**Sermon: Stop Blocking Your Miracle. Scripture: John 11:21-27; 35-45**

**Notes:** Our story today is familiar to all of us. I’ve used it at many funerals and until this series on Kingdom prayer I didn’t realize the powerful prayer message it gives. We all know the story of Lazarus. Jesus learns Lazarus is sick and he doesn’t arrive to help until he had been in the grave for four days.

**I. Realize no situation is hopeless with Jesus. John 11:21–27** 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. 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: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? 27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. Mary says to Jesus you are too late there is nothing you can do. Jesus tells her Lazarus will rise again. Mary thinks she knows what Jesus means. She says I know the hope I have is I’ll see him on resurrection day but Jesus says I am the resurrection and the life; do you believe this. She confesses her faith that he is the Messiah. Jesus knows exactly what he is going to do and why he allowed Lazarus to die. There are situations in life that appear hopeless. Addictions, illness, anger or grief could be some examples.

**II. Jesus is a part of the trial. John 11:35–38** 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. Often we wonder why has God abandoned me. In this story Jesus wept because he knew the pain of losing someone he loved. **Hebrews 2:17–18** 17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. He became like us so he could experience what it feels like to be us.

**III. Jesus wants us to participate in the miracle. John 11:39–45**

**1. Faith must replace logic. (39-40)** 39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been *dead* four days. 40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Martha is right a body which has been in the grave for four days is going to stink. It makes no sense to remove the stone. Logic often gets in the way of miracles. **James 2:21-23** 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. What is it that Abraham believed? **Hebrews 11:17-19** By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. What God asked Abraham to do was not logical. Abraham’s faith was confirmed when he trusted God to keep his word. Isaac had no children and God had said he would be the line through which the Messiah would come. That could only happen if Isaac was alive. Had he refused to do what God told him to do he would not have seen the delivering power of God. Remember we talked about a person living as spirit, soul and body. Prayer is accessing the spiritual part of us and for saved folks it means accessing the Holy Spirit. Martha is now saying I trust you.

**2.** **Obedience allows God to finish the miracle He has prepared for you.** 41 Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. 43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. 44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Jesus didn’t need any help moving the stone. He wanted the people to participate. When they removed the obstacle the miracle happened. Notice the tense of Jesus prayer “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.” I know you heard my prayer. The kingdom agenda was for people to see the miracles so they could believe in Jesus. Remember what Jesus said to the disciples in **John 11:14-15** **Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.** And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. **Dr. Stanley writes:** *We have to understand that God is far more concerned with growing our faith than with making us comfortable. Jesus said He was “glad” about the death of Lazarus, because He valued his friends’ faith over their tears.* I agree with Dr. Stanley but that discomfort is sometimes difficult to bear. It really is the power of brokenness or surrender. Brokenness leads to surrender but surrender can be a matter of our will. Surrender is an act of obedience. Let’s face it most our involve issues of surrender.

**3.**  **God fulfills his plan in ways we can’t always see.** 45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. Mary and Martha’s friends came to comfort her. In the opinion of Mary, Martha and their friends Jesus arrived too late. They may have doubted his power or his love for Lazarus. When life makes us uncomfortable, afraid, or broken we ask the same question; Lord why didn’t you do something. No doubt his disciples were really confused. He healed the centurion’s servant without going to him. He only had to speak the word but he didn’t. Sometimes we don’t see the answers to the why’s of life. In August of 2011 my nephew died of a Heroin overdose. It seemed like a useless waste. Many people asked why did God let this happen. Lazarus story had a happy ending. There is no way God could ever use this. That winter Caleb led a retreat for the youth and during the retreat he built the lessons around the movie To Save a Life. In that movie a young boy committed suicide because he believed nobody cared about him. His boyhood friend who abandoned him because he wasn’t cool enough to hang around with got saved and started to reach out to hurting youth. During the movie there was line “Let my life count for something.” God spoke to my heart and said let your nephews life count for something. You can go places other people can’t go. You’ve felt the pain they’ve felt. Since that time God has blessed me by opening doors to addiction recovery and God has used me so God can work miracles in other people’s lives. I have seen God work those miracles. Oswald Chambers once wrote: *Living a life of faith means never knowing where you being led. But it does mean loving and knowing the one who is leading.*  Faith is the bridge to get the supernatural power of God to intervene in the things of earth and it is the key walking in the spirit. No one thought they were coming to witness a man being brought back from dead. We never know how God will use us to help people receive an even greater gift. Eternal life.