Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But 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." 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. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he 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." After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 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. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 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." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. 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!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus, deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.

It is always amazing how even though you know a portion of scripture well and then you reread it in a certain situation and it applies even more. There is so much comfort and hope in John 11 as Jesus deals with the death of Lazarus from his compassion to the verses of hope. Perhaps the greatest sadness of any part of life is dealing with a death of someone you loved.

Everyone fears or gets nervous about death. Part of the fear of this pandemic is that there is a greater chance of dying from this than from the flu. It is also very contagious. When something involves a risk of death, from a dangerous surgery a diagnosis of a bad disease like cancer, or a hazardous mission like a soldier going into combat we become more fearful. Because we know death is the end of life on this earth. But here see how Jesus deals with danger, death and the hope it brings. We see the two natures of Jesus as both God and man working together.

Jesus gets word that his friend Lazarus is sick. Jesus being God already knows that Lazarus will die. But Jesus shares the news 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." His reaction is just like last week with the blind man. Jesus sees the bad news or an adversity as an opportunity for God’s glory to be seen in action.

So many people wonder if there is a God does He really care about us. We as Christians know Jesus is God and just how much He cares and hurts for us as we see his emotions with His relationship with Lazarus, Martha and Mary. John tells us… Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

John tells us two main things in this portion of the account. Jesus loves other human beings. He knows what it is like for us because Jesus while being God is also one of us. So He is concerned. But John tells us also that He waits a few days even though He cares. He has a plan for not just dealing with Lazarus but using the situation to show the hope and power of Jesus to the world.

The disciples are worried about Jesus being killed by the Jew seeking to stone him. They tell him this. But Jesus makes it clear
this is part of something bigger. Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe.

Jesus knows that Lazarus has died but He will use this event to testify to the world that Jesus is our Lord and Savior so that what happens will be a time of witnessing. And I think that is something we don't always realize. That one event may be part of a bigger plan by God. At another church I served. I had a woman I worked on trying to get to come to church. But it wasn't till a relative of her died that it finally became the event that lead her to being baptized when the person was in hers 50s.

Another part of God’s plan was something that happened in 1956. Over 50 years ago in 1956 5 missionaries worked to make contact with the Auca tribe in Ecuador. This tribe killed all 5 of them. Some of you who are older might know the story. Yet the men’s widows and sisters returned and lived with that same tribe and the tribe became Christian and changed their ways. It was a huge testimony to the power of the Gospel and the power of forgiveness and perseverance in not giving up on sharing the Gospel with others.

The disciples that followed Jesus to Lazarus not knowing what they were in for at the time. They pictured their lives being in danger and going to a funeral. A time of much fear and sadness. They didn’t know what was going to happen.

Right now we are in the same boat as the disciples. We are facing a time of dealing with a pandemic that is causing many unknowns to happen. We don’t know how dangerous this disease but we know it can lead to death for some of us. We don’t know how to stop it and how it will affect our economy. So what are we to do?

I think we need to be realistic to the danger. Hence that is why I’m doing an online service, and we are being more careful. Yet it doesn’t mean to be all gloom and doom. Jesus went to Lazarus after His death because He knew of the opportunity to witness to the fact that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. There are opportunities in the midst of our pandemic and economic downturn to point people to the fact that something bigger might be on the horizon. That God can use tough times for His glory.

When Jesus got to Bethany. He saw people grieving. He took time to comfort Martha. And gave us the reminder as He talked to Martha, “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. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world. Jesus witnessed that He had power over death.

When He got to the tomb, he again stopped and Jesus cried. Jesus wept is the shortest verse in the Bible. Yet it says so much. Jesus understand our pain and hurt because He is one of us. Our suffering moves Jesus to tears. Jesus didn’t immediately do a miracle, He took time to mourn and cry with those around Him. Then and only then did He demand the tomb be opened and then Jesus spoke to His father and shared the purpose of what He was about to do. “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.

The biggest reason for the raising of Lazarus from the dead wasn’t to bring Lazarus back but to be another sign pointing to Jesus as the Savior of the world. Jesus command that Lazarus come out of the tomb and Lazarus did. And the people were amazed and many believed because of it.

So many people ask why doesn’t God do more miracles. And I think God does many of them. But when people ask that question, they ask, “Why doesn’t God do miracles?” I think they are asking why doesn’t God do something to immediately help me or those around me and they don’t realize the bigger picture that God’s purpose isn’t just to grant us blessings or miracles but to get us to repent and believe that Jesus is Savior.

It was an amazing miracle miracle that Lazarus was raised from the dead. It was this exciting miracle that lead many people to greet Jesus as He entered Jerusalem. There was some thought by the Jews that they wanted to not only put Jesus to death but also Lazarus. But the sad part of the miracle of Lazarus is that Lazarus eventually had to die again. Can you imagine having to die twice like Lazarus?

Can you imagine dying and going to heaven and then being called back to earth. Certainly it would be a blessing to see those you loved again on earth. But if heaven is as wonderful as God teaches then why would anyone come back to earth to enjoy some things but suffer other things?

If you have lived through other things before you know this pandemic will pass one way or another. God will see us through us. His main desire is that we believe Jesus is our Savior we may know we are forgiven and ready for heaven. God’s main desire is not to do miracles for us. Christ’s desire is to forgive us and give us faith to believe in Him so that one day we may be forgiven and join Him in heaven for all eternity.