Jesus Raises Lazarus



Scripture Reference: John 11:1-46

Suggested Theme: Jesus felt sad, and He cares when we are sad. We can pray when we're sad.

Memory Verse: "The Lord sees the good people. He listens to their prayers." Psalm 34:15, ICB

Story Overview:

Mary and Martha sent for Jesus when their brother, Lazarus, got sick. By the time Jesus arrived at the home of these good friends, Lazarus had already been dead for four days and was buried in a tomb. After grieving with His friends, Jesus raised Lazarus back to life.

Background Study:

This story is only recorded in the gospel of John. In fact, despite Jesus being very good friends with him, we only read about Lazarus in John chapters 11-12. It is another Lazarus in Jesus' story in Luke 16:19-31.

Lazarus' two sisters, Mary and Martha, are mentioned in Luke 10:38-42. John identifies Mary as the one who anointed Jesus' feet with oil and wiped them with her hair (John 12:1-8). This is not the woman in Luke 7:36-50.

Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem. It was a small settlement at the edge of the Judean desert on the slope of the Mount of Olives.

At the time Lazarus got sick, Jesus was preaching on the eastern side of the Jordan near the place where John the Baptist had baptised Him. Lazarus must have died just after Mary and Martha sent messengers to tell Jesus of his sickness. Jesus waited two days to go to Lazarus because he knew that this sickness would not end in death (verse 4). Add the travelling time of the messengers and Jesus together with the two days, and you will come up with four days. This was the amount of time that Lazarus was dead before Jesus came to him.

It was customary for a person to be buried on the same day as they died. The body was washed and anointed with spices. The Jews did not embalm bodies. They placed a cloth over the head and wrapped the hands and feet separately in strips of linen. The linen strips were then wrapped around the body over the clothing. Months after today's story, Jesus' body would be prepared in this same way (John 19:39-40 and 20:3-7).

Many bodies were buried in caves. There might be a number of niches in the tomb where the bodies of family members were placed. The tombs had a small entrance that was closed by rolling a big stone against it.

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It was usual for friends and family to visit and offer comfort at a time like this. It was Jewish custom to have three days of very heavy mourning and then four days of heavy mourning, followed by lighter mourning for the remainder of 30 days. Mary's "weeping" in verse 33 means loud wailing. This is in contrast to the word used for a quieter shedding of tears when Jesus "wept" in verse 35. John 11:33-35

Jesus empathised and shared this moment of sorrow with His friends. Even though He knew that Lazarus would be raised, He also knew Mary and Martha were disappointed He hadn't come before Lazarus died. He wept with them.

Jesus could have raised Lazarus from a distance or even prevented his death. That would have meant His friends would not have had to be sad. He knew that it was the will of the Father that Lazarus would die and that his rising up from the dead would show God's glory (verse 40). He did not raise Lazarus to make His friends happy. He raised Lazarus to show the glory of God.

The ever-practical Martha was shocked when Jesus asked for the stone to be rolled back. She knew the body would smell after this time had passed. Imagine how she and the others felt when Jesus called for Lazarus to come out (verse 43). It has been humorously noted that Jesus had to call Lazarus by name because if He had not, then who knows how many people would have walked out of the tombs that day!

Children enjoy the mental picture of a raised Lazarus hopping out of the tomb, unable to walk easily because his legs were wrapped up in burial cloths. Perhaps he even floated out of the tomb? Jesus had to tell the onlookers to take his grave clothes off and let him go (verse 44).

Give all your worries to him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7 ICB

Other Bible Verses About God's Care:

- 1 Peter 5:6-7
- Romans 8:35-39
- Hebrews 4:15-16

Way to Introduce the Story:

If it is appropriate for your group, you might like to discuss funerals that you or they have attended. Talk about the sadness and how we can pray to God because He understands. Children often find it easier to talk about these things than adults. "Today we are going to learn about a time when one of Jesus' friends died."

The Story:

Brother and sisters Mary, Martha and Lazarus were good friends to Jesus. They lived in the town of Bethany. Jesus liked to go to Bethany and visit His friends.

One time, when Jesus was far away preaching about God, Lazarus got sick. Mary and Martha were very worried about their brother. They thought he might die.

"Let's send someone to go and get our friend Jesus," the sisters said. "Jesus can help Lazarus get better." So Mary and Martha sent a messenger to find Jesus.

When the messengers found Jesus, they asked Him to hurry to Lazarus' house because he was very sick. Jesus said, "Don't worry; this sickness will not end in death." Jesus kept teaching the people for two more days before He travelled to Bethany.

After the two days had passed, Jesus told the disciples, "We have to go to Bethany because Lazarus has fallen asleep. I have to go wake him up." When He saw the disciples did not understand, He explained, "Lazarus is dead."

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The disciples were very confused while they were travelling to the town of Bethany. What did all this mean? How did Jesus know that Lazarus was dead? How could you “wake up” a dead person?

Finally, Jesus and the disciples arrived in Bethany. Lots of people had come to Mary and Martha’s house. Many of them were crying. Jesus was not surprised because He knew that they were all crying about Lazarus. Lazarus had been dead for four days.

Martha went out to meet Jesus. Martha was very sad, “Jesus,” she said, “if you had gotten here earlier then Lazarus would not have died!”

Jesus said to her, “Don’t worry, Martha, your brother will rise again.” Martha did not understand. She thought Jesus meant that Lazarus would be raised up on the last day of the world when all of God’s people were resurrected. She went to go get Mary.

When Mary heard that Jesus was in town, she quickly went to meet Him. She was so sad about Lazarus that she was crying very loudly when she said, “Jesus if You had been here sooner, then Lazarus would not have died.”

Jesus knew that everything would be all right, but He was very sorry to see Mary so sad. Jesus knows what it is like to feel very sad. He cared so much for Mary that He cried too.

Then Jesus asked someone to take Him to the place where Lazarus was buried. When Lazarus died, the family had to take care of his body. In those times, they put a cloth over the dead person’s head. Then they wrapped the hands and feet in strips of cloth. After that, they used long strips of cloth to wrap around the body until the person was all wrapped up. Sometimes, they put sweet-smelling perfumes like aloes in the clothes so that the body would not stink so much. They then put the body in a cave or a tomb and put a big stone over the door. Lots of family members were often buried in the same cave or tomb.

Lazarus was buried in a cave. Lots of people were gathered around it. When Jesus arrived at the cave, He asked the people to roll the stone out of the entrance. Martha gasped, “Jesus, how can we do that? Lazarus has been dead for four days. His body will stink.”

“Martha, just you wait and see. If you believe then you will see the glory of God.”

The people took away the big stone. After Jesus prayed, He called out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” What was Jesus doing? Didn’t He know that Lazarus was dead? What do you think was happening?

Everyone looked at the entrance of the tomb, and guess what they saw. Lazarus was coming out of the tomb, and he was alive! Everyone was so happy! Lazarus was alive. There was only one problem. Lazarus was alive, but he could not move. He was still all wrapped up in the burial clothes!

Jesus told the crowd, “Go ahead, and take his grave clothes off so he can move around.”

What a happy day this must have been in Bethany. At the beginning of the day, everyone was sad, but now they were happy. God and Jesus know what it is like to be sad. When we are sad, we can pray to God, and he will help us feel better.

Those who witnessed this event reacted in different ways. The story ends with some believing in Jesus, but others rushing off to report it to the Pharisees. The Pharisees grew to hate Him even more, and events led closer and closer to His arrest and eventual crucifixion.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

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Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

View this slideshow and download it from the original source:
https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/jesus-lazarus/

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- Who was Mary and Martha's brother? (Lazarus)
- Why was everyone crying when Jesus arrived at the home of Mary and Martha? (Lazarus was dead)
- What did Jesus do when he saw Mary and other Jews weeping? (Jesus wept)
- What happened when Jesus called Lazarus' name in front of the tomb? (Lazarus came alive and came out of the tomb)
- Lazarus being raised from the dead gave glory to whom? (God and God's Son)
- What did Jesus tell the people to do once Lazarus left the tomb? (Take off Lazarus' grave clothes and let him go)
- Is it sinful to be sad or to cry? (No)
- What do you think Mary and Marth learned from this experience?
- What does this story teach you about Jesus?

Reflection:

- What do you think Lazarus looked like when he walked out of the tomb?
- What do you think Lazarus smelled like when he walked out of the tomb?
- How do you think Mary and Martha felt when Jesus came to visit but Lazarus was already dead?
- How do you think Jesus felt when he saw Mary and other Jews weeping?
- Why do you think Jesus cried, even though He knew He'd bring Lazarus back to life?
- What do you think it was like for Lazarus to be raised from the dead? How do you think it felt for him?
- Why do you think Jesus chose to raise Lazarus from the dead, rather than heal him while he was sick?
- How do you think Jesus feels when we are sad?
- What can we do or think when we are sad that will help us?
- What is something you wonder about in this story?

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Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- Jesus' Love is a-Bubblin' Over Song
- Cast Your Burdens
- Yes! Jesus Loves Me
- J-E-S-U-S Song
- I'm All Wrapped Up, Tied Up, Tangled Up In Jesus
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Use rolls of toilet paper to "prepare a body for burial." Most of the children will want to volunteer to be the body.
- Make the above activity into a race. Teams could use a roll of toilet paper to wrap the body and then carry it to the "tomb." The first one in the tomb wins.
- Look up Bethany on a map.
- Play a simple word game. Bible Wordz Game is an adaptable game where children form words from letter tiles. The words relate to words found in the Bible lesson.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable "God's Story" printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Cut out a simple body shape (feet together, arms to the side) using thick paper or cardboard. Wrap it with strips of gauze. If you have access to an aloe vera plant, you can use this for the spices as you wrap. Aloe was a burial spice.
- Using thick paper or cardboard, cut out a simple body shape (feet together, arms to the side). Have children wrap the body with 1-2 layers of white toilet paper and then mist lightly with water. Repeat wrapping and misting until a "mummy" is formed. Gently press the wrapping after each mist. Allow to dry.

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- Use the dough to make a tomb and stone.
- Colour a picture of Jesus and add a simple, sad face :-(. Write “Jesus Cares When I Am Sad.”
- Print or write the words from 1 Peter 5:7 on a piece of paper with plenty of white space around the words. Guide children on how to decorate it with paints or crayons. “*Give all your worries to Him because He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7 ICB”*
- Make cards for people who are sick or are facing a struggle of some sort. Guide the children in being sensitive in their comments. Perhaps a simple sentence like “Jesus Loves You” would be appropriate.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page and worksheets about the raising of Lazarus (Calvary Curriculum)
- Printable, Crossword puzzle (Sermon 4 kids)
- Printable, Multiple choice worksheet (Sermon 4 kids)
- Printable, Word Puzzle (Sermon 4 kids)
- Printable, Maze (Sermon 4 kids)
- Printable, Wordsearch (Sermon 4 kids)
- Interactive group activities (Sermon 4 kids)

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