpose.

The worst happens, Lazarus dies. When Jesus finally arrives, Lazarus has been in the tomb four days. In those days, people were buried the same day they died. Martha goes out to greet Jesus and they have an interesting conversation:

Martha → "If you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. You could have healed him (regret)
→ but I know that God will give you what you ask for (expectation)."

Jesus → “Your brother will rise again (hope).”

Martha → “Yes, I know he will rise again on the last day, when all God’s people will rise again (yeah, yeah).”

Jesus → “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die! Do you believe this?” (Whoa ... what?)

Martha → “Yes, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God (I believe ... but).”

Later, Mary arrives and says the same thing: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.” This time there is no conversation. Jesus’s emotions are building.

When Jesus saw Mary and her friends wailing in grief, he was "deeply moved in spirit and troubled." Jesus is sad for sure, but he’s also grieving, mad and furious that death has taken his friend. He can stand it no longer. He has to act. He is Lord over death. Jesus goes to the tomb and starts giving God-like commands and asking God-like questions:

11:39 → “Take away the stone.”

11:40 → “Didn’t I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”

11:41-42 → Jesus prays: "Father, I thank you that you have heard me."

11:43 → “Lazarus, here! Outside!”

11:44 → “Take off the grave clothes and let him go!”

I bet Jesus was one of the first to hug his formerly dead, now very-much-alive friend.

Jesus had told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25). And the life starts now and never ends. One day Jesus will raise us from the dead and give us resurrection bodies ready for the new creation. But between now and then, Jesus is also "the life."

For you to trust him, you have to know how he feels about you and your suffering. Your ordeal not only hurts Jesus, it also angers him deeply. He’s not mad at you. He’s mad at evil—at Satan, sin, sickness, disease and death for hurting you, his precious child.

We don’t always know why we suffer, but perhaps it’s better to think about purpose than reasons or causes. The sisters want to know "why." But Jesus is focused on purpose—life. Jesus is the life! Today. For you. Right now. Resurrection life that empowers you to endure now and guarantees the ultimate victory over death. Jesus is asking us to trust him to work his purpose in and through and out of your suffering. Your future is certain, and his purpose now is clear: "I am the resurrection and the life."



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