



for the week of July 08, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:
good news: Jesus, the resurrection and the life

daily life notes for individuals & couples

Introductions

Pastor Mark spoke this weekend about our eternal security in Jesus. The chapter from John is copied below in its entirety, but we invite you to use your own Bible so you can make note of verses or ideas that interest or speak to you in some way. It's always good to read a passage at least twice, so that your mind begins to get involved with what the Holy Spirit is saying. You can view various Bible versions online at sites like www.biblegateway.com

Note: Saturday is used as a "sabbath" or "rest from our every day work responsibilities" experience, but you might work on Saturday and be off some other time during the week that would be more appropriate to celebrating rest. Please feel free to adjust the **Life Notes** schedule to fit your own.

the Word: John 11:1-46

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.

Word came to Jesus from the sisters: *"Lord, the one you love is sick."*

Jesus: *"This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."*

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

Jesus (to his disciples): *"Let us go back to Judea."*

Disciples: *"But Rabbi, a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?"*

Jesus: *"Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light. Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."*

Disciples: *"Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better."*

Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

Jesus: *"Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."*

Thomas (to the rest of the disciples): *"Let us also go, that we may die with him."*

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

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

Jesus: *"Your brother will rise again."*

Martha: *"I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*

Jesus: *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

Martha: *"Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."*

After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside.

Martha: *"The Teacher is here and is asking for you."*

When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet.

Mary: *"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

Jesus: *"Where have you laid him?"*

Those with Mary: *"Come and see, Lord."*

Jesus wept.

Jews: *"See how he loved him!"*

Some of the Jews: *"Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"*

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.

Jesus: *"Take away the stone."*

Martha: *"But, Lord, by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."*

Jesus: *"Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"*

So they took away the stone.

Jesus (looking up): *"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."*

When he had said this, Jesus called out in a loud voice,

Jesus (in a loud voice): *"Lazarus, come out!"*

The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus: *"Take off the grave clothes and let him go."*

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

Monday: expectations and dreams in our lives

We spent last week reflecting on our need for security, and this week we turn our eyes to security of another kind - the hopes, dreams and expectations we have for ourselves and for those we love. We'll begin by journaling about our own lives, and we'll move into John 11 tomorrow.

We all have expectations of ourselves and of others - it's part of the human experience. So let's do some remembering and some exploring.

*What were some of the expectations/dreams you felt (or still feel) as a child from your parents...
...from other family members...
...from teachers or coaches...
...from friends or significant others in your life...*

How did you feel about/respond to the expectations?

What were some of your own expectations or dreams for yourself? How did your expectations differ from the ones other people had for you?

What happened when circumstances seemed to hinder or threaten those expectations?

What happened when your own sense of who you were/should be differed from others' expectations?

Now journal about your current family relationships and the expectations and dreams you have for those you love.

These are the expectations and dreams I have for _____ ...

These are the expectations and dreams I have for my family as a whole...

As you close your time, pray for each person you've written about. Give each person to Jesus. One at a time, carefully and with intention, trust each person to Jesus.

Tuesday: dreams and expectations of a family who loved Jesus

We'll spend today with the family from Bethany. John 11:1-46 gives us insight into Mary, Martha and Lazarus, as do the following passages: Luke 10:48-32; John 12:1-3. Read these sections of Scripture and think intentionally about the relationships that are revealed in this family's story. Journal about what the text says about the relationships and also about what you learn from the Spirit as you consider those relationships.

What do you learn about Martha, Mary and Lazarus?

What do you learn about the family relationships they shared?

What do you learn about how others perceived the three and related to them?

Was there a change in them or in how others related to them pre-John 11 and post-John 11?

What were Mary's expectations of Jesus, related to Lazarus?

What were Martha's expectations of Jesus, related to Lazarus?

Why do you think Jesus cried and what impact did the tears have on those around him?

As your time comes to a close, think about that family as they faced loss and grief and all the related feelings during those days of struggle. And pray for those you know who are facing family pain at this time.

Wednesday: dreams and expectations of the Father

This is the middle of the week, so it's possible that there is some stress in your life or that you've encountered a broken expectation or two so far this week. Let those broken expectations and the questions they provoke enter your mind as you begin today. Speak openly with God about what you feel or what you wish he would consider. Then be silent for a few moments. Let the Holy Spirit just be there with you, hearing your heart and teaching you God's heart in return.

Today, we begin to focus on God's perspective in the passage. Read John 11:1-46, looking for God's expectations (see 11:4, 11:14,15 and 11:41,42 for insight).

What did Jesus say was God's purpose for this situation?

What were the expectations of the Mary-Martha-Lazarus family?

What were the expectations of the disciples?

What were the expectations of the villagers?

How was God's purpose revealed in...

...Lazarus

...Mary

...Martha

...the disciples

...those accompanying the family through their loss

...the villagers - those watching at more of a distance

What were God's expectations for each of these people/groups?

How would you describe God's expectations for you at this moment in your life compared with your own expectations for yourself?

We see that God has purpose in the midst of the difficulties, and we see this personally exemplified through various people in the John 11 story. Clearly, the sisters and friends of Lazarus would have wanted him to be healed rather than die, but the Father had a different purpose in mind. Pastor Mark reminded us that God has our good in mind, always.

Return to your responses from Monday and look, as objectively as possible, at the dreams and expectations you have for others in your family/life and ask God to show you where your dreams or expectations might differ from his dreams and expectations for that person.

Is the Holy Spirit showing you people or specific circumstances that you might need to release from your expectations in order to help the live in God's purpose?

Close your time by meditating on a few quotes about the "sacred ambiguity" of our longings and God's longings.

"There is a lot at stake when we put what we want and what God wants into the crucible and allow His ways to become ours." (Kathleen Norris)

"Only prayer is a crucible strong enough for this transmutation." (Martin Smith)

"If I were called upon to state in a few words the essence of everything I am trying to say, both as a novelist and as a preacher, it would be something like this: Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of God because in the last analysis, all moments are key moments. And life itself is grace." (Frederick Buechner)

Thursday: the ever-growing state of “to believe”

We all believe in something...in many things, really. And when it comes to believing in Jesus, that's our first real step of faith. But we don't fully believe when we newly believe - we are, each one of us, in process, and we all start somewhere.

When and what did you first believe about God and his ways?

What, about God and his ways, has become easier for you to believe as you've walked with Jesus?

What, about God and his ways, is still difficult or even more difficult for you to believe as you walk with Jesus?

We read in John 11:14,15: *“Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”*

Why do you think Jesus said this to the disciples? Did they not yet believe in Jesus? What do you think Jesus meant? Do you think the belief of the disciples changed with the Lazarus story? In what way(s) and why?

How did Martha show her belief?

How did Mary show her belief?

How did Lazarus show his belief?

How did some of the Jewish friends show their belief?

Each one of us goes through various difficulties and losses during our lives in this world. Those difficulties or losses either usher us into a deeper relationship with God as Father, Son and Spirit, or they create a separation between us and our Father. Perhaps God recorded the story of Mary, Martha and Lazarus to show us an example of love drawing closer, even in the midst of life's pains.

In what specific ways has God used circumstances in your life to help grow your belief? What happened?

What has been the faith-result in your life from these circumstances?

Pastor Mark has been preaching from John, and woven throughout this gospel is God's desire that we believe.

Where do you need God's help right now to believe?

Friday: It's God we believe in

Begin your time today with the "Our Father."

*"Our Father, who is in heaven,
Holy is your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done
On earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

It's God that we believe in - our Father, maker of heaven and earth and us. And no matter what we face, it is God we believe in - not our own expectations or plans or dreams. We believe in Jesus.

Pastor Mark taught that one of the more amazing statements of faith comes from Martha in 11:21-27, in the midst of her loss. Read that section of the story at least two times.

What did Martha believe about Jesus?

What specific actions grew out of Martha's belief? (think about those actions that are obvious in the text as well as those not so obvious)

What did it mean for Martha, the 4th day after her brother had died, to say out loud that Jesus is the resurrection and the life? What about when Jesus told them to take away the stone? How might Martha have felt?

When difficulties come up in our lives - of all shapes and sizes, God asks us to trust his plan, not our own...his expectations for our life and for the world around us, not our own. Pastor Mark told us that, *"Without knowing the end of the story, it can be very confusing to understand how God could possibly use suffering for good."* And yet God is the master of bringing good out of everything. He is God. And as difficult as this might be, the message is: believe in God, not in your own dreams and expectations. Believe in God, not in the circumstances that help you feel safe or satisfied. Believe in God. That's what happened in this story, and that's what God desired. He wanted them to believe in his Son so that people and neighborhoods and cities and neighboring principalities and you and I might also believe.

What does it mean to you today that Jesus is the resurrection and the life?

The most obvious example of Jesus as resurrection and life that I see around me is...

The most obvious example of Jesus as resurrection and life that I see in my life is...

As I go through my life decisions, circumstances and relationships...and as the people I love face life's decisions, circumstances, changes and pains, I will believe in God in all things...and ask him to help me in my unbelief.

Saturday: Sabbath

We encourage you to let Saturdays be a “mini Sabbath” moment. If Saturday is a work day for you, simply exchange this day in Life Notes for the day you have off. It’s really important to learn to simply “be” with Jesus, with yourself, with those you love, without an “agenda.” Sabbath simply means “cease” and “rest.” So, today, spend moments truly resting with God the Father, Son and Spirit. “Cease” all of the detailed work and worries that creep into your life everyday.

Couples, if possible, spend some Sabbath moments together reading, taking a walk, drinking coffee outside, sharing a song you both like, inviting friends over and cooking for them, taking a drive or a bike ride, exercising, watching a movie. Whatever you might like to do to truly rest, do it together. You might laugh or cry with God about things that have happened in your life together this week. Just let the time unfold. Sense God’s love for you; seek his peace and pursue it.

Families, spend a Sabbath day together. Let different members of the family choose what to do each week. Simply enjoy God’s company together. Or maybe serve somewhere as a family or invite neighbors over, simply because you care.

Discover Jesus in all you do. He’ll delight and amaze you.