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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Lazarus

John 11:1-45

Prayer: *Father God, I do again thank you for the cross, I thank you for the incredible sacrifice that you were willing to lay down in order to rescue and ransom us from the penalty of our sin, and Lord, I just again thank you for having us remember your cross. I pray today this morning as we are at communion, that you would give us an extra measure of your Holy Spirit's grace and power as we again look into your word, we may -- may we be renewed in the worship that we have and the ability to love and adore what it is you've done for us and love and adore you as well. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, this is the first Sunday of the month again and again this is the day that we remember the Lord Jesus and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with the disciples and there he celebrated a Passover supper with them. And we read of that in *Matthew 26:26-29*. It says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and*

when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Jesus took bread, he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and of his blood and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup to symbolically eat his flesh, to symbolically drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat the remembrance of this sacrifice on a regular basis which is what we are doing this morning, and we call that the Lord's table. We celebrate it once a month, and we do that by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, by asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, by confessing our sins, and then by participating in the elements. *John 6:53* says: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well, we have been following the life of Jesus and we've thus far made it to the 11th chapter of the Gospel of John. This is the chapter that has to do with Jesus raising Lazarus. *John 11:1-4* says this, it says: *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."

Well, there's a lot of information right from the start that John wants to convey, and he wants to convey just a few words here. We know from scripture that there was in fact more than one Lazarus. We also know that there was more than one town called Bethany. So John tells us this was the Lazarus of Bethany and this is the Bethany that Martha and Mary lived in. Now John is also making the assumption that we know a little bit about these two sisters, Mary and Martha, because we've been introduced to them before. In *Luke 10:38* it describes this incident, it says this, it says: *Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."*

So we learn that Jesus has been a house guest of Martha and Mary and that he knew them well enough to settle a dispute that had arisen between both sisters. This dispute has become to some an iconic display of the difference between those who worship with their hearts and their minds and those who worship with their hands and their feet. Actually I think it's a mistake to pit one against the other when what Jesus was really saying was that given the opportunity to sit at the feet of God himself or to sweep floors and bake bread and scrub dishes, well then Mary who made that choice to sit at Jesus' feet, then Mary had chosen well. And John goes on in the next verse to further identify this Mary with this act of worship in *John 11:2*. He says: *It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill.* We'll see that in the next chapter of John, John 12, but he's describing Mary being overwhelmed with gratitude that Jesus has raised her brother Lazarus from the dead and so she's anointing his feet, but that's in the future. In the present all Mary and Martha both knew was that their brother Lazarus was gravely sick. Verse 3 says: *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.

You know, I gave a message and we're still doing the series, this is a couple of -- dating back a couple of weeks, I said when God doesn't make sense, and I was speaking then about Elijah and how counterintuitive God's instructions to him seemed to be. God was in the process of growing faith in this prophet and God is still in the process of doing the very same thing in our lives today. And the way that he grows faith is by testing and trying the faith that we have, stretching it to make it grow, because faith is not faith until it is tested. I mean, any test of faith is going to challenge us to believe that God is good or faithful or trustworthy when the arguments for that no longer make a lot of sense. And in Elijah's case, God sent him, he sent him from the center of power, Ahab and Jezebel's throne room, into this place of complete and utter obscurity with the brook Cherith where the only companions he had were birds who were feeding him twice a day. And we've seen that that was just the start of a journey that we've been following for a few weeks now wherein Elijah's ideas about God just got turned upside down in the process of growing in him a faith that would be willing to trust him no matter what. Well that process, that process never stops. You see, we have to understand that faith is not something that God takes casually. *Hebrews 11:6* says: *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes*

to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. See, what matters most to God is faith. It's the source of our being made right with him. Romans 4:3 says: For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And so if faith is the source and the ground of our being made righteous in God's sight, well, does it not follow that God would be about the business of growing faith in each of us? Well, this is exactly what we see Jesus doings in the lives of Lazarus, in the lives of his family, and the disciples and even the crowd around them. What we see him doing is he's growing their faith by stretching it, by testing it, by trying it, often times by engaging in things that don't make a great deal of sense. In fact, one of the reasons why we have these accounts in scripture is that they allow us, as I've said many times, to get back up to the ten thousand foot level to see the lives of the saints from the perspective that only time can give. I mean, we see that a lot of what didn't make sense to Elijah, in the end it makes perfect sense when we understand that God's goal for Elijah's life was to grow faith in him. Well, the same applies to our text this morning because what we're seeing here is that Jesus is about the business of growing faith. And here's the hard part. Often times that very process seems to make very little sense. With that in mind, I guess you could call this communion message when God really, really doesn't make any sense, because Jesus' actions made

no sense to the disciples, they made no sense to Martha and Mary, they made no sense even to the people who were surrounding Lazarus's death.

Let me just take a look at each of these. First of all, Jesus made no sense to the disciples. Let me pick up at verse 3. It says: *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. Well, scripture declares that Jesus has this deep affection for Martha and Mary and Lazarus. We know that he stayed at their home and we knew that he knew them well. So we have the sisters approaching Jesus and they tell him that his beloved Lazarus is gravely ill. And Jesus appears to be saying to him, don't worry, Lazarus is not going to die from this. But then Jesus does something absolutely confounding. What he does is nothing. Verse 6 said: *So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.*

Now, I want you to imagine that you're one of his disciples and you're trying to figure this out, and you know that Jesus deeply loves Lazarus, you know that his sisters have made this desperate plea to him for his help, and yet for some reason Jesus is just

lingering. He's just kind of hanging out. He's there -- he's there for two full days. Well, I would think it doesn't take a rocket scientist to conclude that since Jesus has said, first of all, this illness is not going to end in death and that he's lingering there for a few days, that Lazarus is probably pretty much okay. Imagine how you would feel when Jesus announces to the disciples in *John 11:14*: "*Lazarus has died.*" If you did that to a dear friend of yours, I guarantee you would certainly have your friends scratching their heads. No doubt the disciples were scratching theirs. I mean, this is how you show love and concern to a dear friend who is sick? I mean, how many times have you and I thought if God was really loving and kind and caring and all powerful, and whatever -- you fill in the blank -- well, then surely he would have -- again, fill in the blank. I mean, it is confounding when God doesn't act or respond like we think he should. Maybe he knows more than we do. A lot more than we do. You see, our perspective goes from the day of our birth and it projects forward, but it projects forward usually only just a couple of months. I mean, think for a second how many of us are thinking right now of next summer. It's not on our minds at all, I mean, we don't think forward at all that way. Think about God's perspective. It dates backwards from before the foundations of the world and then it projects forward not just through today but through to eternity. I mean to God, all of us fit on that time

line and not the one that we think that we're on. We think short term; he thinks eternally. And the result is we are often disappointed in God. I mean, he appears silent, sometimes he appears distant, sometimes he appears uncaring because he's not supplying us with what seemed to be imminently reasonable answers to the perspective that we have of ourselves. I mean, we feel we don't get what we asked God for even though we've asked for legitimate things. So our unanswered prayers shout to us that God probably really doesn't care or if he cares, he cares for somebody else and he just really doesn't care for me. Our problem is really is a clash of perspectives and the two perspectives are ours and God's. Tim Keller sums up our dilemma neatly in one sentence. He says this, he says: "God will only give you what you would have asked for if you knew everything he knows." That kind of goes by pretty fast. Let me read that again. "God will only give you what you would have asked for if you knew everything he knows." See, the fact is we don't even remotely know everything that he knows. Not only do we not know it, he even tells us so. He says through Paul in *1 Corinthians 13:12*: *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.* You see, part of seeing dimly is our tendency to see him time and again interacting with those who we know that he loves in ways that are absolutely confounding.

Let me pick up at verse 6. It says: *So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"* See, the disciples are logical people, they're thinking this through and they're thinking in their minds Jesus, you just told us that Lazarus wasn't going to die and you've been hanging around here for a couple of days, and now you're telling us it's time to go to him. I don't get it. When it's time to go, you want to stay; when it's time to stay, you want to go. And as long as Lazarus is okay, why in the world would you want to go back there? Last time we were there they tried to stone you. So why do you want to go now, especially since you've been lingering here for the last few days? Well, Jesus says this in *John 11:9*, he says: *Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in a 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."* You see, the Jewish day was divided into equal parts, day and night, that's what he was talking about twelve hours in a day. Each day had twelve hours of daylight, twelve hours of night and what varied with the seasons was the length of each of those hours. And in the summertime those hours were longer than 60 minutes; in the winter they were shorter than 60 minutes, but there was always twelve hours of daylight. And now Jesus's

statement actually has been bled of some of its meaning because for us nighttime is not the same as it was for them. Nighttime for us could be as bright as we want it to be. Nighttime is not much different than daytime if you have electricity. But in Jesus's day, nighttime was that time of profound darkness and unless there was a full moon, you couldn't see your hand in front of you. What Jesus meant is that his heavenly Father had provided an open window of daylight to operate in that was as fixed as the hours in a day. And what he was saying is it's important to take advantage of that window regardless of how it looks to human eyes, because that window is going to start closing and darkness is going to start closing in and life is going to be far more prone to stumbling in the dark. And the light that Jesus was talking about was not the sun, it wasn't even the moon; it was himself. He said in *John 9:4*, he said: *"We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."* We have a cliché that says "make hay while the sun shines," and Jesus was kind of restating that by saying "make the kingdom advance while the Son of Man still shines in your presence." But then he gets down to a practical aspect of what he's discussing. We pick up again at verse 11. He says: *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."

You want to talk about not making any sense? You want to talk about confounding? Jesus stays when he's supposed to go, he goes when he's supposed to stay, he tells the disciples that Lazarus's illness is not unto death and then he flat out tells them that he's died. Then he adds now he wants to go to where Lazarus is in spite of the fact that previously having gone there they tried to stone him. You look at Thomas's response and it's as much an indication of his profound confusion and resignation as it is his determination to follow Jesus even when doing so makes no sense at all. He said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." We know that when push came to shove, Thomas and the other disciples all deserted Jesus. Thomas didn't flat out deny Jesus like Peter did but he was among those who fled. Nevertheless, Thomas's attitude was the attitude of faith, and what he's saying is that even though everything in me is telling me this is crazy, Jesus, you are my Lord, you are heading into a death trap, if that's where you want to go, I'll go with you. As one commentator put it, Thomas was a

combination of devotion and despondency. Nevertheless, he was determined to follow his Lord.

As the elders begin distributing the bread, I would like us to ask ourselves would you be willing to do the same thing especially in light of the fact that so much made so little sense? Jesus may not ask us to die with him but many times we've all had to wrestle with the temptation that he's asking far too much when he wants us to live for him, especially when life doesn't seem to make any sense. So the question I want to ask this morning is are you willing, like Thomas, to trust him even then?

As the bread is being given out, I would also like us to consider this warning that God gives about communion itself. *1 Corinthians 11:28* says this, it says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* You know, I say this every month, communion is extremely serious business and if you take it in an unworthy manner, you are literally courting disaster. What I'm saying here is that if

you're not absolutely confident that you are a child of the King or perhaps you first need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you bring your sacrifice to the altar, then when the elements come to you, just pass them on. Again, no one's going to look at you or think you strange, it's just something that happens that people need to get right first. I also say that on the other hand we can make the mistake of thinking that unless we're spotlessly perfect we're unworthy to receive communion, and that too is a mistake, because being a child of the King doesn't mean that we don't sin and it doesn't mean that we never fail. What it means is that we recognize salvation as a gift that no one is ever capable of earning by being good. Again, as Dane Ortland puts it: "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." But you know, it also means that when we do fail, we are aware of the fact that we have sinned because we have the Holy Spirit of God who lives inside us, and God's Spirit is there inside us convicting us, grieving us, and so we grieve as children who know we have a Father who longs to forgive us, who longs to cleanse us.

God says in *1 John 1:9*: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the King doesn't mean that we

are sinless. It means that when we sin, we have an advocate with the Father. And an advocate is someone who simply speaks on our behalf. *1 John 2:1* says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* So because we have Jesus's righteousness, an alien righteousness that does not belong to us, it belongs to him but it's given to us, because we have Jesus's righteousness and not our own, we are free to eat from his table. So if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Christ has purchased for you. He lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of heaven, so that we could partake in this very meal. And as we're sitting and meditating, take some time this morning to ask yourself: Am I willing to trust Jesus when life makes no sense at all?

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter, the 23rd verse says: For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." So take, and eat.

Well, like I said, Jesus made no sense to the disciples. And if

Jesus made no sense to the disciples, how do you think he made any sense to Martha and Mary? As the elders come forward to distribute the cup, I would like you to just consider these statements. In John's gospel, the 11th chapter -- just tuck them away in your head for a minute. This is *John 11:17*, it says: *Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.* Verse 21 says: *Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."* And then in verse 32 it says: *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."* You see, Mary and Martha give voice to the kind of struggle writ large that each of us have putting our faith to the test. There was a whole set of facts that they knew. You see, they knew that Jesus loved them. They knew that if Jesus was there, he could have made a difference, and they both state it in the exact same way. And what is remarkable is the honesty with which they approached Jesus. They basically are saying Jesus, all you had to do was show up and this wouldn't have happened. This really gets to the heart of our struggles with faith. You see, Martha and Mary flat out state what a rational assessment of the facts indicate. Rationally looking at all the facts, Jesus makes no sense whatsoever to Martha and Mary at this point, but they don't complain and they don't even accuse, but hanging in the air of their statements is this clear combination of despondency and

devotion, and that is what marks the process of faith being birthed and grown. *"Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died."* Consider the times in your own life when your faith has been stretched. Just consider the times that that took place and what it took to make that faith grow. I can almost guarantee you that it was not good times and great blessings but instead hard times and scant blessings, times when the enemy whispered in your ear that this God and that faith is itself a waste of time and a joke, times when common sense itself is telling you that a God of love, a God who is all caring, a God who is all powerful, he wouldn't do what he's doing to you. This is when you know that your faith is being tried and tested and stretched. But you know, it's not like we haven't been forewarned. God tells us this in *1 Peter 1:6*, he says: *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith -- more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire -- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

You know, Martha and Mary passed their testing, their trying, they passed it with flying colors. But you also have to know that they weren't simply disappointed. They were crushed. I mean, they were crushed by the events that had unfolded. The brother whom they

dearly loved was dead and buried in a tomb. And I'm sure the enemy delighted in whispering in their ears how badly Jesus Christ had let them down. And yet we can see that they refused to go there. We pick up at verse 21, it says: *Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But" -- that's a very important but -- "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."* You see, Martha in the midst of this severe test, she refuses to go anywhere but where her faith in Jesus is going to lead her, and she's a model of what we need to do when life no longer makes sense, when circumstance seems to shout that God doesn't care, we go back to Jesus. But we go back to the Jesus of the cross. And we ask ourself the same question that Paul asked in *Romans 8:32*, he said: *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* Now I'd be the first one to say that sometimes you have to ask that question through gritted teeth. You know, sometimes life throws circumstances at us that make us wonder is God really for us? Well, it's then that the vision of Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God who came to this earth and lived his life perfectly, beaten, bloodied, abandoned, and hanging on a cross in order to pay for my sin, that vision, that vision is what allows me to trust him when circumstance begins

to shout otherwise. Martha and Mary didn't yet have the proof that we have because Jesus had not yet gone to the cross, and all they had was his friendship and his presence and his word. But that was enough. In verse 25 it says: *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."* You have to understand that when Martha said this, Lazarus was nothing more than a rotting corpse in a tomb. Verse 28 says: *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.*

Please don't miss what God is saying here. You know, could Jesus

have healed Lazarus before the disease took his life? Of course he could have. Well then is Jesus in some way responsible for this pain that's descending like a blanket on all of these people whom he loved? Well the answer is yes, he is. Jesus understands that some things grow only through pain, and he understands that by experience. This is what *Hebrews 5:7* says, it says: *In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.* Are you saying then that Jesus willingly allowed his dearest friends to suffer the pain of losing Lazarus in order to grow their faith? That's exactly what I'm saying. But understand something that is absolutely critical to this discussion, and that is Jesus felt that pain as well. Jesus loved Martha, he loved Mary, and he loved Lazarus, and he hated what death does in general and what it did specifically to his dear, dear friends. But here's the critical part to grasp. He was willing to allow that pain in order to grow faith in his friends. Verse 34 says: *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?"* Well, leave it to the crowd to say what everybody else is thinking, I mean they just give expression to it, I mean they knew

that Jesus was this great miracle worker, and by this time he'd already healed the sick, he'd already fed the hungry, he'd given sight to the blind, and so they wondered, Lazarus is a dear, dear friend of Jesus, why would Jesus let somebody so close to him die? Verse 38 says: *Then Jesus, deeply moved again, 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?"*

You see, there is -- there's three different groups of people who could make no sense whatsoever of Jesus' response to Lazarus's sickness. The first group is the disciples. Thomas summed them up well in his devotion and in his despondency because Jesus didn't need to make sense to Thomas. I mean Jesus -- Thomas knew that Jesus was Lord, he knew he was ready to follow him wherever it was he was going even if it seemed absolutely crazy at the time. So he said: *So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."* Another group was Martha and Mary. And at the height of Martha's pain, she is still able to say: *"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."* And finally there's this crowd. Jesus addresses

every one of these three groups, and he addresses the crowd this way in verse 41, he says: *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."* Now admittedly Jesus had not made much sense to the disciples, he had not made much sense to Martha and Mary, and had not made much sense to the crowd, but with his next three words he made perfect sense. Verse 43 says: *When he had said these things, he cried out in 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.*

You know, if you are having a hard time this morning trying to make sense of your life, trying to believe that God still loves you, still cares for you when circumstance seems to be shouting otherwise, realize that you are not alone. I mean, even those who were the closest to Jesus were at times profoundly confounded by what he said and what he did, but not one word was wasted and not one deed was idle. I mean they all had a point, they all had a purpose and that purpose was to grow them in their faith. It may be 2,000 years later, but God is still in the same business of

doing the exact same thing today. Sometimes it's just not that easy to see. Sometimes we just need to ask for his help in finding it. We need to look to the cross. We need to look to the Savior. Take a moment to thank him for his word, for his flesh, for his blood shed for us.

1 Corinthians, the 11 chapter, the 25th verse says this: *In the same manner he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."* Take, and drink.

This is the part that we call heads, heart, and feet, and I just -- in keeping with what I've been saying here, I just -- I'm asking you to think if you know anybody who's having a crisis of faith or just a crisis in general or a struggle where life doesn't seem to make sense, and I just want to issue a bit of a caution. Because when we are confronted with folks who are in that kind of a situation, life doesn't seem to make sense, we often times think it's our job to make it make sense and so we wind up being either a cop or lawyer or psychiatrist for God. I don't think that's what God is looking for from us. I think what God is looking for from us is that overly used word "empathy." You know, God says *weep with those who weep; rejoice with those who rejoice*. There is nothing more powerful than somebody weeping with you. I've wept

with people and I've had people weep with me. That cuts across everything. You don't need an explanation if you're willing to weep with somebody. You don't need an explanation if you're willing to rejoice with somebody. What God is saying is that the journey of faith for us is going to constantly involve us in situations that are baffling, confounding, faith challenging. And if you know somebody who's in a situation like that, come alongside them and just say I ache with you. Weep with them. You know, if they have questions that you can answer, fine, but don't think that that's what God desperately needs. He needs us to be his heart, his hands, and his feet. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for the incredible lessons that you are teaching thousands of years ago and teaching today. I thank you for Lazarus, Lord, I thank you for the example that he was. I thank you for the absolutely confounding way that you seem to be involved in surrounding all of the people and all of the circumstances that were surrounding this death. I just think of the confusion that the disciples had, that Martha and Mary had, that the crowd had, and yet Lord, you knew exactly what you were doing, you understood exactly where you were going, and you understood exactly what the point and the purpose was and that was your glory. Father, give us the ability when friends, when those around us are struggling with that part where they are confused and

*confounded, that you would give us the ability to just come
alongside them and give them the comfort that only you can give,
and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*