

Dr. David L. Turner, The Gospel of John, Session 13, John 11:1-57, Podcast Audio Overview

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Okay, so picture this, right? Someone you love, like really love, has died. And then boom, they're brought back to life. It's a pretty wild concept.

Wild doesn't even cut it. But that's the kind of story we're going to dive into today. Yeah, this is a big one.

It's the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. You'll find it in the Gospel of John. It's one of the most well-known stories in the Bible.

Absolutely. And lucky for us, we've got this incredible lecture from a biblical scholar to help guide us through it. We're going to get a real expert take on this whole event.

I think people are going to find this really interesting. Oh, for sure. And don't worry if you haven't cracked open a Bible in a while; you know, the story itself is just, it's gripping.

You don't need to be a biblical scholar to appreciate it. No, not at all. Plus, the analysis from the scholar offers some really interesting insights into history and culture and human nature, like how people react to the unbelievable.

It really makes you think. Big time. Okay.

So to set the scene, we're in a period where things are getting pretty tense. Jesus is facing increasing opposition from the authorities in Jerusalem. Yeah.

He's had to withdraw to the east side of the Jordan River, actually, just to avoid conflict. Like a strategic retreat. Exactly.

Laying low for a bit. But then he gets this news that Lazarus, one of his close friends who lives in Bethany near Jerusalem, is really sick. You'd think he'd just, you know, rush back immediately.

Right. That would be the natural thing to do. But that's not what happens at all.

Nope. And that's what kicks off all the intrigue, really. Instead of rushing back to Lazarus' side, Jesus delays.

And this delay creates all this suspense, you know. Like, what's he doing? What's he waiting for? Yeah. It really makes you question, like, what is Jesus up to here? Right.

And it's like he knows something we don't. Right. Definitely.

And the scholar points out these really cryptic conversations that Jesus has with his disciples during this time. We're talking about light and darkness, and it's all very mysterious. Yeah.

And the disciples, they're, well, they're understandably worried. Of course. They're worried about their safety, especially with all the threats Jesus has been getting in Jerusalem.

Yeah. I mean, remember, people wanted to stone him not too long ago. Oh, absolutely.

They haven't forgotten that. But Jesus, he assures them. He tells them they're safe because they're walking in the light.

It's like this constant theme in the Gospel of John, right? Light versus darkness, truth versus falsehood. Yeah. And it's all connected to Jesus' power over death.

But it's presented in this veiled, symbolic language. It's like he's giving us clues, but not the whole picture. Keeps us on the edge of our seats.

Oh, for sure. Meanwhile, back in Bethany, Lazarus' sisters, Martha and Mary, they're devastated, obviously. I mean, their brother just died.

It's a horrible situation. Yeah. And they both express this belief that Jesus, if he had been there, he could have prevented their brother's death.

Right. Like if he had just come sooner. But what's really interesting is how their reactions to Jesus' arrival are so different.

Oh, yeah. They handle their grief and their faith in very different ways. You really see how different people process these things.

Martha, she expresses a more intellectual kind of faith. How so? She says to Jesus, I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. Like she's quoting scripture, you know? She's got that belief system in place.

Right. Like she's holding onto that theological hope. Exactly.

But Mary, she's just completely overcome with emotion. I can only imagine. When she sees Jesus, she just falls at his feet, weeping, saying, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

It's such a raw moment. Like you can feel the weight of her grief. Absolutely.

And it's in this really intense emotional moment that Jesus makes one of the most powerful statements in the whole Bible. He says, 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. Chills every time. Yeah.

Those words have resonated throughout history. It's incredible. And the scholar explains how this statement points to this.

Well, it sounds complicated, but it's a really powerful idea. Realized eschatology. Yeah, that's a mouthful.

Let's unpack that a little bit. So what exactly does realized eschatology mean in this context? Okay, so it means that eternal life isn't just something we wait for after death. It starts now, in the present, through faith in Jesus.

It's like saying, yes, there's a future resurrection, but God's power is already active here and now. Right. It's not just a future promise.

It's a present reality. That changes the whole perspective on life and death. It's a pretty radical concept.

For sure. And I think it speaks to this, like, deep human longing, this desire for something beyond just this earthly existence. Absolutely.

So then the scene shifts. We're at the tomb itself. It's such a vivid scene, right? Yeah.

You can practically smell it. The stone, the stench of death, you know, Jesus praying. He's a tabby.

And then he just commands Lazarus, "Come out. I get chills just thinking about it. And Lazarus, he walks out of the tomb, wrapped in burial cloth still.

It's just this powerful image: life beating death. It really is. But it's important to note: the scholar uses the word raising, not resurrection.

That's an interesting distinction. Why is that significant? It highlights that Lazarus was brought back to physical life, but he wasn't given a glorified body like Christians believe Jesus experienced after his resurrection. Lazarus was going to die again.

So it's more like this temporary thing, a restoration of life. Exactly. A preview of the ultimate resurrection that's to come.

That's really interesting. Makes you think. It does.

So you'd think seeing someone literally raised from the dead would be enough to convince anyone. Right, exactly. What you would think, wouldn't you? Case closed.

But the scholar points out that it's not a simple happy ending. In fact, it actually triggers a whole chain of events. Yeah, this is where things get really interesting.

Okay, so what happens next? Well, so a lot of the people who see this miracle, they're moved to believe in Jesus. But there are some people who are just, like, deeply unsettled. They're actually the ones who go straight to the Pharisees, the religious leaders who are already suspicious of Jesus.

So instead of being amazed, they're like running off to tell on him. Wow, that's fascinating. It's so human though, right? Some people are inspired; some are threatened by the same event.

Oh, totally. And for the Pharisees, this is like the final straw. Oh boy.

They call a meeting of the Sanhedrin, that's like their Supreme Court, the highest Jewish council, to figure out what they're going to do about Jesus. So the pressure is on; what's their main concern at this point? Well, they're worried, like terrified, actually, that Jesus is growing in popularity. It's going to cause an uprising against Rome.

Right, they're under Roman occupation. They don't want to cause more trouble. Exactly.

They don't want to rock the boat and risk even more oppression from the Romans. So they're stuck between a rock and a hard place, trying to keep the peace, but also dealing with this, well, this potential religious and political disruptor right in their midst. It's a tense situation, to say the least.

So what happens in this council meeting? Okay, so this is where we meet this guy, Caiaphas, the high priest. He's a really fascinating figure. In what way? Well, he embodies this pragmatic, almost cynical approach to power.

He argues that it's better for one man, meaning Jesus, to die than for the whole nation to be destroyed by the Romans. Wow, that's a pretty chilling statement. He's basically saying, get rid of Jesus to keep things stable.

That's exactly the scholar's point. Caiaphas is putting politics above everything, even religious truth or justice. It's a pretty stark example of how power can distort even our most sacred values.

No kidding. But there's another layer to this whole thing that I find really intriguing. Okay, I'm listening.

Tell me more. Okay, so John, the one who wrote this gospel, he presents Caiaphas' statement as this unintentional prophecy. Unintentional? How so? He's saying that even in their scheming, God's plan is being worked out.

Caiaphas thinks he's just playing politics, but his words actually foreshadow Jesus' death as a sacrifice for many. So it's like he's unknowingly playing right into God's hands. Yeah, exactly.

It's like those moments in history where people do things, even for, you know, not so great reasons, but they end up serving a larger purpose. Right. It makes you think about all those times when something that seemed bad actually led to something good.

It really does. And after this, the tension in the story just keeps building. Like a ticking time bomb.

The authorities, they're actively plotting to kill Jesus. And Jesus, he knows his time is running out. So this whole raising of Lazarus, which at first seemed like this huge victory, it actually becomes the turning point that sets everything in motion.

Exactly. It leads to the final act of Jesus' life. And the scholar emphasizes that this is a major transition in the gospel.

Jesus withdraws from public ministry because he knows this confrontation with the authorities. It can't be avoided. It's like the calm before the storm, right? We know what's coming and it just makes the story that much more powerful.

Oh, definitely. This story really gets you thinking, you know; it's not just about, like, a miracle. It's so much deeper than that.

Yeah, it really is. The scholar makes a good point that the story of Lazarus, it's not just some, you know, spectacle. It's about thinking deeply about faith and life, death, the whole mission of Jesus.

Those are big questions we all face eventually. It's not just an ancient story, right? It feels so relevant even now. It makes you wonder, like, what do we believe about life after death? What gives us hope when we go through, you know, loss and suffering? Those are the big questions the story brings up.

And it also makes you wonder: how would we have reacted if we had seen Lazarus raised from the dead? I mean, would we have been like awestruck and believed right away? Or would we have been more like those people who ran off to report Jesus to the authorities? That's a good point. It's easy to just read this and be like, of course I believe. But if you really imagine yourself in that moment, it's probably not that simple.

No, not at all. We all have our own, you know, baggage, doubts, preconceived ideas. We bring all that to these kinds of experiences.

So it's not just, you know, saying you believe certain facts. It's about trust, a deep trust in a person, in this case, Jesus, who said he was the source of resurrection life. Right.

It's that leap of faith, being willing to trust even if we don't fully understand. And this story also shows all the different ways people experience and express faith. Oh, yeah, for sure.

You see that in how Martha and Mary reacted to their brother's death. One's more intellectual. The other is all emotion.

But Jesus, he meets them both right where they are. Exactly. And I think there's something comforting about that.

No matter how we wrestle with these big questions, we can find a place in this story. We're all included. Yeah, totally.

And the story of Lazarus, it doesn't just make us think about life after death. It's about how faith in Jesus can change our lives now. So it's not just about the future.

It's about how it affects us today. What does that look like, practically speaking? Well, we might not see a physical resurrection like this one. But we can experience the power of faith in Jesus in all sorts of ways.

In ways that bring hope and healing, even when things are painful and uncertain. It's powerful. It's a power that can change our relationships, our whole perspective, even how we interact with the world.

So even though, you know, we're all going to die someday, we don't have to be afraid of it. There's that hope, right? The promise of something more. Something that goes beyond death.

Yeah, that's a message that just keeps resonating through all these different cultures, through history. Absolutely. It's a story that challenges us and comforts us.

And in the end, it invites us to examine what we believe about life, death, and everything that comes after. Well, that's a great way to wrap up our deep dive into the story of Lazarus. It's been an amazing conversation.

And if this story has sparked something in you, if you're thinking about these questions of faith, life, and death, don't be afraid to keep exploring them. Talk to someone. Read.

Just sit and think. This journey of faith, it's a personal one. It's okay to ask questions, to wrestle with doubts.

But like we've seen with Lazarus, even when we're faced with death, there's always hope.