

**JOHN 11:5-16**  
**ROADBLOCKS TO SERVING!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 11 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

Last week we began our study of John chapter 11 and we talked about the focus of this chapter not necessarily being the raising of Lazarus from the dead, but it is about the glory of God through the raising of Lazarus from the dead!

Let me just fill in some of the details that will lead us to our study this morning.

A friend of Jesus, one whom Jesus loved, was very sick. And his sisters, Mary and Martha sent some friends of theirs to Jesus to let Him know that Lazarus was sick, very sick, he was dying.

In fact, we are told in John 11:17 that by the time Jesus and His men had reached Bethany, to the home of Mary and Martha, Lazarus was dead, and in the tomb already. He had been dead for four days!

Now, as we read this story, we may be wondering how a God of love could allow such a tragedy in the life of this family!

I want to deal with this for a minute because it will merge with what we will be talking about this morning – ***ROADBLOCKS TO SERVING!***

Back in the 1980's there was a bestselling book that dealt with this very issue.

This book, "***When Bad Things Happen to Good People***" was written by Rabbi Harold Kushner. Rabbi Kushner not only had to deal with tragedies within his own congregation of some 2,500 people, but he experienced it in his own life.

At the age of 3, his son Aaron was diagnosed with a condition called Progeria, which causes rapid aging. This child would look like an old man and would die in his teens which did occur only 2 days after his 14th birthday.

And Rabbi Kushner tried to understand why this was happening. He said, “. . . *I was living a more religiously committed life than most people I knew, people who had large, healthy families. . . . If God existed, if He was minimally fair, let alone loving and forgiving, how could He do this to me?*”

As he tried to understand why this was happening to him and his family, his perspective of God was becoming more and more distorted.

As he saw the pain and suffering of those in his congregation over death and illness, he said that “. . . *I find it very hard to tell them that life is fair, that God gives people what they deserve and need. Time after time, I have seen families and even whole communities unite in prayer for the recovery of a sick person, only to have their hopes and prayers mocked. I have seen the wrong people get sick, the wrong people hurt, the wrong people die young.*”

Rabbi Kushner’s conclusions to why Job suffered, why he and his family have suffered, and why others suffer, is based upon a humanistic approach and not a Scriptural approach.

He said, “*Are you capable of forgiving and loving God even when you have found out that He is not perfect, even when He has let you down and disappointed you by permitting bad luck and sickness and cruelty in His world, and permitting some of those things to happen to you? Can you learn to love and forgive Him despite His limitations, as Job does, and as you once learned to forgive and love your parents even though they were not wise, as strong, or as perfect as you needed them to be?*”

The logical conclusion we must come to regarding God is that He is not perfect, He is not always able to help us, He can and will let us down at times, just as our parents have done and will do.

Thus, if God is not fair, that would make Him unrighteous. If He was unrighteous in the things that He does that would make Him a sinner, and thus, like all sinners, we are to forgive God for His failures, for His limitations, just as we forgive man for his failures and limitations.

There is so much wrong with that kind of thinking but when we find ourselves in difficult situations, it is amazing the conclusions we can come to that are not accurate!

First of all, this premise of why bad things happen to good people is wrong.

What do I mean by that?

I mean that there are no good people, no, not even one! (Romans 3:9-10, Romans 3:23)

Now you may be thinking that is a copout on my part.

Not at all, it is true.

But let's just play this through with the idea that if God is all good then He would have to eliminate Evil! If He is all-powerful, then He could just eliminate evil.

Then what is the problem?

Evil is still around and thus, God must not be good, He must not be all powerful or He just doesn't care. That is the view that an atheist and a skeptic would have and even some Christians struggle with this, especially if they or a loved one are going through a very difficult time!

First of all, we need to understand that just because evil, sickness and other painful things are still around, doesn't mean that one day they won't be eliminated, they will!

For us as Christians, we rest in the fact that God is all-knowing and we aren't, that whatever happens to us God is aware, and He has what is best for our lives!

And yes, one day all this evil, sickness and sin will be done away with, read the book of Revelation and you will see that come to pass!

Listen to what Norm Geisler wrote as he takes this to the logical conclusion. He wrote,

***“The most powerful argument ever devised against the existence of God is this: ‘If an all-powerful God exists who created the universe, and if He is all-good who put morality into the heart of man to show us that He is a good and moral God - then why does evil exist in the world? If God is all-good so that He would eliminate evil; and if He is all-powerful so that He could eliminate evil, yet evil is not eliminated therefore - an all-good, all-powerful God cannot exist. He could be partly good and partly powerful but He can’t be both, because if He was all-good He would eliminate evil; if He was all-powerful He could eliminate evil and since evil has not been eliminated no such God exists.’”***

Like I have said, that is the logical conclusion that people come to. And please understand that is not what Norm Geisler believes, he is making a point and then his conclusion as he goes on to say, ***“Evil is a privation [hardship] or a lack. Evil is like rust to a car or rot to a tree. It’s a kind of parasite; it exists only in something else. The Bible teaches that a good God created a good universe but gave man a good thing called free will, which allowed for the possibility for evil to enter God’s universe and corrupt it.”***

That is the correct perspective to have. The paradise that God created in Genesis was very good. And then Adam sinned and as sin entered this world so did the effects of sin. Thus, paradise was lost when Adam sinned and we see that today, this world is far from a paradise, I don't care where you go. Yes, there may be some glimpses of the beauty, but it is not what God created, that was very good!

But the paradise lost in Genesis is the paradise regained in Revelation, as I have said.

Let me see if I can help you to understand this a little more.

Think about the Internet and all the good we can glean from using it. All the information we can glean from it.

And yet, look at all the evil that this promotes. The lives it has destroyed from pornography, relationships and-so-on.

Is the Internet evil?

No, the Internet is a tool for us to use but man has made it evil and that is true of this world, that was made good and then, when sin entered it, we see what has transpired and it seems to be getting worse and worse.

And please understand that God allows things to happen in our lives to help us to grow in the faith, to guide us, direct us and one day, ultimately, we will go to be with Him!

Like I have said, our study this morning is called – ***ROADBLOCKS TO SERVING!***

And we have all kinds of reasons for not serving and we will look at some of them as well as looking at what the Lord has called us to do – ***TO SERVE!***

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following points. They are,

***JOHN 11:5-7 – THE CALL***

***JOHN 11:8 – THE ROADBLOCK***

***JOHN 11:9-10 – THE ENCOURAGEMENT***

***JOHN 11:11-13 – THE CONFUSION***

***JOHN 11:14-15 – THE BIG PICTURE***

***JOHN 11:16 – MISSING THE POINT***

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 11, beginning in verse 5 as we study the Word of God and look at the topic of – ***ROADBLOCKS TO SERVING!***

## **JOHN 11**

### **VERSES 5-7**

I want you to take another look at John 11:5 again and I want you to notice that it says that Jesus “**loved**” Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

Now here's the thing.

Jesus didn't love them with just a brotherly type of love, a ***PHILEO*** love, but with an ***AGAPAO*** or an ***AGAPE*** love, an unconditional love!

I think many times we do as Mary and Martha did. We see our weaknesses and think that God's love is conditional towards us, a brotherly type of love. When in reality, it is an unconditional love.

There is nothing you can do to make God love you more and there is nothing you can do to make God love you less!

It is as Paul said in Romans 5:8, **“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

You see, God’s love towards us is so rich, it is so deep that He was willing to die for us when we in no way deserved it. That is how much He loved us and still loves us!

That means whatever you are facing, whatever you are going through, don’t deal with it on your own, try to figure your way out of it, or just lose hope. Rest in the Lord, give it to Him and let Him carry you through those times.

I can’t tell you how many times in my Christian life when I found myself in situations that I was so discouraged, so down, I was losing hope.

And then the Lord is there just waiting for me to look up and give Him those things that I am trying to carry on my own. I could not bear the burden on my own but how much easier it was and is when I let the Lord carry me!

It is as Isaiah 40:31 says, **“But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”**

So we have seen here the love that Jesus had for them and yet we are told, **“So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed there two more days in the place where He was.”** John 11:6.

Are you kidding me? How in the world is that love?

Jesus knew that Lazarus was sick, he was dying. In fact, Jesus already knows that Lazarus was dead, so why wait two more days. That seems so uncaring, so unloving, doesn't it? I thought He loved Mary and Martha and now, when they need Him most, He waits two more days!

When we look at this through human reasoning, it does seem uncaring and unloving, but we need to understand that God is all-knowing and thus, the things He does are perfect!

Ray Stedman put it like this regarding this delay. He wrote,

Why? That is the question we all ask. Why? Well, we ought to believe what John tells us. John says, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Therefore, because he loved them, he stayed two days longer where he was."

That is the tough thing to handle. When you have gone to God for help which you feel you desperately need, your heart is breaking over something and you need God to intervene, but nothing happens, the heavens are silent, there is no word at all, that is what is tough.

Has that ever happened to you? It has happened to me several times. When that does happen, we always interpret God's delays as God's denials. We say, "He didn't answer my prayer. Prayer doesn't work. What's the use? I've tried it. It doesn't work."

This is the usual reaction. With shameful heart, I have to admit that I have reacted the same way. But what this is telling us is that a delay in answer like that is not a sign of God's indifference or his failure to hear. It is a sign of his love. The delay will help us. It will not hurt us. It will make us stronger.

So Jesus deliberately delayed because he loved them and knew this would strengthen their faith as they learned the ultimate outcome when God would work.

Now, after that we are told in John 11:7, “**Then after this He said to the disciples, ‘Let us go to Judea again.’**”

Like I have said, I have called this – ***THE CALL!***

Jesus is calling His men together and He is telling them that it is now time to go to Bethany, to go and see Mary and Martha.

As we are going to see, this was not an easy thing for them to do because they, as well as Jesus, were not liked by the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem.

But Jesus is calling them to go with Him to Bethany and I think that is a good lesson for us. God calls us to do things, to stretch our faith and thus we must walk, we must go forward.

But He never tells us to walk alone. Our Good Shepherd is right there with us, leading the way.

Let me take a few minutes and look at some passages of Scripture that deal with us serving the Lord and others.

Jesus tells us in John 13:12-17, “**So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.’**”

Please understand that the washing of feet was left for the lowest of servants to do. We also need to remember that in those days they wore sandals and the roads they traveled on were dirt, so their feet would get very dirty.

Also, they did not sit at tables like we think of today and not like the painting of the Last Supper.

They laid down on the floor and ate off a low table, so their feet were close to each other. Thus, to wash them when you came to eat was very important.

Here, no one bothered to wash the feet of anyone, except Jesus did this and He washed all their feet.

Our Almighty God, the creator of Heaven and earth stooped down and washed the feet of the disciples.

Today, some feel that certain things are below them, they are more important than bending down and picking up garbage. That is very sad.

We are here to serve the Lord and it doesn't matter if it is teaching from the pulpit or the Sunday School classroom or working in the sound and radio ministry or the worship team or whatever. None of us, none of us are too big to do any work that God wants us to do. If there is a need, if something needs to be done and you see it, then do it.

And I love that Jesus says that if we do serve, we will be blessed. And let me say this. If we serve with a joyful heart, if we serve not wanting any recognition for what we have done, we will be blessed!

Paul talked about it in I Corinthians chapter 13, that all that we do needs to be rooted in love.

Just doing something for the church or someone is worthless if it is not done in love. I hope that makes sense. Our service needs to be done out of our love for God and for those you are serving!

Paul wrote in Colossians 3:23-24, “**And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.**”

That is important, that what we do we do our best because we are serving the Lord and men are blessed by the work that we do, and they can glorify our Father who is in heaven!

And please understand that I am not only speaking about the work you do in the church. This is speaking about ***WHATEVER YOU DO!***

***“But pastor Joe, you don’t know my boss, he is stupid, and he doesn’t like anything I do!”***

You miss the point. God is your boss; you might say, and you are serving Him no matter what your boss or even others may do.

And I do realize that it is not always easy. I have worked in hospitals for over thirty years, and I have seen my share of bosses who were not very nice and others who were very nice.

My prayer is that as the good ones and the bad ones saw my work, they would not see a difference because I was serving the Lord and my service to the Lord blessed those I cared for!

And one more, there are others but just listen to what we are told in Malachi 3:18, “**Then you shall again discern Between the righteous and the wicked, Between one who serves God And one who does not serve Him.**”

Keep in mind that the people of Malachi’s day were discouraged and thus, they felt that it wasn’t worth their trouble to serve God.

That is what we are told in Malachi 3:14-15, **“You have said, ‘It is useless to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, And that we have walked as mourners Before the Lord of hosts? So now we call the proud blessed, For those who do wickedness are raised up; They even tempt God and go free.’”**

God is showing them that it is not a vain thing, an empty thing to serve Him, to worship Him. There is coming a day of judgment for the wicked and a day of blessings for the righteous.

What had happened to them? Why were they so discouraged and not wanting to serve God?

They lost the perspective of God because they were not doing the things that they needed to so that they could have a correct perspective and that would lead to action!

To get a correct perspective on things we need to go into the house of God, church.

We need to read the Word of God.

And we need to be in fellowship of other believers.

We are not called to sit back and do nothing; we are to serve just as our Lord has shown us.

Remember what we are told in Mark 10:45, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

Are you willing to do that for others as you serve the Lord?

If not, you need to ask yourself, why? Why won't you?

If our Lord and Savior, Almighty God came to serve are we saying we are better than He is?

Of course not and thus, may we serve as we get – ***THE CALL!***

As we read on, we will see – ***THE ROADBLOCK!***

VERSES 8

So, Jesus tells His men, *“Let’s go to Judea!”*

And they tell Him, *“Are You kidding me? They want to kill You! They have tried before; do You want them to try again?”*

Remember in the last chapter the Jewish religious leaders wanted to stone Jesus to death because He claimed to be God. And He is but they refused to accept that fact.

And now Jesus wants to go back to Jerusalem where they want to kill Him! Well, not exactly to Jerusalem, but Bethany, which was only some two miles from Jerusalem!

You can see why the disciples were worried.

And here, the **ROADBLOCK** to serving or ministry is **FEAR!**

Now there are other **ROADBLOCKS** to serving or ministry and I will mention them and then we will deal with this issue of **FEAR** because **FEAR** stops us many times from doing what God has called us to do and it does play a role in many of the other reasons why we don’t serve.

Sometimes it is as simple as **PROCRASTINATION**. We are just waiting and waiting, and the days go by, the months go by, and the years go by and nothing.

James reminds us, **“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”** James 4:17.

That is pretty simple. We may not like it but if you know what you should be doing and you are not doing it, then James tells us it is a sin to you.

And, included in that is another reason why people don’t serve, it is just **STUBBORN REFUSAL**. God has called you to do something, and you just refuse because you don’t want to do it.

Another reason people don't serve is that they feel that they are ***NOT TALENTED ENOUGH OR EDUCATED ENOUGH.***

Let's think about that for a minute. If God has called you to do something, do you really think He is going to let you fail?

Of course not.

In fact, God not only prepares you for the work that you are to do, but He also prepares the work for you!

I know, you may not agree with that but listen to what Paul said in Philippians 2:12-13, **“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”**

Here is the key. Paul tells us that we are to **“work out”** not ***“work to get in”*** our salvation.

His point is simple, since God has worked in you, now let that flow out into your actions, the things you are doing, bear fruit in your life showing you are abiding in Him!

You see God put it in you and now you must work it out in your daily life. You must humble yourself and surrender your life to God, be in obedience to what He has said, like Jesus demonstrated for us, and that is how it starts to look as it's working its way out into your life.

Keep in mind that the verb **“work out”** carries the meaning of ***“work to full completion,”*** such as working out a problem in mathematics.

In Paul's day it was also used for ***“working a mine,”*** that is, getting out of the mine all the valuable ore possible.

In other words, Paul is telling us that we are to reach for our full potential in all that we do for God's glory and that is only going to be accomplished as we surrender our lives fully to His will and purposes!

Also, Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:10, **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”**

I love the way The Amplified Bible puts this verse. Listen closely. It says, **“For we are God's [own] handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus, [born anew] that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live].”**

Is that awesome! God has created us, or really recreated us in Christ, and the purpose is to do good works.

And the exciting thing to me is that He has prepared all the work that I am to do in this life, all the work you are to do in this life beforehand. All we must do is walk in the path that He has set for us. And that is the problem many times, we don't feel we are talented enough or educated enough to do them and you are wrong.

Yes, you may not be talented enough. You may not be educated enough. But you have been with Jesus and through Him you and I can do all things that He wants us to do. We have to rely on Him, depend upon Him!

If we think we can do it because we are talented, we are educated, then we are in trouble because we have left God out and He will let us fail so that we can look up to Him and depend upon Him!

Sometimes the problem is ***PEOPLE!***

What do I mean by that?

I mean that some people rub us the wrong way, we don't like them, they said something we did not like, we are mad at them, they don't deserve it.

What is the problem with that kind of thinking?

It is **WRONG!**

Okay, don't get mad at me on that one, it is true.

Did the Jewish religious leaders deserve Jesus coming to them and sharing the truths of God with them?

Of course they didn't, they were opposed to Jesus and yet, He kept coming until the end, when they had passed that point of no return.

And let's think about this for a minute.

Do we deserve all that God has given to us, is giving to us and will give to us?

Of course we don't and yet God loves us and we are to love others as He has loved us.

Over the years I have poured my heart into many different people here at Calvary and many of them have come against me, said things about me that were not true, even left the church.

And I thought about that, and I wondered why God would allow me to spend all that time pouring into them when He knew that they would come against me.

And the basic reason is simple. I would not have loved them, been as close to them as I was if I knew what they were going to do to me.

Even with all that, I still love them, would help them if they needed help, why?

Because the Lord has done that with me, and now He tells me to go and do the same.

Okay, maybe you need a Scripture verse to convince you because maybe I haven't.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:32, “**And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**”

And in Colossians 3:13 Paul wrote, “**bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.**”

When you see that it is hard to justify why you won't forgive and serve, minister to others. It is not that you can't, it is that you won't!

Let's face it, if we're honest, we aren't very openhanded with forgiveness and we tend to withhold it until we feel ready, or the offender shows some indication of their remorse.

Some of us have been known to say; “*I'm praying and asking God to help me to forgive.*”

That sounds correct, doesn't it! The problem with that is that it isn't biblical. Like I have said, it is not that you can't forgive someone, it is a choice on your part.

And let me say this, forgiving someone is an act of obedience, not a feeling. Jesus wasn't suggesting we forgive one another, He was commanding us to!

And the big reason we don't serve and probably the main reason and the other reasons have this incorporated within it is ***FEAR!***

Why are we fearful?

Because we have lost ***HOPE!***

We are looking at the work, we are looking at what needs to be done, we are looking at this and looking at that and we lose hope because we are not looking to God.

Remember, He not only created us for service, but He created the work for us and thus, it is a perfect fit.

I am not saying it is something that we are comfortable doing, but it is what God wants us to do and it is a perfect fit!

I have told you before, that speaking in front of people was something that I truly feared. That would be the last thing I wanted to do. But God called me, and I took those steps of faith with teaching a home Bible study and then, as He brought me up here to Calvary Chapel, I continued to walk in obedience to Him and He not only equipped the work for me but me for the work and He has done the same with you for whatever ministry, whatever service He has called you to do.

Don't fear, walk by faith!

A good example of this was a godly King in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Jehoshaphat brought spiritual reform to the nation. And it is after he brought the people back to God and brought civil order to the nation, we now see three nations rise up against the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

These nations were the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Edomites,

As Jehoshaphat gets word that these nations are gathered around the western shore of the Dead Sea, and he is fearful.

That is a normal human response.

Now when this happens there are only two things that we can do. We can become fearful, incapacitated, let this fear paralyze us and keep us away from the Lord, away from the work that He wants to do.

Or it can cause us to seek the Lord, to bring our fears to Him and cast them at His feet and do the work that God has called us to do. That is what we see Jehoshaphat do here!

Keep in mind that it is three nations against one, so they are outnumbered. There is no hope from a human perspective. And what does Jehoshaphat do?

Jehoshaphat gathers the nation together, they are fasting and praying, seeking direction from the Lord. What a great idea when you are overwhelmed, the situation is scary that you are in, fast and pray!

And in this prayer Jehoshaphat remembers how God has delivered the children of Israel in the past and that was to not only encourage him, but the nation to trust in the Lord, rest in Him.

I want you to notice here that when Jehoshaphat prayed, he prayed with the knowledge and understanding of God's Word.

What a great lesson for us, to trust in the promises of God for us.

It is as Spurgeon wrote, *"I like to plunge my hand into the promises, and then I find myself able to grasp with a grip of determination the mighty faithfulness of God. An omnipotent plea with God is: 'Do as thou hast said.'"*

After all that listen to the perspective that Jehoshaphat has.

In II Chronicles 20:12 we are told, **"O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You."**

Here is a proper perspective of the situation. They had no strength. They could not do it on their own. They did not know what to do. And thus, the only thing they can do is set their eyes upon the Lord!

How true for us. Many situations can overwhelm us in the work that God has called us to do. We have no strength. We cannot do it on our own. We don't know what to do. And all we can do, and I don't mean that lightly and I guess I should say, the best thing we can do is focus our eyes on the Lord to see us through and guide us, give us direction, give us the victory!

Early on in my ministry I use to worry a lot. But through the years the Lord has taught me to rest in Him. Am I there yet? No, like all of you, I am still learning but I am farther along than years ago. Praise God for that.

You see, what we see here is a total dependence upon God.

It is as Psalm 46:1-2 says, **“God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”**

It is when we lose the consciousness of God in our life that things get out of focus, and we become anxious and terrified.

Remember what David said in Psalm 31:24, **“Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart, All you who hope in the LORD.”**

I like the way that Spurgeon saw this situation that they were in and where their eyes were focused.

He wrote, *“They said, ‘Our eyes are upon thee.’ What did they mean by that? They meant, ‘Lord, if help does come, it must come from thee. We are looking to thee for it. It cannot come from anywhere else, so we look to thee. But we believe it will come, men will not look for that which they know will not come. We feel sure it will come, but we do not know how, so we are looking; we do not know when, but we are looking. We do not know what thou wouldst have us to do, but as the servant looks to her mistress, so are we looking to thee, Lord. Lord, we are looking.’”*

We need to place our eyes upon God and when we do, we will be stable, He will see us through all that life has thrown our way and we will be able to serve Him, no matter what, because we will serve in the strength of the Lord!

It is as Jehoshaphat said, **“... For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.”**

May our eyes be upon the Lord and as they are, we can rest in Him instead of being fearful in the work that is before us like the disciples of Jesus were.

Again, listen to what Jesus said to His men, **“... ‘Let us go to Judea again.’”** John 11:7.

Jesus did not say that they should go alone, but that He was going to be with them. Thus, as the Good Shepherd leads us, may we follow and do the work that He has called us to do.

There are many **ROADBLOCKS** that the enemy places in our way to discourage us and stop us from serving in the body of Christ and in the communities that we live in.

And as discouraged as we may be, as discouraged and fearful as the disciples of Jesus were to go to Jerusalem, we see **THE ENCOURAGEMENT** that Jesus gives to them.

VERSES 9-10

We understand that it is much easier to work when the sun is out, especially back in those days when they did not have electricity.

But there is a spiritual application that Jesus is making with this light and darkness.

Light is a picture of holiness, truth, moral purity and so on.

Darkness, on the other hand, is a picture of evil, error, moral impurity and so on.

So what we see here is Jesus calling them, and us to walk in obedience to the Word of God and the will of God!

Also, we all have an allotted amount of time to live on this earth, a day.

And the night can also be a picture of when that time is over.

Listen to what one writer had to say regarding this. He wrote,

The spiritual meaning of the Lord's words is as follows: The Lord Jesus was walking in perfect obedience to the will of [His Father] God. There was thus no danger of His being killed before the appointed time. He would be preserved until His work was done.

In a sense this is true of every believer - if we are walking in fellowship with the Lord and doing His will, there is no power on earth that can kill us before God's appointed time.

- William MacDonald

How true that is. You can be in the most dangerous part of the world, in the will of God, and it will be the safest place in the world.

But you can also be in a rubber room and out of the will of God and it will be the most dangerous place in the world for you.

As you walk in the will of God you don't have to worry about dying before the appointed time that God has for you.

Thus, we are going to see that Jesus is not worried, He knows the time the Father has allotted for Him, and He will work, as dangerous as it may be, because the night is coming, the cross of Calvary is close, when the work will be finished.

Again, people were fearful about me going to Russia. But for me, I knew what the Lord had called me to do, and I rested in that truth, His promise to me to bring me to Russia.

May we use the time we have on this earth to the fullest, serving the Lord all the days of our lives.

What an *ENCOURAGEMENT* that must have been to them.

But we also see – *THE CONFUSION!*

### VERSES 11-13

Remember back in John 11:4, as they found out that Lazarus was on his deathbed and Jesus said, “... **‘This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.’**”

Now here we see Jesus tell His men that Lazarus is asleep and that He is going to him to wake him up! What is that about?

First of all, when a sinner dies in his sins he is separated from God for eternity.

But a person who is born again, saved, does not die but goes to sleep, as the Bible puts it.

Now we are not talking about soul sleep here. Jesus is speaking of the body, in a sense, goes to sleep, but it will be resurrected one day, at the Rapture!

You see, this body is just a temporary dwelling place, a tent you might say, for our soul and spirits to dwell in.

Thus, the moment this body ceases to function, when our brain waves are flat-lined, we are with the Lord.

You see, we don't really die, we just move from this tent to the mansion, a new body that will never get sick or die, and we will be with the Lord for eternity!

But the disciples of Jesus did not get it, they were *CONFUSED!*

They said to Jesus, “... **‘Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.’**”

Again, what they were told by those who came from Mary and Martha was that Lazarus was dying, not sleeping. But again, they did not listen but heard what they wanted to hear, and it was wrong, completely wrong.

And that leads us to our next point – ***THE BIG PICTURE!***

#### VERSES 14-15

Jesus tells us what is going on with Lazarus, He knew that “**Lazarus is dead.**”

And notice it is in the past tense because he has been dead for three days already!

Now by the time Jesus makes it to Bethany he will be dead for four days, for it is a day's journey to Bethany. He was already in the tomb and has been there for at least three days!

Why the wait by Jesus and why does God wait many times to answer our prayers?

Listen carefully, “***So we may learn that He often permits us to pass into profounder darkness, and deeper mysteries of pain, in order that we may prove more perfectly His power.***”

(Morgan)

When all our efforts, all our plans, all that we have put together to fix the problem or do the work has failed, we then look to Him and seek help. We should have started with that first and last, seeking direction, help, deliverance or whatever the case may be from the Lord!

Now we talked about one reason for the wait, but again, why four days, why not two or even three?

Jesus deliberately waited to bring Lazarus back from the dead until he had been in the tomb four days.

Listen carefully to why the four days. We are told, *“Lightfoot quotes a remarkable tradition of Ben Kaphra: ‘Grief reaches its height on the third day. For three days the spirit hovers about the tomb, if perchance it may return to the body. But when it sees the fashion of the countenance changed, it retires and abandons the body.’”* (Dods)

So, on day four the body has been corrupted, there is no more hope, at least with the traditions that they believed. I am not saying that they were right on this, but it is what they believed.

And what Jesus wanted them to see is that when all hope is gone, even with their misguided beliefs, God can still work and does work!

Now John 11:15 is a little strange as Jesus says, **“And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there . . .”**

It almost seems like Jesus was glad that Lazarus was dead. What is the problem with that kind of logic, that kind of thinking?

It is wrong!

Why is it wrong?

Because you have to read the rest of the verse. Jesus said, “**And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.**”

Jesus is not glad that Lazarus is dead but that by seeing Him raise Lazarus from the dead, that their faith would grow!

I think we see that in our own lives as we see the hand of God move upon our lives. Our faith grows!

I can spend hours talking about the hand of God working in and through this church. How He raised up people for various ministries and has provided for us and it just blesses me and strengthens my faith, and I am sure it does yours as well.

For us, we need to see – ***THE BIG PICTURE!***

Especially in the days we are living in. It is not time to cower in fear but to boldly serve the Lord!

How can we do that?

By understanding that God is in control, that this is not our home, and we are to occupy or serve the Lord to the fullest in the days we are living in. We are to use the opportunities that come our way to share the Gospel message. May we not let fear stop us.

And also, may we not lose sight of ***THE BIG PICTURE*** because, if we do, we are – ***MISSING THE POINT!***

VERSE 16

First of all, is he called Thomas or Didymus? Both!

Let me explain. **“All Jews in those days had two names – one a Hebrew name by which a man was known in his own circle, the other a Greek name by which he was known in a wider circle. *Thomas is the Hebrew and Didymus the Greek for a twin.*”** (Barclay)

Now you can look at the remarks of Thomas two ways.

First, he was willing to die for the Lord, he was a true disciple.

There are many who feel that this is showing us the bold faith of Thomas. I don't think that is what is going on here.

I think Thomas was a fatalist, **“*Well, if He goes, they will kill Him, so we might as well go with Him and die with Him!*”**

Do you know what this syndrome is called?

It is called the Eyore syndrome! No, not really, I just made that up, but it does fit the picture. You know Eyore from Winnie the Pooh, right? The doom and gloom donkey who said things like, **“*It's not much of a tail, but I'm sort of attached to it.*”**

Or, when Winnie the Pooh asked, **“*Lovely day, isn't it?*”** And Eeyore responds in true Eeyore fashion: open with something affirmative and then bring in the punch line for a slam dunk. **“*If it is a good morning, which I doubt.*”**

We should not be gloom and doom, but the joy of the Lord should fill our lives and really, overflow our lives and touch the lives of others. There is joy in the **LORD!**

Thomas **MISSED THE POINT!**

They were not going there to die, but to see Lazarus raised from the dead!

I think many Christians today are missing the point. We are not going to serve the Lord to die, we are serving the Lord in the abundant life that He has given to us!

That is how people should see us, not people of discouragement but encouragement.

Not faithless people but faithful people!

And the idea here is that it does not matter the situation, our hope is in the Lord, our joy is in the Lord, and our faith is in the Lord!

Are you willing to walk by faith? Are you willing to serve the Lord at whatever capacity He asks you to serve? You should be able to!

Today, many people in the world are facing a greater fear than they have ever felt in their lifetime. Crises of all kinds, and abundant misinformation, is taking our sanity on a never-ending roller coaster ride. Our world has never felt less peace-filled and more fear-filled.

And yet, if our lives are focused on the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, it is there we will find peace in the midst of the storms of life, and we will see those **ROADBLOCKS** for ministry be blown away!

I pray that you have been encouraged to seek direction from the Lord in the work He wants you to do and then, walk accordingly.

As I close this morning, I want to share this story with you. We are told,

Recently I glimpsed the glory of finishing a task well. At Arlington National Cemetery, I saw the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns. I had watched that ceremony several times before, always moved by its solemnity [somberness] and precision.

This time, however, I witnessed something new.

When the changing of the guard was completed, the commanding officer asked us to remain standing in silence.

Sergeant Jennings had completed 27 months of this special duty and wanted now to pay his respect to the unknown soldiers. A guard escorted Jennings' family to a place of honor.

The commanding officer handed Jennings four roses.

Jennings approached the great Tomb of the Unknown Soldier from the First World War, knelt, and placed a rose before it.

Then he moved with solemn dignity to the tombs honoring unknown soldiers from the Second World War, and the wars in Korea and Vietnam, kneeling to place one red rose upon each.

He returned to his commanding officer and stood before him.

At attention, with their eyes locked, they shook hands. Then Sergeant Jennings carefully removed his white gloves and returned them, his work finished. He saluted his officer, greeted his family, and left.

With tears running down my face I thought of standing before my Lord Jesus someday, taking off my gloves and handing them to him.

- More Perfect Illustrations for Every Topic and Occasion

Yes, our days are limited on this earth, may we serve the Lord each and every day of our lives because someday we will end the work and go to be with the one that we love, the one we have served, Jesus Christ!