

Sermon outline notes: John chapter 11– ‘A matter of life and death.’

Introduction

The apostle John felt privileged to have known Jesus personally and wanted his readers to have the same opportunity. He was convinced that if he could bring Jesus alive through the pages of his inspired account, his readers could not fail to be as utterly convinced, as he was, that ‘Jesus was the Christ, the son of God’. And that by ‘believing they would have life’. For John this was literally a matter of life and death.

- The structure of John’s gospel account: not a straightforward biography.
- A series of episodes constructed around 7 carefully selected miracles (or signs), each revealing more about who Jesus is.
A series of episodes constructed around 6 carefully selected personal conversations, each revealing more about what the kingdom of God is.

The context for chapter 11

- Chapter 11 brings together these two structural devices and interweaves both a miracle and a conversation. Because of this it is of particular significance and is hugely compelling.
 - The story is placed at a key turning point in the life of Jesus. From this point on John’s story focuses entirely on the details of his death and resurrection. Because of this it has particular significance.
 - Chapter 11 reiterates many of John’s earlier themes and powerfully brings the reader to the most significant theme of all.
- 3) The conversation and the miracle: some questions to challenge us.
- Why did Jesus decide to go to Bethany? (see verse 14)
 - Martha already believed in the hope of resurrection. Why wasn’t this enough?

- Why does Jesus so often talk about the future in the present tense? (see v. 25 and also John 5:24)
- How is the description of Lazarus in verse 43 also a picture of us?

Continuing the conversation

1. How does Jesus lead Martha to a new and deeper understanding about himself and the power of his kingdom? Are there any lessons from this conversation that we could apply to our approach to teaching the Christian faith?
2. In verse 33 we read that Jesus was very emotionally disturbed by Lazarus’ death, even though he knew he was going to raise him. (the word translated ‘deeply moved’ expresses indignation, outrage and anger). Can this help us to come to terms with our own very mixed emotions about death?
3. The raising of Lazarus has been described as a great sign ‘to give us hope in the face of death’. What is your understanding of Christian teaching on the issue of resurrection? (see also Hebrews 2:14, Romans 5:17, 1 Corinthians 15:12-58)