

JOH 10:37 Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does.
38 But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." 39 Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp. 40 Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Here he stayed 41 and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true." 42 And in that place many believed in Jesus. **11:1** Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 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. 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." 4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." 5 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

As we come to our text this morning we are going to find that it is a leaping off point for Christ and His disciples that will shortly bring the redemptive ministry of Jesus to an end.

He has been in Jerusalem for some time bearing witness that He is the Son of God sent from the Father to do His will. As we come to the end of chapter ten we see that this will be the last time that Jesus will be in Jerusalem until He returns to face the cross for which He was born.

Our Lord's last act of love to His enemies in chapter ten is found in Him appealing to their sense of fairness as He lays out for them the plain truth that He is the Messiah who has proved His case in both word and deed.

JOH 10:37-38 Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does.
38 But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

To this end these Pharisees and leaders of Israel are given the proof they need to accept Him as the One sent from the Father to redeem sinful men. It is at this point that they should have laid aside their

bias and hatred and humbled themselves before the Son of God who came into this world to die for the penalty of man's sin.

But, of course, as we have seen before, men have a bigger problem than simply looking at the facts and arriving at the logical conclusion based on their intellect. Men have a heart problem which only God can solve as His Spirit opens their eyes. But as our Lord leaves these leaders with the truth they reward Him with threats of death.

JOH 10:39 Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

There were times before this when the Jews tried to seize Jesus to put Him to death and on each occasion He was not taken by them. And the only reason is that the Father's will would determine the time and place at which Jesus would be allowed to be taken captive and put to death as we saw earlier in this gospel.

JOH 7:30 At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come.

And so it is now. "Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp."

But as always, Jesus doesn't simply escape the enemy only to hide out somewhere. He continues to do the will of the Father. In our text before us the will of the Father is for Jesus to withdraw His love and grace from Jerusalem, where the official religion of Israel was centered, and to take it to the common man outside of the capital of Israel.

JOH 10:40-42 Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Here he stayed 41 and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true." 42 And in that place many believed in Jesus.

In a very real sense Jesus went back to where it all started. You'll remember that it was at the Jordan where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. It was there that our Lord's public ministry started.

MAT 3:16-17 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17 And

a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

And now, as Jesus leaves Jerusalem, and those who turned their backs on His love and grace, His public ministry begins to come to an end.

I'm sure this was a time of reflection for Jesus as He arrives back at the place where the Father spoke from heaven announcing His love and pleasure for His Son. For almost three years Jesus poured out Himself to Israel and now as He nears the end of His ministry He has those comforting words of the Father to reflect on at the very place where it occurred, the Jordan.

William Barclay makes an interesting observation about this incident as it applies to you and me in Christ. And it has to do with putting our lives into perspective as it pertains to our salvation and the purpose to which we have been called.

He says, "It would often do our souls a world of good to make a pilgrimage to the place where we first found God."

My wife and I first found God, or maybe I should say, He found us, in the city of Gainesville, Florida. Last year we went back there just to spend a couple of days relaxing. We walked the campus of Florida and reflected on the things God was doing in our lives at the time and how it was so exciting to be a part of His plan.

We visited the little Catholic church right across from the campus where we first met. It was in that same Catholic church where we got a taste of the truth as we opened up the bible with a small group of "Charismatic Catholics" and studied it.

It was at this same church, as brand new baby believers, where we realized that mingled in with the truth were things which raised red flags, and by the grace of God, we both saw how the traditions and doctrines of Rome could not be combined with the truth of God's word.

But what I found interesting about that trip to Gainesville was that as special a time and place that it was, it was the past, but it was a past that determined our futures which has brought us to this place by God's design.

It was a blessing to go back even though the enemy tried his best to make it a nightmare. As soon as we got off the interstate and drove

into the city of Gainesville, the car broke down and wasn't fixed until the day we left.

But even in the midst of this trial the Lord impressed upon us that what He started in our lives in that place some 30 years ago was only the beginning of what He has in store for us. And from that standpoint it was good to make that short pilgrimage.

But as with any pilgrimage there is the realization that the work must go forward into the future and this is what our Lord realized as He went back to the Jordan, partly to be refreshed and blessed, and partly to consider what lay in front of Him.

Part of the blessing Jesus received at the Jordan was a receptiveness He found on only a few occasions in Jerusalem.

JOH 10:40-42 Here he stayed 41 and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true." 42 And in that place many believed in Jesus.

Being in this kind of ministry of Pastor has many trials associated with it. There are people who reject the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it breaks your heart. You determine to feed the sheep of Christ as you bring the truth of God's word, and there are those who decide that that is not enough.

And the temptation is to focus on these types of things. But the truth is that as small as we might perceive the blessings, it is those blessings which help us to refocus on what is important.

There is no greater blessing for a Pastor than to have people be truly blessed with the teaching of the word of God to where their lives demonstrate how the Spirit of God is working in them as they go forward with the Lord.

It is also a blessing to have a group of people, no matter how small or large, who are faithful to move forward in the blessings associated with being doers of the word and the work that Jesus is doing in our midst.

This is why I've always said that I can't be concerned with the ones who aren't here, but to be concerned with the ones who are, and to do my best with the gifts Christ has given me to serve the sheep in my care. Those outside of my care, Jesus has other plans for them.

But I'm sure it was a blessing for Jesus to have people who weren't always trying to confront Him and ridicule Him and ultimately try to kill Him. Here at the Jordan He was blessed with people who saw Him for who He was and appreciated Him for what He was sent from the Father to do.

They realized that John the Baptist's ministry was to herald in the Messiah as he was considered to be the one making straight the way of the Lord. He had told them what to look for in the Messiah and they believed John as he shared the prophecies concerning the one to come.

And part of the reason they believed the Lord Jesus was a prophet from God, whom John spoke of, was the very thing Jesus challenged the Jews in Jerusalem to believe.

JOH 10:38 ... believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

These Jews at the Jordan believed the miracles that they heard about Jesus performing in Jerusalem and that is one of the reasons that we're told they believed in Jesus.

Again, we're not given any indication that Jesus performed any miracles there at the Jordan at this time, only that these Jews heard that Jesus had done miracles which John did not do. And so, many believed.

The word many is the exact same Greek word we saw last week when we were looking at verse 32 when Jesus said, "I have shown you *many* great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"

The word many in verse 32 indicates that Jesus performed a lot of miracles. And so, in verse 42 the indication is that a lot of people at the Jordan believed in Jesus. Now, was that saving faith? Well, we don't know. We do know however, that when Jesus finally comes into Jerusalem triumphantly riding on a donkey, while the allegedly believing crowds covered the streets with palm branches, many of those same people were yelling for His crucifixion only days later.

Often times in the gospels when the phrase is used, "*they believed in Him*", it is used to convey that they were convinced that He was someone special. But as to saving faith that would be determined by those who were faithful to follow Christ.

Now as I said early on in this study this particular portion of Scripture is a springboard which is going to speed up the whole process of Jesus going to the cross. It is because Jesus is at the Jordan that a particular incident is about to happen which the Father has ordained from all of eternity.

JOH 11:1-5 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 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. 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." 4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." 5 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

There are two Lazarus' mentioned in the NT. There was the Lazarus in Luke 16:19 whom Jesus contrasted with the rich man. Both of them died and yet the poor man, Lazarus, went to heaven, while the rich man went to hell, thus emphasizing in one sense that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (MAT 19:24)

But this is not the Lazarus we see in our text. This Lazarus was a man who came from the village of Bethany. Bethany is a place located about 3 miles southeast of Jerusalem, and so it's in the neighborhood of the capital city.

Ironically, Jesus, at this time, was probably in or near Bethany. But the Bethany Jesus was in was nowhere near the Bethany Lazarus is in. In fact, if we were to go back to the beginning of this gospel we are specifically told where John the Baptist was baptizing and where Jesus was baptized by him.

JOH 1:26-28 "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. 27 He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." 28 This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

This particular Bethany is located near Galilee, while the Bethany where Lazarus is from is located in Judea. If you were to look on a map you would see that the Bethany on the other side of the Jordan where Jesus is now located is about 70 miles north/northeast of the Bethany in Judea, as the crow flies. In terms of actual travel distance it's probably closer to 100 miles.

Also in verse one we're told that this Lazarus had two sisters by the names of Mary and Martha. This is significant because these are the same two sisters who show up in other places in the New Testament.

LUK 10:38-42 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" 41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

And so it appears that Jesus has a fondness in His heart for this family as they opened up their home to Him and showed love and hospitality. And the reason for this may be what we read in the next verse of our text as John makes a special note of the sister Mary.

JOH 11:2 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.

This particular Mary is mentioned in the gospel of Luke.

LUK 7:36-39 Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38 and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. 39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is - that she is a sinner."

As to what kind of sinner Mary was, we're not told, but it may be inferred that she was some sort of adulteress or possibly a prostitute. Whatever kind of sin which seemed to define her life in that town, it was something she knew was displeasing to God and when Jesus shows up at this Pharisee's house she becomes a party

crasher so that she can minister to the Lord as she humbles herself before Him.

Of course, the Pharisee questions Jesus' status as a prophet because if He were one He would have known that this woman was not deserving of any mercy. At least that's the way this Pharisee would have dealt with the woman. But Jesus perceives what is going on in his heart and so He responds to this Pharisee.

LUK 7:40-50 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41 "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. 44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven - for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." 48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

This is the same grateful Mary who is mentioned in our text. And it seems obvious that this "sinner" received salvation that day from Christ and she didn't hide it under a basket, but evidently went back to her family, including Martha and Lazarus, and shared with them this great news of the Master who can forgive sins, even the sins of one labeled a town sinner.

And this sin, which was probably a source of concern among her family, and possibly resulted in Mary being ostracized from her own family, was the catalyst which brings them together to where the three of them are seen, not as individuals who are saved by grace, but a family united by the grace of God.

And so, there is a very special place in their hearts toward Jesus and also a very special place in the heart of Jesus toward them, which brings up an interesting question. If God so loved the world

that He gave His only begotten Son, how can it be said that Jesus loved a particular individual out of many, not unlike how the apostle John is referred to as the one whom Jesus loved? (JOH 13:23; JOH 19:26; JOH 20:2)

JOH 11:3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

Obviously, Jesus loved all of His disciples. But we must remember that as fully man Jesus possessed all of the qualities of men who, for whatever reason, may have a special human relationship with other people.

It's not unlike the relationships you and I have with people, be it family and friends or other believers in Christ.

It may not having anything to do with a special spiritual connection we may have with brothers and sisters in Christ, but simply a chemistry, for lack of a better word, that we may have with certain people. Such people are sometimes called best friends.

And so, there is a sense in which Jesus had best friends in a human sense. And the apostle John along with Lazarus were a couple of them.

And so, though you and I have people we know and love, who may not be that kind of best friend, it doesn't mean we aren't friends with them or that we don't care for them. It just means that there is sometimes a special chemistry, or as Ann of Green Gables put it with her best friend, kindred spirits.

Jesus had a kindred spirit with Lazarus. And now his friend was sick; so sick in fact that it was an ailment which was obviously going to lead to death as the two sisters of Lazarus sent word to Jesus about his condition.

JOH 11:4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

The way Jesus responds gives evidence that the word from Martha and Mary was filled with a fear that he would die. And yet, Jesus encourages the messengers from Martha and Mary that this sickness will not end in death. Well, of course we know that it did.

So, was Jesus lying? Was He just trying to give false hope to Mary and Martha? No. He was telling the truth that this sickness will not end in death in the ultimate way.

Yes, his body died and he was buried in the tomb, but the physical life Jesus placed back in his body shows that this sickness ultimately did not have mastery over Lazarus. It only took four days out of his life.

But the second, and most important aspect of our Lord's statement that "this sickness will not end in death," is what immediately follows in verse 4, "No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

Of course Jesus is talking about the implication that just as He can and will raise Lazarus from the dead it speaks of our Lord being the resurrection and the life unto eternity.

Though Mary and Martha would not fully understand the response they would receive from the messengers they sent to Jesus, in light of Lazarus actually dying, the truth is that Jesus knew exactly what He was saying and doing.

And He said this because He truly loved them as we're told in verse five.

JOH 11:5 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

As special friends Jesus only had their best interests in mind, but more than that He had His Father's will in mind. And though Martha and Mary would not be able to rejoice at this, in a short time they would as Jesus would come to them and use the death of Lazarus as a way to bring glory to the Father and to Himself.

Next week we'll look at the details of this incident.

But as we close this morning I think it's important to realize that the risen Jesus desires that we be His friend as well as faithful and humble servants. To be His friend doesn't mean we treat Him or serve Him as we would a mere human.

It doesn't mean we address Him as our buddy. But it does mean that we can and should live in the reality that we have a special relationship with Him that includes a closeness which only a friend can have.

Today a growing number of people are calling themselves Christians and yet never seem to get really intimate with Jesus or

other believers. They remain nominal or superficial in their relationship with the Lord.

They may go to church regularly and even be moved by the message and the worship. But they never really think about what they're saying or what God is saying to them. They're hearts are not fully engaged.

Even in prayer or fellowship they may never really intimately talk with God or each other about where they're at with the Lord as they live out this closeness with Christ.

It's a closeness and a unity that is based on love; first His love for us and then our love for Him and others. This is the kind of foundation upon which our friendship with Christ is based as our love for Him is shown through our faithfulness and obedience to our God and Savior, who loved us even to dying on a cross for us.

And oddly enough this friendship is found in the form of a command from our Lord Jesus to love.

JOH 15:12-17 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit -fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.