

7 Things To Do in Suffering

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, in the New Covenant, we know what those living under the Old Testament did not, and that is that Jesus' coming would take place in two comings.
- They only knew he was coming, and there were passages that spoke of his sufferings and his glories, and it was only when he came that it was clearly seen that, yes, he was to come first to suffer for sin, to be rejected, and to die in humiliation, rising again and ascending into heaven, and then to come again the second time.
- To come the first time to accomplish that work of redemption, and then to come a second time, to bring the application of that redemption to its completion and fulfillment.
- We sing of that day with joyful anticipation. Lo, behold, he comes. Lo, behold, he comes with clouds descending, What's your favorite sinner slain?
- Thousand, thousand saints attending, Swell the triumph of his train. Alleluia, alleluia, God appears on earth to ring.
- [1 : 4 5] Every eye shall now behold Him, broken dreadful majesty. Those who said and got and stole Him, fierce and nailed Him to the tree.
- Deeply waiting, deeply waiting, shall the true Messiah see. Every island, sea and mountain, never shall be afraid.
- All who ate Him, lost the crowned, near the trump proclaim the day. Come to judgment, come to judgment, come to judgment, come away.
- Now redemption of expectancy in solemn hope of fear.
- All His saints by hand rejected, Thou shalt meet Him in the air.
- [3 : 3 6] All I know, O come with me, O come with me. Alleluia, come forth now.
- Take your scriptures and turn to John chapter 11. And we're going to read the first 16 verses.
- Now a man named Lazarus was sick.
- He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and his 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.
- So the sister sent word to Jesus, Lord, the one you love is sick. When he heard this, Jesus said, This sickness will not end in death.
- [4 : 4 6] 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. Then he said to his disciples, Let us go back to Judea.
- But Rabbi, they said, A short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you're going back there? Jesus answered, 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.

After he had said this, he went on to tell them, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I'm going there to wake him up. His disciples replied, Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.

[5 : 47] Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, 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.

Then Thomas, called Didymus, said to the rest of the disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. Come, Pastor Aaron, and open this passage to us.

Well, it is good to be back with you all, and to have the opportunity to preach God's word to you. I love coming back to Grace Fellowship Church, and glad that you welcome me back to preach.

John 11, that we've just read from a little bit later than the verses that we read, records one of the most remarkable miracles of the ministry of Jesus.

It's the raising of Lazarus from the dead. It's the part that we didn't get to in the reading, where Lazarus is miraculously raised by the Savior Jesus from the dead.

[7 : 09] And that powerful work of Jesus in raising Lazarus from the dead was a demonstration that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. I think that's why the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle John to write it down, was to demonstrate that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

This miracle proves that. In advance of Jesus' own resurrection from the dead, which would come not too much later. However, that's not what we're mainly going to focus on tonight, which is why we read the first 16 verses and not the next however many it would have taken to get to the resurrection of Lazarus.

I think there's real value for us in thinking together tonight about not just the resurrection of Lazarus, but the sickness and the death of Lazarus and what we might be able to learn from that.

How far can I wander without getting off the camera? Okay. All right. Okay. All right. At home, I'm tethered.

Or at our church, I'm tied down to a mic that only lets me go about that far. So I just had some freedom there and I wasn't sure what to do with it. So we're not going to focus on the resurrection of Lazarus tonight.

[8 : 39] We will think about that to a degree, but I want to think about the sickness and the death of Lazarus because I think that shows us some really helpful truths about our Savior Jesus.

I think it's worth contemplating those things together. And so let's do just a little bit of background and context from these verses and then I want to get into some things we can learn from the sickness and death of Lazarus.

So a little bit of background. There's a family. They live in this little town of Bethany, not far from Jerusalem. And it consists, the family consists, as much as we know, of a brother, Lazarus, and two sisters, Mary and Martha.

And you see all that right there in verse one. It seems likely that John's readers would have been familiar with the other Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It looks like John wrote a little bit later than them, so they probably, John's readers probably would be familiar with the material Matthew, Mark, and Luke, or at least other parts of the life of Christ.

So they may well have known about the account in Luke chapter 10 where Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha. And there's a well-known interaction. We're not going to get into all of that.

[9 : 48] But that likely, possibly, at least would have been known to John's readers, some familiarity with this family of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.

Now, we don't know all of the history of the interaction between Jesus and this family, but they were dear to Jesus. He loved them. John tells us here in verse two that it's this Mary who would, as he records in the next chapter, John 12, who would anoint Jesus' feet with perfume and wipe his feet with her hair.

That's the Mary. Jesus' connection with his family is almost unlike any other that we see in his life and ministry. The language of affection and friendship, you just don't see between Jesus and other people that he interacted with.

There's the apostle John who is the disciple whom Jesus loved. We think that's who the disciple who Jesus loved is. We think it's John. But outside of that, in Mary and Martha and Lazarus, you don't really see this kind of language in reference to Jesus.

But look at it here in verse three. The sister is sent to him saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill. And John affirms that, as John's the one telling the account in verse five.

[11 : 03] Now, Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. And then Jesus himself, down in verse 11, calls Lazarus our friend, one who's loved.

Yeah, in verse 11, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep. It's the language of close relationship. Jesus' relationship with Mary and Martha and Lazarus was closer than, really, we see described anywhere else in the Gospels.

He loved them. And they loved him. And now this Lazarus, verse three, is sick. So sick that he dies, as we find in verses 11 and 14.

But after getting the message of his sickness, Jesus doesn't immediately go and heal him. Or he doesn't just speak the word from where he is, right there, and heal him from a distance.

Lazarus is in Bethany, down in Judea. Jesus is a little bit north of there. He's probably not all the way up in Galilee. But he doesn't go and heal him. He doesn't speak a word and heal him.

[12 : 09] He waits a couple of days before going. And by the time they depart to go, he knows that Lazarus is already dead. He describes it in verse 11 in terms of sleep for his disciples.

Our friend Lazarus, verse 11, has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him. The disciples mistake that for talking about real sleep. Well, if he's asleep, he's going to wake up. No worries.

And they don't want to go back to Jerusalem because they don't want to face persecution. We'll talk a little bit about that. So they're like, no, he's asleep and he's fine. And she says, no, no.

Listen, what I mean is that he has died. And he says that explicitly for them in verses 14 and 15. Then Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus has died.

And that sets us the stage then for us to draw some insight from these verses that we would do well to learn from. And so tonight, I want to talk from these verses about seven things to do when you or a loved one is sick or suffering in some other way.

[13 : 13] And before you go, whoa, what happened to him? He's gone all self-help on us. He's gone felt needs. Seven steps to a better you. Hang with me. I think you'll see all seven of them come right out of this text.

Seven things to do when you or a loved one is sick or is suffering in some other way. The specific context here, though, is physical sickness and death.

Right, the first thing that we can learn from this passage that I want to draw our attention to is go straight to Jesus. If you or a loved one is sick, go straight to Jesus. Pretty straightforward, pretty clear right on the surface of the text.

What do Mary and Martha do when their beloved Lazarus, their beloved brother, falls ill? Look at verse three. So the sisters sent to him, to Jesus, saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill.

They go straight to Jesus. They send word to him. And while it's just information, the one that you love is sick, they just, sort of a statement of fact that they give Jesus, it seems what's driving them is a desire for him to come and to heal Lazarus, to make him well.

[14 : 21] They're saying, Lord, the one that you love is sick is a request. Come and heal him, please. They must know of Jesus' power to heal and they want that exercised on behalf of their beloved brother.

You see that in what they say later. And you can look later in the passage with me. When Jesus arrives, humanly speaking, he arrives too late. Lazarus is dead and in the grave.

And look at what Martha says. She goes to meet him when she hears that he's coming in verse 21. Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Mary repeats the same thing when she hears that Jesus is there. Verse 32. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet saying to him, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

They've got faith that Jesus can heal. And so they go to the one that they know, the one that they know loves them, and the one that they know is able to heal their brother.

[15 : 25] And I wonder tonight, is that your instinct? Is that your first thought when you fall ill or someone you love falls ill?

Do you go straight to Jesus? Yes, you should call the doctor. You should call 911 if it's an emergency. Go to the hospital, right? Don't neglect all of those things. God calls us to live wisely in this world.

It's wise to do those things. You're responsible. Do those things. But is your instinct one of despair? I'm sick. Oh no, my loved one is sick. Worry? Immediately concerned about medical bills?

I know I'm going to have to see the doctor. I'm going to pay for this? Wondering what in the world you will do if your loved one dies or what they will do if you die.

Those are all things that you'll have to think about during sickness. Think about how to pay the bills. What might happen if your sickness is so bad that you might not live? But do you go straight to Jesus?

[16 : 29] Sometimes children's songs get it just exactly right. Jesus loves me. This I know. So I'm going to go to Him. That's what Mary and Martha do. Jesus loves us.

He loves Lazarus. And so we're going to go to Him. Lord, the one that you love is sick. I don't know what His response will be.

It might be surprising. It might even be disappointing in the moment. Mary and Martha were disappointed. Lord, if you had been here you wouldn't have died. They were disappointed with Jesus' response. You might well be also.

But do you go? Pour out your heart to Him. Do you make your request and desires known? Do you tell Him how you're feeling and express your concerns and your fears to Him?

Go to Jesus. He loves you, child of God. He welcomes you. Straight to Jesus when you're suffering. Sickness or suffering in some other way. Immediately. Straight away to the Lord Jesus.

[17 : 30] Mary and Martha went straight for Him. and don't let His physical absence hinder you. In fact, you really got like Jesus isn't on the scene anymore. I can't go to Him. You've got quicker access to Jesus than Mary and Martha did.

They had to send a messenger out of Judea and go find Him and get Him. You can talk to Him right where you sit tonight. While I'm preaching you can talk to Him.

And go straight to Him. You don't have to send a messenger. You don't need a priest to pray for you. Just cry out. And He will hear you. He knows you by name. You're His sheep.

Jesus has just gotten done talking about how He's the Good Shepherd in John 10. You're one of His sheep. He knows you. He calls you by name. He loves you and He'll receive you.

First thing to do when you or a loved one is sick is to go to Jesus. Right? Thing number two. Don't be surprised. Listen, Lazarus got sick.

[18 : 33] This guy was loved by Jesus. We've just seen that and it doesn't eliminate the reality that we read here in verse one. Now a certain man was ill and you might expect anybody else's name except Lazarus because Lazarus was close to Jesus.

He was his friend. He loved him. But the one that got sick was Lazarus. Even someone with that close of a relationship with Jesus doesn't avoid suffering and death.

You might think, well, if I have a really good relationship with Jesus then I'm going to receive blessings and things are going to go pretty well for me. Listen, that's the health, wealth, and prosperity non-gospel and you can take that and you can flush it down the toilet.

It is a lie from Satan to crush the faith of the saints and to lead them into guilt and despair and to lead them away from Jesus.

When people say, you follow Jesus and then everything's going to go well. You're going to help, wealth, and prosperity. It is to lead you astray from Jesus. Not to follow him. There's no, well, if you're in a really good relationship with Jesus, you can expect to enjoy an easy, comfortable life in this world.

[19 : 47] Lazarus, Mary, and Martha blow that clean out of the water. You might point to his resurrection a little bit later but the suffering they endured before that was very real and Lazarus would die again.

Lazarus got sick. We shouldn't be surprised when we do. There's another aspect of this, don't be surprised. It's Jesus and the disciples being persecuted.

There's other things besides Lazarus' sickness and death in here. And Jesus, who is sinless, did not manage to avoid suffering. Jesus, the sinless one, perfect relationship with God, that didn't keep him from suffering.

It wasn't health, wealth, and prosperity for Jesus. He was persecuted and John, in his gospel, shows this crescendo of hate and rejection of Jesus through his ministry that culminates at the cross.

And so, when he suggests returning to Judea, he's just left Judea and the religious leaders are not happy with him. They were picking up stones to kill him. They didn't like what he said.

[20 : 57] That's in John 10, 31, the Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Things are not going well in Judea for Jesus. They don't like what he says, that he's the son of God, that he's God himself. And so, the disciples, when Jesus says, hey, let's go back to Judea, back to Mary and Martha and Lazarus, they're like, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm, we're going to suffer if we go back there.

You see that in verses 7 and 8? Then after this, he said to the disciples, let us go to Judea again. And the disciples said to him, Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you and are you going there again?

Let's make sure you're thinking clearly about this, Lord. As though we need to help Jesus think clearly. They know it means suffering, though. That's the point. They're not surprised at that.

They're not going, oh, we shouldn't suffer. We shouldn't expect that. They expect it. And so, that's why they're hesitant. Look at Thomas down in verse 16. So Thomas called the twin, said to his fellow disciples, let us also go that we may die with him.

I honestly don't know if that is really bold courage and faith on Thomas' part or if it's kind of a resigned hopelessness. It's hard to say. But for our point, either way, in some ways, it doesn't matter.

[22 : 11] He's expecting suffering. They want to avoid it, but they don't seem surprised by it. So what about us, friends?

Are we surprised when suffering comes? Are we surprised when illness comes, when difficulty comes? Jesus later says this right out, John 15, 20. Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. Or how about Peter? Who would have been here for this? 1 Peter 4, 12 and 13.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you. Did you hear it? Do not be surprised. at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you.

But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. Are you suffering? Are you suffering deeply?

[23 : 16] It might be physical. It might be persecution. It might be financial. Emotional. But as long as we are in this world marred by sin, marred by ourselves in our own sin, awaiting the appearing of our Savior Jesus that we've sung about tonight, as long as we're in this world, we can expect to deal with the effects of that sin.

We live in a fallen world. It's full of sin and sinners. And we've got some of it remaining in our own hearts. And so as long as we live in that world, we should expect to feel the effects of it.

And that means suffering. And sometimes suffering sickness. And severely so. Those that Jesus loves are not exempt.

And so don't be surprised. Lazarus suffered. Jesus and his disciples suffered. And so will you. As unpopular as it may be to say. How does that help us?

Well, this is again where the prosperity gospel, non-gospel, has done so much damage. It's not a lack of faith that brings suffering in our lives. It's sinful people living in a sinful world.

[24 : 33] And if you are eagerly anticipating something completely unrealistic like no suffering, like maybe I'm eagerly anticipating when I wake up tomorrow morning that there's going to be a package on my front doorstep with a million dollars in it.

I have no good reason to expect that. But if I get that in my head, like, that's happening. And I expect it. And I'm believing that it's coming. And I go and I look on my front porch tomorrow morning and there's just some leaves left that didn't get cleaned up at the end of fall.

And if you're expecting something with no good reason to expect it, when it doesn't come, it will be all the harder to deal with that suffering in our cases we're talking about here tonight when it comes.

If I'm expecting a smooth, comfortable life and here comes life-threatening illness that totally catches me off guard, that's not good. That's not going to go well. I'm not talking about walking around always waiting for the sky to fall, assuming that the worst is going to happen as you walk through this world.

But as you do walk through this world as a child of God, you should expect that it will involve suffering. Don't be surprised. That can help us be better prepared.

[25 : 53] All right, so go straight to Jesus. Don't be surprised. Third, rejoice. And this one's hard. Also might be a little bit more obscure in this passage.

You're familiar, no doubt, with James 1, 2 through 4. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and let steadfastness have its full effect.

You may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. And I think Jesus models that for us here, rejoicing in suffering. Did you notice verses 14 and 15? Jump down there with me again for a moment.

Verse 14, then Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus has died and for your sake I am glad. I rejoice. That's the word. I'm glad. But I rejoice that I was not there so that you may believe.

But let us go to him. Jesus rejoiced. He was glad that he wasn't there to heal Lazarus. And it was for their sake. It was for the building. It was for their faith that they would believe. And what he's going to do for Lazarus is far more faith building and strengthening than healing him and keeping him from dying would have been.

[27 : 05] It would have strengthened their faith to see Jesus heal Lazarus. It will do so far more to see him raise him from the dead. Jesus knows this.

They don't know it yet. And so Jesus is able to rejoice knowing that much good is going to come for their faith. But it meant suffering.

It meant suffering for Lazarus, for Mary, for Martha, for the disciples. Remember, Lazarus is our friend, friend of the disciples as well. Sad for them that he was sick. And died.

And so maybe you say, well, Jesus is rejoicing and somebody else is suffering, not his own. Are you sure? Because look over at verses 33 and following. This is before Jesus gets to the graveside.

He's come to Bethany now. Verse 33, When Jesus saw her, Mary, weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

[28 : 05] And he said, Where have you laid him? They said to him, Lord, come and see Jesus wept. So the Jews said, see how he loved him. Some of them said, Could not you open the eyes of the blind man have also kept this man from dying?

See, it was Jesus' pain as well. He loved Lazarus too. He mourned his death too, it seems. But even in suffering, we can rejoice.

We're about to get into, in a moment, the wisdom of God. And him knowing far better than us what will be good for us. It's because of that wisdom that Jesus is able to rejoice.

He knows what's coming, not just for Lazarus, but for others who love him. Their faith is going to be strengthened towards believing that Jesus really is the resurrection and the life. It's going to be good for them that Jesus wasn't there to heal Lazarus.

So he rejoices in it. You know what we need to do when we suffer, even though we can't see the end that Jesus sees. We don't have the knowledge that Jesus does. We don't, we don't have that, that he does.

[29 : 10] But, and that makes it really hard when we don't know what he knows. We do know that suffering can grow and deepen our faith and our reliance on the Savior.

And that is good. And we can rejoice in it. Even if we don't know how. I'll say more about that in a moment. Even if we don't know how he's going to strengthen our faith or how good will come.

We can still rejoice knowing it's not outside of God's sovereign, good, wise plan. And just as with Jesus, rejoicing in our trials doesn't eliminate being deeply distressed and troubled.

This is, please don't hear me saying that you need to pretend like you're fine when you're not. Like you have to be happy about all the hard things. It's not a denial of the great importance and good of mourning, of lament, and sorrow because of sin and suffering in our lives and in the world.

I just preached a sermon last week that I think is really important about lament and its role in the life of the Christian and not pretending like everything is okay. Pouring out your heart like the psalmist does.

[30 : 25] When I say rejoice in your suffering, it doesn't mean that you have to be happy that you're hurting. I can't preach the lament sermon now, but please don't hear me saying like, rejoice!

Happy, happy, happy all the time, time, time! Even though I've got this terminal illness. No, no, no, no. The Bible understands. Jesus understands your pain.

And He welcomes you to come and express it. But Jesus is a beautiful example for us of rejoicing in the midst of sorrow brought on by suffering. Right?

So, go straight to Jesus. Don't be surprised. Rejoice. Number four, ask how it might glorify God. Verse four, when Jesus heard it, He said, this illness does not lead to death.

It is for the glory of God so that the Son of God may be glorified through it. Ask how it might glorify God. Jesus helps lift His, lift His disciples' eyes beyond the immediate horizon to see not just the suffering of Lazarus, but the glory of God that it will bring.

[31 : 31] The illness, while it did end, it did result in Lazarus' death, it was temporary. You see, in verse four, some people might have trouble with this.

The illness does not lead to death. Well, Lazarus died. Well, it doesn't lead to death. That's not its finishing point. That's not the termination point of Lazarus' illness. That's a stopping point along the way to His resurrection.

That's where it ended. It ended with the resurrection of Lazarus. The death was a stopping point. It wasn't where it finished. And so, Jesus points out that reality.

Rather, as with the man born blind, it was for the glory of God. Remember the man born blind? Jesus' disciples see a man who was born blind, and the disciples and all of their wisdom say, Lord, who sinned?

This man or his parents? Somebody must have sinned. And Jesus says, John 9, 3, it was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

[32 : 31] And so it is with Lazarus. The works of God are going to be displayed in him. Jesus knows He's going to raise Lazarus from the dead, which will bring great glory to God and to Himself, the Son of God.

Jesus knows Lazarus' sickness has a God-glorifying end. And as the resurrection and the life, He knows what that end is. The resurrection of Lazarus and ultimately His own resurrection which guarantees the resurrection of all His people, all of which is to the glory of God.

And so God will get glory that He wouldn't have received because Lazarus died. Jesus is looking for the ways God receives glory.

And what about us? I simply think here that we should have the eye of our Savior. We won't necessarily immediately know how our suffering is going to bring glory to God. but we know that all things are for His glory.

We should always be looking for how our suffering or that of our loved one might bring glory to God. How might our suffering, our sickness, honor God? You think about several ways that that could happen.

[33 : 38] That you being sick or someone that you love being sick could bring honor to God. It might honor Him through a miraculous recovery. God is praying. Why am I suffering like this?

And God raises them up and He gets the glory for it. It might glorify Him through answered prayer. We pray and we pray and we pray for someone who's sick and we see God make them well.

They've been gone for church for a long time and then they're back all of a sudden and they're well. They're on their way to being well and God has answered prayer and He gets the glory. Amen. It might honor Him through a demonstration of God's long, enduring, never failing grace through a long trial that just doesn't let up.

Some people suffer chronically and will until they die. And God is glorified as He is seen to be the one that is bearing them up through that suffering over the long haul.

Because of His grace, that person's, your patient, faith-filled, enduring response to sickness should glorify God as you encourage others around you.

[34 : 47] Might bring glory to God as God uses the suffering of your loved one or your own suffering to draw that loved one or to draw someone else to Himself. Look for how your suffering might glorify God.

That's another thing to do when you're not well, when you're suffering. Number five, ask how it might strengthen the faith of others. And these two really go hand in hand. How does it glorify God and how does it show love to my fellow men?

How does it serve others? How does it strengthen the faith of others? Jesus is looking out for His disciples, not just Himself. It's going to be better for them that Jesus didn't immediately go heal Lazarus or just say the word and heal him from a distance.

It's going to be better for His disciples to go with Him back into the teeth of the line where they might face persecution in order to raise Lazarus from the dead. That's going to be better for them.

And Jesus knows that. They're going to get to witness the raising of a man from the dead which should bolster their faith in the ability of Jesus Himself to rise from the dead. Sadly, it doesn't fully accomplish that when Jesus dies.

[35 : 49] They're not thinking, hey, He raised Lazarus from the dead. He said He's the resurrection and the life. I think He's going to rise from the dead. It's all over and they go into hiding. But I think the cumulative effect of this and then the resurrection of Christ and now John is looking back and reflecting on this and seeing how His Savior loved Him well and how His Savior acted in such a way to strengthen His faith.

It's good of our Savior to always act with the best interest of His disciples in mind. And so, do you ever ask how your sickness or other suffering might strengthen the faith of others?

Sickness often makes us very self-centered. all our thoughts are about ourself and how we can find relief and how miserable we are and woe is us and all sorts of other things.

Sickness can make us very self-centered. Jesus says here, let your sickness turn your thoughts outward. In Lazarus' sickness, He wants to serve His disciples.

Do you think about your own sickness that way? Do you ever pray that that would be the case? That your suffering would work to be a blessing for other people? However God chooses to glorify Himself in your suffering.

[37 : 05] Answered prayer, healing, or long-enduring grace under suffering, perhaps. Do you pray that that reality would also strengthen the faith of the other saints?

This passage, I think, holds before us the two great commandments. Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus is looking to glorify God in verse 4 and He's looking to love His disciples down in verse 14 and 15.

Are you looking for the same in your sickness to glorify God and to love your neighbor as yourself? Looking for their good, for the strengthening of their faith instead of loving self?

We're really good. I'm really good at loving myself. Looking out for number one. But that shouldn't drive our behavior. What should? The glory of God, verse 4, and the good of our fellow man, verse 15.

In particular, here are brothers and sisters in Christ. These are Jesus' aims and what He does with Lazarus and when He does it. The glory of God and the faith of His disciples. Are you aiming for that? Looking for how that can happen when you are sick or when someone you love is sick?

[38 : 12] And again, they're closely related. What brings glory to God is also often what strengthens the faith of your fellow saints. God's working you. Just think of that, how He's working. Long-suffering, patient endurance over a long-haul sickness or permanent disability that you have.

And as other saints, there are people in our church in Warsaw that suffer in ways that I can't imagine. And in an ongoing way, there's one I'm thinking of in particular right now, but they always, no matter how deep they're suffering, I'll try to encourage them, send them a verse or ask them how they're doing when I see them and they end up encouraging me because they always point to the good sovereignty of God.

It's really hard right now, but I know that God is sovereign and I know that He's good. And that person in their suffering are using their suffering to encourage me.

They're not looking for pity. They're not looking for somebody to come and serve me. They're affirming the goodness of God. And it blesses my heart.

You ever do that when you're not well? Do you look for opportunities to encourage others and be a blessing to others? Lift your eyes off of yourself and look to see how you can be a blessing to others.

[39 : 37] These things on display honor God and strengthen the faith of His saints. Jesus sums up the law on two commands. Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself. It applies to all of life, including your sickness.

All right, number six. The sixth thing to do when facing illness or the illness of a loved one. Rest in Jesus' wisdom.

Rest in the wisdom of our Savior Jesus. Part of that wisdom is that Jesus is the light. He gives you the light to walk in. I'm not going to dig real far into verses 9 and 10.

It's tying into some other themes in John's Gospel that we don't need to dig into for our purposes tonight. But he says in verse 9, other than at 12 hours in the day. If anyone walks in the day, and part of Jesus' wisdom is giving us, He is the light of the world.

If anyone walks in the day does not stumble because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles because the light is not in him. Part of the wisdom of Jesus is giving his people the light.

[40 : 46] And in that light, they don't stumble. You might suffer as you walk with Jesus, the light of the world, but you won't stumble. You won't fall away. But then there's the rest of the world out here in darkness, and they are stumbling all over.

And if you're here tonight without Jesus, you're in the dark, and you're stumbling in the dark. But did you know that Jesus could use that stumbling in the dark to open your eyes to the need of the light? And so if you're here tonight, and not a lot of this is really making sense to you because you don't have the wisdom of Jesus.

You're not walking in His light. You're not walking in His truth. Then you need Jesus. You come to Jesus. You put your faith in Him. You trust in Him. And this Jesus, who so clearly loves His disciples so well, will love you well all the way home to heaven.

And so part of walking with Jesus is walking in the light. That's Jesus' wisdom for us. He gives us His light.

He enables us to walk in it and not stumble. Yes, we will suffer, but not stumble and fall. Being in the light, securely in the middle of the plan of God, meant death for Jesus.

[41 : 57] It meant suffering for Him, and He was the light. And it may well mean suffering for us, but as God had great, good design for His Son, He has a great and good design for us, His sons and daughters.

And it often includes suffering. That's part of walking in the light. That's part of walking with Jesus. Suffer, yes, but we're ultimately safe because we're in the light of Christ.

And you can rest in that, friends. You're in the light. That's part of the wisdom of Christ, to give you that light. But there's more here that I want us to see about resting in the wisdom of Christ. Go back up to verses 5 and 6 with me.

And if you have the NIV, I want you to listen for a difference here. I used to do a lot of picking on translations. I don't want to do that, but I think there's a really significant change that you'll hear in what I read than what you have if you've got the NIV in front of you.

All right? So, verses 5 and 6. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that Lazarus was ill, He stayed two days longer in the place where He was.

[43 : 16] It doesn't say, Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, so He went immediately and healed them. It doesn't say, Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, so He spoke the word and healed them.

It says, He loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Therefore, when He heard that Lazarus was ill, He stayed two more days.

His delay, His two-day delay, was not in spite of His love. It was because of His love.

It was an expression of His love. That word, therefore, is really important. That's why I draw your attention to it. He loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

Therefore, so, He stayed two days longer where He was. He loved them, so He didn't come right away and heal them.

[44 : 19] And in our human wisdom, we go, what? That makes zero sense to us. That's why I want to encourage you today, when you or someone you love suffers illness, to rest in the wisdom of Jesus and not your own.

Our wisdom calls for immediate healing, immediate relief. Jesus, in His wisdom, might delay. It may not make sense to you, but Jesus might delay because He loves you.

Surely, it didn't make sense in that moment to His disciples. We know that Mary and Martha didn't understand. Lord, if you had been here, He wouldn't have died. If you loved us, why did you delay?

What John says is, He delayed because He loved them. there's something that's going to be glorious. God's going to be honored in a remarkable way.

These saints are going to have their faith strengthened. There's going to be a testimony for all time, still today we have it, of the power of the Savior, that He is the resurrection and the life.

[45 : 35] Jesus' delay was an expression of love. Even though they couldn't see it in that moment. And that's what I want us to remember.

What I need to remember when we suffer. Maybe for an extended, long period of time, we don't get to see the whole big picture that Jesus sees. And so friends, when what's happening in your life is impossible to understand, and it seems as if there's no possible way that God has your good mind, remember this, therefore.

Jesus loves you. Therefore, He's doing this in your life. Who has known the mind of the Lord? For the disciples and Mary and Martha, we want to say, we want to say for them, like, we want to go, it's okay, like, just wait a few days.

It's going to be okay. You're going to see. It's okay. But when it's us, in the middle of our suffering, and we can't make sense of it right now, and we don't know what's coming in a few days or a few years or whenever on God's timetable, man, it's hard.

And God says, just wait. Just wait. It's hard when He says, I love you, therefore, there's some really hard things coming your way.

[47 : 05] But this passage gives us hope for those moments. Brothers and sisters, I don't know exactly how God will be glorified in your suffering, but He will be. I don't know exactly how faith will be strengthened, but it certainly can be.

I don't know exactly how it will be for your good, but it is. He loves you. Therefore, you are facing the things that you're facing.

You know what guarantees that? Well, the resurrection of Jesus guarantees that. So that's the last point. Number seven. Remember that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

Remember, this whole account and the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is to show us that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Look at verses 25 and 26 a little bit further down.

Jesus said to her, He's talking to Martha. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

[48 : 12] do you believe this? Do you believe this? I can't preach that passage tonight, but hear this.

Everything that we've said means nothing if Jesus is not the resurrection and the life. It means nothing if Jesus himself didn't rise from the dead.

If Jesus' death is only a tragedy, that's it. That's the end. If it's only a wicked miscarriage of justice, the end of his life, that's it. Then no good will come from your suffering. I have nothing to offer you tonight if Jesus is not the resurrection and the life.

Nothing. You pack up and go home. You're wasting your time. And I'm wasting mine if Jesus is not the resurrection and the life.

You know, that's one reason I'm really glad that John tells us about how he raised Lazarus from the dead. Because you know what it shows? Before Jesus himself ever rises from the dead, it shows that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

[49 : 18] And then he's going to show it in a remarkable way by himself rising from the dead. Again, not too long from this account. But if he's not the resurrection and the life, there's no faith to be strengthened.

No good will come from your suffering. There's no Jesus to turn to. But as Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, he shows his power over the grave. As Jesus himself emerges from the tomb, he shows his power over the grave.

Which means that everything that he says in this passage and what we've heard tonight is true. It means there is sense to be made of our suffering. It means that even should our suffering end in death, and eventually it will for all of us.

Unless Jesus comes back first. even if and when our suffering ends in death, it's not the end of the story. It's just the beginning.

And we'll live with him forever. Because he gives that resurrection life to us. You see what he says there in verse 26? Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

[50 : 27] Just before that, whoever believes in me though he die, yet shall he live. Do you believe that? The resurrection of Lazarus from the dead shows it.

Resurrection and eternal life, brothers and sisters. That is our hope. And we have that hope because of Jesus who is the resurrection and the life. If he's in the grave, this sermon is garbage.

There's no good in our suffering. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. And we will too. So let's walk in the light. Trust the Savior who is the light of the world and the resurrection and the life to see us safely to our own resurrection day.

So what do we do when we're sick? I think the sickness and the death of Lazarus and Jesus' actions surrounding it show us that we should do these seven things. You might number them differently or find some other ones in there, but at least these.

Go straight to Jesus. Don't be surprised. Rejoice. Ask how it might glorify God. Ask how it might strengthen the faith of others. Rest in Jesus' wisdom and remember that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

[51 : 41] Let's pray together. Father, we thank you that our Savior Jesus is the resurrection and the life. And we pray that that would be our hope and our confidence and that you would help us to live in the light of that reality as we are called to face suffering ourselves or the suffering of loved ones.

We pray that you would help us to cling to Christ our Savior who is with us and who loves us and who welcomes us when we cry out to him and who is aiming for your glory and for our good and who died and rose again and ascended and is now seated at your right hand interceding for us even now.

We pray that we would remember our Savior Jesus the resurrection and the life and we pray in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.