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MC LEAN BIBLE CHURCH
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>> LON: Thank you. Thank you, Marty.

Whew. Thank you.

Thank you.

Well, you don't mind if I cry a little bit, do you?

It doesn't matter, I don't care whether you care or not. I can't stop.

You know, I got a letter a number of years ago, I broke down and wept one Sunday when I was talking about my dad on Father's Day. And this dear gentleman wrote me a letter and said, you know, don't ever apologize for crying in the pulpit. He said the church would be stronger if we had more tears in the pulpit.

And so --

(Applause.)

>> LON: Listen, though, I do want to echo what Brenda said in the video. A dream two people have is wonderful. But without a group of people like you guys adopting the dream and making it yours and getting behind it, it -- this never would have happened. So we are so grateful to the people, all of you at McLean Bible Church, for taking this vision, making it your own. Dreaming the dream with us. There were a lot of obstacles there. Political, financial, zoning.

But you know what?

Through it all the Lord Jesus said I'm building Jill's house. And here it is. So thank you guys. A big thank you. Give yourselves a hand. We appreciate it.

(Applause.)

>> LON: Okay. If you're at our Prince William campus or law Loudoun or down in the edge, I just want to tell you, we are a wreck right here. I'm a wreck. But we are so glad that you're with us. And so when I say three, all of you are going to say good morning to us and we're going to say good morning to them.

1, 2, 3.

>> ALL: Good morning.

>> LON: It's great to be together today as McLean Bible Church. And I hope that many of you will come over even from our campuses and go see what the Lord's done at Jill's house.

You know, we're in a series entitled people Jesus met, and today we're going to talk about one of the most well-known people Jesus ever met, a fellow named Lazarus. But Jesus just didn't meet this guy. Oh, no. He did a whole lot more than that for him. And we want to go back and look at the story of what happened with Jesus and Lazarus. And then we want to wind all that forward and we want to talk about, well, what difference does that make to you and me today?

So John Chapter 11 is our passage. And we're going to begin at verse 1. The Bible says a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister, Martha. So the sister sent word to

Jesus, because he wasn't in town. Saying, Lord, the one whom you love, that is Lazarus, is sick. And when Jesus heard this, he said to his disciples, this sickness will not end in death.

No, he said. It is for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it.

Jesus turns to his disciples and said, hey, you remember that man born blind in John 9, and how I healed him and displayed my glory?

Well, fellows, Lazarus' sickness is going to give me another platform to do something that reveals my glory as the Son of God. So fellow, just watch.

Verse 5.

Jesus loved Martha -- and his sister -- Lazarus, yet when he heard Lazarus was sick, Jesus stayed where he was for two more days.

Now, this is a key element in the events of John 11. And I want to make sure we all see it. And that is that Jesus made Mary and Martha wait for two days before he responded to their situation.

Do we all see that?

Do we see that?

>> ALL: Yes.

>> LON: Good. Okay. Verse 11. Jesus said to his disciples, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going to wake him up. And the disciples, are, fine, Lord, if he sleeps, he'll get better.

Jesus had been speaking of Lazarus' death. But his disciples thought he was talking about natural sleep. Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

And I'm glad for your sakes I was not there so that you may believe. But let us go to him.

Verse 17. And upon their arrival in Bethany, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

Bethany was less than 2 miles from Jerusalem.

Verse 20, when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him but Mary stayed at home. And Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

But I know that God will give you whatever you ask so if you ask him, you can even raise him from the dead.

Now, let's stop and note that Martha makes a huge theological mistake in what she says here in the first part of this verse.

She said, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Her mistake is she assumes that in order for Jesus to heal somebody, he has to be physically present. Well, Jesus has already demonstrated throughout the New Testament that that's not true. You remember in Luke Chapter VII, the C.

Anturian had a sick little servant. And he said I am not fit for you to come under my roof, Jesus. You don't need to come to my house, but just speak the word. Even though you're yards and yards away, just speak the word and my servant will be healed. And that's exactly what happened. The point is that Jesus' miracles of healing were not limited by whether he was physically present or not.

Folks, if Jesus had wanted to heal Lazarus he could have done it from 30 miles away, 100 miles away, if he wanted to do it.

Jesus said to her, Martha, your brother shall rise again.

And Martha answered: I know that he will rise again, in the resurrection on the last day.

Then Jesus said to her: Martha, I am the resurrection. And the life.

See, remember what Martha had just said. She said, Lord, I know God will give you whatever you ask. So please ask him to raise Lazarus back to life.

Jesus responds and says, hey, Martha, I don't need to ask God the father to do this, I have the power to do it all by myself.

John 5:26, Jesus said for as the Father has life in himself so he has granted the son to have life in himself.

On 5:21. Jesus said for just as the father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the son gives life to whomever he wishes.

Folks, this is so important. When it came to the resurrection, Jesus wanted to convert Martha from believing in a doctrine to believing in a person. Namely, himself, the living, risen Lord of life.

You know, I was out in the lobby shaking hands not long ago. And an individual came up to me and said, hey, Lon, you're Jewish and you believe in Jesus, right?

And I said yeah. And they said I'm curious, do you still celebrate Passover, do you still celebrate Yom Kippur, the day of atonement and all these Jewish festivals?

And I said no, I don't. Tell Lee tell you why. The reason is what Paul says in Colossians 17. All of these festivals is a shadow but the reality is found in Christ. And I said to this person, Jesus is my living Passover. Jesus is my living atonement before God. Why should I celebrate the shadow when I have the reality through my Lord and savior, Jesus Christ?

And friend, the same thing is true of the resurrection. As followers of Christ, we don't believe in the doctrine of the resurrection as followers of Christ, we are joined at the hip with the living resurrection himself.

Hallelujah. Amen?

Hallelujah.

Jesus went on and said, he who believes in me, Martha, shall live even if he dies. And everyone who lives and believes in me, shall never die.

You say, Lon, what does he mean by that?

Friend, he means exactly what he just said. He means as believers in Jesus our human body may die, but we ourselves, our spirits will never die. Instead we go to be immediately with the Lord.

For ever. This is why Paul said, 1 Corinthians 5:8. The body dies, but to be absent from the body when the body dies is to be present with the Lord. We don't go into soul sleep or some other crazy nonsense. We go right to be with the Lord. Which is why Paul said Philippians 1:23, I desire to depart this earth and be with Christ. Because that's what happens to believers when they leave this world.

Listen, my friends, this is God's mighty promise over death to every true believer in Jesus, that we will show -- shall live even when we

die. That when we're living now, we shall never die. And God wants us to ride this mighty promise like a surf board right through the grave and on to the shores of heaven.

Hallelujah. There's a lot of hallelujah in this chapter, I got to tell you that.

Wake up. Wake up. Let's go. All right. Verse 26.

Jesus asked Martha, do you believe this? That he who believes in me will never die?

And she said, yes, Lord, I believe you are the Christ. The anointed one. The messiah. The Son of God who was to come into the world.

Now he's got her where he wants her. She's not trusting a doctrine anymore, she's trusting the living, risen resurrected Lord of glory.

That's where you got to be. That's where you got to be.

Verse 28: After Martha had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside and said, the teacher is here and asking for you.

When -- so Mary got up and went. And when Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. That sound familiar?

That's exactly what Martha said. You think the two of them had been talking about this?

Yes. Okay.

Verse 33. And when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jewish people who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in His spirit and troubled. He asked: Where have you laid him?

And they replied, come and see, Lord.

Then verse 35: Jesus wept.

Then the Jewish people said: See how he loved him. Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?

Verse 38: And Jesus once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone rolled across the entrance. Take away the stone, Jesus said.

But Lord, said Martha, by this time there will be a bad odor. For he's been in that tomb four days.

And Jesus said to her: Martha, didn't I say to you that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?

Now, girl, move that stone.

Move that stone.

So they removed the stone.

Then Jesus looked up and said: Father, I thank you that you have heard me. And I know that you always hear me. But I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe you sent me.

And when he had said this, Jesus called out in a loud voice:

Lazarus, come out.

Then the dead man came out we need it again.

Hallelujah. The dead man came out. His hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and with a cloth around his face. Jesus said to the people there: Unbind him and let him go.

Therefore, many of the Jewish people who had come to visit Mary and who beheld what Jesus had done, believed in him. Well, I guess so.

Hello?

But some of them went to the rabbis and told them what Jesus had done. Therefore the chief priests and the rabbis convened a meeting, and said, what are we accomplishing?

This man is performing many miracles. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him.

Wouldn't that be wonderful?

Yeah.

And then the Romans will come and take away our position and our nation.

So from that day on the rabbis plotted to take Jesus' life. And I might just add for the sake of completeness, what we're told in the next chapter, John 12:10, and the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many Jewish people were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

So, friends, did Jesus turn Lazarus' death into mighty glory for himself? Like he said he was going to do at the beginning of this chapter?

Did he?

You bet your life he did. You bet your life.

Now, that's as far as we're going to go in our passage. Because we're going to stop now and answer our most important question. Out at Loudoun and Prince William and down on the edge and here at Tysons, are you ready?

You sure?

All right. Nice deep breath. Here we go, everybody.

One, two, three:

Yes. You say Lon, so what. You know, this is a great chapter, would you, what a great chapter. But I don't exactly see how any of this has relevancy to my everyday life right now.

Let's talk about that.

Remember what we said earlier. We said that a key element in the events of John Chapter 11 is that Jesus made Mary and Martha wait for two days before responding to their situation and coming to Bethany. And you know, Mary and Martha were both pretty unhappy about this.

Remember what they said to the Lord. They both said -- and I'd like to give it the proper emphasis now that I think they really said it with -- they both said: Lord, if you had been here, our brother wouldn't have died.

That's how I think it was really said, my friends.

And what exactly are Mary and Martha accusing Jesus of by saying this?

Well, they were accusing him of two things. Number one, they were accusing him of being late.

You weren't here on time, Lord. You weren't here on time.

And number two, they're accusing him of messing everything up. Their plan. They had a plan. Their plan was to see Jesus come heal their brother. He messed that plan up. And they're not happy about it. Because he didn't do what they wanted him to do. And He didn't do it when they wanted him. This isn't just a problem of Mary and Martha,

this is a problem Lon Solomon has. In almost every situation I know what I want God to do. And in every situation just about, I know how I want God to do it. And I always know when I want God to do it, which is right now.

Right now.

Lord. Lord.

But you know, just like Mary and Martha, God often delays and makes me wait. And it drives me crazy. Crazy.

Now, can you guys relate to any of that?

Yeah?

Okay. Well, you say I can't, Lon. And it raises a question.

The question is, why didn't Jesus go immediately to Bethany and heal Lazarus?

And far more importantly, why doesn't God immediately step in and solve all my problems when I ask him to?

Well, friend, the answer to that question is found in Isaiah 55:8. God says, my thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are my ways -- your ways my ways. And I might add, neither is your timing my timing, says the Lord. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways. And my thoughts higher than your thoughts. And I would like to add, and my timing higher than your timing. You see, friends, the reason Jesus delayed in going to Bethany is because with God timing is everything.

Listen. Jesus did not want to get to Bethany when Lazarus was still living and heal him. He wanted to get to Bethany when Lazarus was stone cold, smelling in the grave dead and raise him up so that he could get maximum glory from it all.

Look, to come to town and heal the man, well, that's glorious. All right?

To come to town and raise a man who's been dead for four days, to raise him from the dead, well, that's maximum glorious. You understand?

Yeah.

And the point I want to make is that God's perfect plan for Lazarus had a perfect timing. And as followers of Christ we need to learn this lesson from John Chapter 11, namely for God to get maximum glory from our lives, our lives must run on his timing and not on our timing. And that means that often we must be willing to wait for God's perfect timing to mature for our life.

Hey, the Bible tells us this all the time.

Psalm 27:14. King David said wait on the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait on the Lord.

Psalm 37:7. David says rest in the Lord and wait -- what's the next word, say it out loud -- patiently. Wait patiently for him.

Now, there is an unAmerican word right there. Patiently. It's unAmerican. We don't want to wait for anything. We got instant oatmeal, instant grits, instant ice tea, instant cream of wheat. We got it all. It's instant. We're not waiting for anything. This is a counter cultural word. As Americans, the word patient is not one of our cultural practices.

But that's what the Bible says.

Hey, Psalm 130:5. David says I wait for the Lord, and in his word while I'm waiting, I do hope.

And finally, Isaiah 49:23, a promise from God who says those who wait on me shall never be put to shame.

Folks, remember, God is never early. That's too bad. Because we always want him early. But God is never early. Did you notice none of these verses said catch up with God because he came by early and you missed him?

Did you notice that?

They all said, wait, God is never early. You know what?

By the same token, God is never late. Even though most of us just like Mary and Martha, often accuse him of being late, God is never late. Friends, God is always right on schedule. His schedule. And God is always right on time, his time. We see this truth throughout the Bible repeated over and over and over again. When Moses and the Israelites were trapped at the red sea and pharaoh and his chariots with getting ready to swoop down on him. You saw the movie, you know how this looked. You know, I'm sure at that moment Moses and the Israelites were thinking that God was late. But friends, hey, God showed up right on schedule. Didn't he?

And think about it, now. God wanted all of those Egyptian chariots to be drown in the red sea. Why?

Because that way they couldn't cross into the Sinai and pursue the Israelites and try to recap it your them. And kill them over in the Sinai. But you know what?

When Moses and the Israelites first got to the red sea, the chariots and pharaoh weren't there yet. It was no good to open the red sea them. There were no chariots to close it back on then. God had to wait. There was a timing. And God was right on schedule. I think about David, running away from Saul in the wilderness. Thinking why didn't God deal with Saul? : I'm sure he thought God was late. But without David raising even his little finger and this enabled David to consolidate his kingship over Israel without a bloody Civil War, David realized that as always, God was right on schedule. And when Ruth and Naomi wondered back into Bethlehem as destitute widow, I'm sure they thought God was late for them. But then there was Boaz, and he showed up right on schedule. And Ruth became the great, great-grandmother of king David and the great, great, great-grandmother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Was God right on schedule?

You bet he was.

And finally, I think of Mordecai, and he saw Hamem getting the okay and to wipe out every single Jew in the empire. I'm sure Mordecai thought why he was late but Ester went to ski the king right on schedule and everything worked out, didn't it?

Let's admit, let's be honest that just like Moses, and just like David, and just like Ruth, and just like Naomi, and just like Mordecai, and like Mary and Martha, every one of us struggle with the conflict between God's timing and our timing. Let's be honest and admit that.

I mean, many of us here to be -- plan to be Mary at this point in our

lives. But in God's timing, we're still single. Many of us plan to have that new job or that new promotion by this time, but in God's timing, we don't have it.

Many of us plan to be financially secure by this point in our life, but in God's timing, the economy tanked. Many of us planned to have a household of children, full of children running around by this point in our life, but in God's perfect timing, we don't have any.

And many of us planned to go to a certain college or to make a certain ball team or to make a certain cheer leading squad, or to have our career much farther along than it is right now, but in God's timing, those things haven't happened.

And so as followers of Jesus, what do we do with this?

Well, we go to the Bible. And we find a verse that says, proverbs 16:9, the mind of man plans his way.

Are you good at this?

I'm great at this. I'm great at planning my own way. I got it all worked out. And it seems great to me. But the Lord directs his steps. You can't work out the plan without taking steps. God's in charge of the steps. And you know what?

God's in charge of the plan too. We just don't realize it sometime. Now true men and women of God believe this verse.

True men and women of God believe that God has better ways of getting us where we need to be, when we need to be there, than we could ever plan, than we could ever dream up for ourselves.

And therefore true men and women of God have no problem waiting on the Lord even if it means years waiting on the Lord. Listen, because they are totally confident that not only is God's will for their life perfect, but they are just as confident that God's timing for their life is also perfect.

That's why when we're contemplating something, we always need to ask two questions: Not just what is God's will concerning this situation, have I discerned that, we also need to ask the question, have I discerned God's timing for this situation?

Friends, we can identify the will of God correctly. And if we get the timing wrong, we can mess it up just as badly as determining the will of God wrong.

You say, Lon, I get that. I'm with you.

But here's my question. How do I know when God's asking me to wait and how do I know when God's asking me to act?

Well, that's a great question.

And I'll tell you the answer. God will use one of three tools -- or maybe a combination of them -- to tell you that he wants you to wait.

Tool number one are circumstances. Like when you don't get that promotion. You don't get that new job. You don't get into that college. You aren't able to have children. Hey, when God uses circumstances to tell us to wait on him, my friends, if we want God's best, and if we want God's finest, we will resist the temptation to take matters in our own hands and fleshly impetuosity, you might say God I'm going to myself. Don't do that.

Number two is tool number two, people in authority over us. Maybe it

can be our boss, our husband, or parents, or some government authority or someone else telling us, no, God is saying not yet. Maybe not at all. But certainly not yet.

Hey that's where I am with the uptown theater in Washington. You know, I want a campus of McLean Bible Church at the uptown theater in Washington, D.C. but the acting zoning administrator in Washington said no. So I'm waiting. Waiting on the Lord. Waiting on the Lord.

I'm not a prophet of the son of a prophet, but I believe with all of my heart one of these days we're going to have a campus at the uptown theater, but we're going to have it in God's timing, not in Lon's timing. Amen?

Amen. All right.

(Applause.)

>> LON: Finally e No. 3, how does God tell us to wait?

He tells us to wait by his own direct communication to our heart. This is the most common way he uses, Psalm 32:8, I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel you and guide you. You say how does he do that?

Friends, he does it on your knees. By communicating to you directly. You say, well exactly what does it sound like?

What should I be looking for?

Folk, I can't answer that question. God communicates to every single person uniquely and differently. And this is why we urge you to have your quiet time every day. This is why we urge you to be in the word of God and to be in prayer and seeking the face of God so you're getting to know him intimately and learning to hear his voice to you.

You learn it. You'll hear it.

So let's conclude. When God made Mary and Martha wait for him to act, it wasn't because he forgotten about them. And it wasn't because he was insensitive and uncaring about their need. It was because he was setting everything up so that Ephesians 3:20. They had asked come heal our brother. What did the Lord do?

He went exceedingly abundantly beyond what they asked and raised the guy from the dead.

And listen, by the same token if you're a follower of Christ here today and God is asking you to wait on something in your life and he's getting -- you're getting frustrated and you're getting impatient, listen to me. God wants you to know, he has not forgotten about you any more than he forgot about Mary and Martha. God is not insensitive or uncaring about your need any more than he was with Mary and Martha. God is making you wait for the same reason he made Mary and Martha wait. And that is so that he can get every detail into perfect alignment to give you his maximum blessing.

Trust him.

He knows what he's doing. So let me leave you with the great advice of King David. He said Psalm 27:14, wait on the Lord. Be strong and take courage. Friends, when we're waiting on the Lord, we can be strong. We can be courageous. Wait patiently on the Lord. And why can we be strong and courageous while we're waiting?

Because we have a promise from God. We saw it earlier. The

marvelous promise of Isaiah 49:23, those who wait on me shall never be shamed.

Hold on to that promise. While I wait, I do hope in your word. That's what the Bible says.

And so let me leave you with a question to talk about today. Maybe ask somebody: Where is it that the Lord is asking you to wait on his timing instead of your own?

Or tell somebody, this is where God's asking me to wait on his timing instead of rushing out in my own. And that begs the follow-up question, which is: If God's asking you to wait, my friends, even if you have been waiting a long time, are you willing to obey God and wait?

Remember, we're not trying to be American Christians who want everything now. We're trying to be biblical Christians who know how to wait when God says wait.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as you know, of all the spiritual disciplines in the Christian life, Bible study, prayer, fasting, seeking the Lord, memorizing scripture, all of it, the most difficult for us as Americans is waiting on the Lord. We're just not wired that way Lord, in this culture. It is counter cultural for us to do that.

But as I said a moment ago, Lord, don't make us American Christians. Make us biblical Christians. Who know how to act when you say act, and to do it courageously and who know how to wait when you say wait. And we do it courageously.

Lord Jesus, for people who are waiting on you today, encourage their hearts, fortify their soul, give them the strength they need just to keep waiting and trusting you until your timing is perfect. And just as you did with Mary and Martha and Lazarus, just as you did with Moses, just as you did with Naomi e and Ruth, as you did with David, with Mordecai, you will be right on schedule. Help us believe that. Trust you. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. And what did God's people say?

What did you say?

There you go. Hey, God bless you. Thanks for being here today.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

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