

Series: Hope For Hard Cases

HE WHOM THOU LOVEST IS SICK

JOHN 11:1-16; 42-44

Text: John 11:3

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³ *Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*

Introduction:

The school system in a large city had a program to help children keep up with their school work during stays in the city's hospitals. One day a teacher who was assigned to the program received a routine call asking her to visit a particular child.

She took the child's name and room number and talked briefly with the child's regular class teacher. "We're studying nouns and adverbs in his class now," the regular teacher said, "and I'd be grateful if you could help him understand them so he doesn't fall too far behind.

The hospital program teacher went to see the boy that afternoon. No one had mentioned to her that the boy had been badly burned and was in great pain.

Upset at the sight of the boy, she stammered as she told him, "I've been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs." When she left she felt she hadn't accomplished much.

But the next day, a nurse asked her, "What did you do to that boy?"

The teacher felt she must have done something wrong and began to apologize.

"No, no," said the nurse. "You don't know what I mean. We've been worried about that little boy, but ever since yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment. It's as though he's decided to live."

Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher arrived. Everything changed when he came to a simple realization.

He expressed it this way: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?"

Hope is defined as "the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best." Hope is something we all want, and it is something we all need.

The power of hope cannot be underestimated. When hope fails, dreams shatter and people give up.

John 11 describes one of the greatest hopeless cases in the Bible.

Anyone looking in on the death of Lazarus would conclude that he was dead, and that there was no hope.

Yet, even in the face of absolute hopelessness, the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates His power to step into any situation and transform that situation into a time of blessing; this even includes situations that appear hopeless.

Note:

1. INSURMOUNTABLE PROBLEMS

There were several problems in this case that declared this case to be hopeless. Let me share a few of those problems with you. It may be that you are looking at what you think is a hopeless case today.

Let's see if there are any parallels with your hopeless case.

Note:

A. The Problem of Disease (vs. 1-3)

John 11:1-3

¹ *Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.* ² *(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)* ³ *Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*

The Lord receives word that His friend Lazarus was sick.

Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, are concerned about their brother, so they send word to Jesus to come and heal Lazarus. Their request says a lot about how they viewed the Lord.

The request made by Mary and Martha speaks to us as well. Their request reminds us that Jesus Christ is to be the first resort in any time of trouble.

When difficulties arise in life, we are to turn to Him for the help we need. When we do, we are to have faith in Him, and then He will be able to do what we ask Him to do.

That is what the Bible teaches:

Matthew 21:22

²² And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

B. The Problem of Delays (vs. 4-10)

John 11:4-10

⁴ When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. ⁶ When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. ⁷ Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. ⁸ His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? ⁹ Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

When Jesus hears their urgent request, He reacts in a surprising manner. Instead of getting up and walking the five miles to get to Lazarus, Jesus stays where He is for two more days.

Could Jesus have healed Lazarus? Of course He could have! He could have spoken the word where He was and Lazarus would have been made perfectly well. But,

He didn't! Jesus remained where He was, and He did not heal Lazarus, because He actually wanted Lazarus to die. Why? He waited until Lazarus was dead because God would get greater glory from the resurrection of Lazarus than He would from him being healed.

Regardless of the Lord's reasons for His delays, Mary and Martha were forced to watch Lazarus waste away and die. They were forced to wash his body, prepare it for burial, and lay it in a tomb. They were forced to feel pain, heartbreak, sorrow and doubt. They were forced into an impossible situation.

That's how it goes sometimes, isn't it? You bring your problem to the Lord, and what you receive in return is silence. You call on Him, expecting Him to answer your prayers and meet your need, and all you get in return is nothing. In fact, sometimes the problems just get worse. Sometimes situations turn desperate.

Sometimes you need an answer today, but that answer doesn't come today, or even tomorrow.

Here is what we need to remember in the times of divine silence: The Lord was able to see what the sisters and the disciples could not see. He was able to see beyond the crisis of the moment to the glory God would receive through the crisis. He knew what was on the other side of the pain, the problems and the

pressure. He knew the outcome before the crisis even reached its peak.

Remember:

God knows more about our situation than we do:

Proverbs 15:3

³ The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

Hebrews 4:13

¹³ Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Our duty is to learn to trust Him, even when we cannot figure out what He is doing and why He is doing it.

C. The Problem of Doubt (vs. 21-22, 32)

John 11:21-22

²¹ Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. ²² But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

John 11:32

³² *Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

Their pleas had been unanswered and they were defeated, discouraged and distressed. When they did talk to Jesus face to face, they both brought up the problem that plagued their minds. When they said “Lord if thou hadst been here.”

Many believers lose the battle right here! They will get mad at God when He doesn't do as they say, and they will get on the outs with Him; some will even quit on Him. When people give up on God, they usually miss the greatest of His miracles! It's always too soon to quit!

Notice not only the “Insurmountable Problems” but also:

2. INCONCEIVABLE PROMISES

When Jesus arrives in Bethany, He comes upon a scene of utter despair. He finds the community mourning the death of Lazarus. He finds two very brokenhearted sisters. He finds, what most would consider to be, a hopeless case. Jesus walks into that tragic scene with words of comfort, hope and blessing. He enters that place of Insurmountable Problems and gives them some Inconceivable Promises. Let's consider His promises for a moment.

Note:

A. There Were Promises About Death (vs. 23-25)

John 11:23-25

²³ *Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.* ²⁴ *Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.* ²⁵ *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:*

Martha meets Jesus and tells her that her brother will “rise again.” She says that she believes that he will live again in “the resurrection.” Jesus then gives her one of the greatest promises in the New Testament. He says:

“He is the resurrection and the life” and knowing Him in a faith relationship brings a person face to face with death-defeating, life-giving power.

B. There Was Promises About Deliverance (vs. 26)

John 11:26

²⁶ And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

Jesus goes on to promise Martha that every person who places true faith in Jesus will never experience death. He promises to deliver His people from the death experience altogether. That does not mean that believers don't lay down their mortal bodies, because they do. It means that they don't experience what the Bible refers to as “the second death,”

Revelation 20:11-15

¹¹ And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged

every man according to their works. ¹⁴ And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Romans 6:23

²³ For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C. There Were Promises About Dependence (vs. 25-26)

John 11:25-26

²⁵ Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: ²⁶ And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

As Jesus closes His words to Martha, He asks her a very important question: “Believest thou this?” In other words, “Martha, is your faith in me and in what I can do? Martha, are you trusting me with everything, even with your soul?” Jesus is telling Martha that faith in Him translates into the believer seeing and experiencing great things in this life, and in the life to come.

Notice not only the “Insurmountable Problems and the “Inconceivable Promises” but lastly:

3. INCREDIBLE POWER

When Jesus entered that scene of hopeless sorrow, He did not just come in with soothing words. Jesus entered that hopeless case and demonstrated His great power.

He didn't just make promises; He did something about the problem.

The power He demonstrated on that occasion is the same power He can and will bring to bear in your hopeless case.

A. It Was Seen In His Compassion (vs. 33-38)

John 11:33-38

³³ When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, ³⁴ And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! ³⁷ And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? ³⁸ Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

We certainly see the compassion and care of the Lord in these verses.

Close:

That's Him! That's just what Jesus does.

He walks into hopeless situations and He brings hope.

He is still doing that today.

You may feel as if it is a hopeless case.

Bring it to Him. If it is a person, bring them to Him. Whatever it is, bring it to the Lord and watch Him work it out for His glory and your good. He knows what He is doing, and you can trust Him.

A man approached a little league baseball game one afternoon. He asked a boy in the dugout what the score was. The boy responded, "Eighteen to nothing--we're behind."

"Boy," said the spectator, "I'll bet you're discouraged."

"Why should I be discouraged?" replied the little boy. "We haven't even gotten up to bat yet!" _

It may appear that you are in a hopeless situation today. That's merely how it appears! If you could see the Lord today, you would see that He is just warming up. When He takes His turn at bat, everything will change.