

Significance and Greatness of What Jesus Has Done

July 30th, 2014, Home Meeting at Miyota
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2014年7月30日、御代田家庭集会
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John

11:1 Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

11:2 Mary was the woman who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair. Her brother Lazarus was the one who was ill.

11:3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, saying, "Lord, the one whom you love is ill."

11:4 But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness is not meant to end in death. It is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

11:5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

11:6 Yet, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was for two more days.

11:7 After this, he told the disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

11:8 The disciples told him, "Rabbi, the Jewish leaders were just now trying to stone you to death, and you are going back there again?"

11:9 Jesus replied, "There are twelve hours in the day, aren't there? If anyone walks during the day he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.

11:10 But if anyone walks at night he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

11:11 These were the things he said. Then after this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am leaving to wake him up."

11:12 So the disciples told him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will get well."

11:13 Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was speaking about resting or sleeping.

11:14 Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died.

11:15 For your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let's go to him."

11:16 Then Thomas, who was called the Twin, told his fellow disciples, "Let's go, too, so that we may die with him!"

[International Standard Version]

John

11:45 Many of the Jews who had come with Mary and had observed what Jesus did believed in him.

11:46 Some of them, however, went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

Today, I would like to discuss with you the necessity, importance and greatness of what Jesus has done. It is not what Jesus taught. Needless to say, the teaching of Jesus is supreme for us. The problem is that we would never be able to put his teaching into practice perfectly. Unless Jesus works on us, we will hit a wall. This shows us the importance of paying more attention to what Jesus has done rather than what Jesus has taught. Let us read the last two verses again.

John

11:45 Many of the Jews who had come with Mary and had observed what Jesus did believed in him.

11:46 Some of them, however, went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

We see the words, "what Jesus did" in verse 45 and there is an expression, "what Jesus had done" in verse 46. To understand all things Jesus did during his life in this world as the Lord, needless to say, we need to read through the four Gospels.

Luke stated in his book, "I wrote about everything Jesus did and taught from the beginning." Actually, it was exactly the same as what Matthew, Mark and John did. So, we can understand how magnificent our Lord was from the four Gospels.

Actually, some people insist that the Gospels in the Bible conflict with each other. But it is not true. Our Lord Jesus discussed things from different perspectives in each Gospel. That is to say, in the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus is presented to our eyes as the King, the great King. In the next Gospel, Mark, Jesus is depicted as the "servant" who served his Father God, who dispatched him, while in the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus is described as human, the perfect man. Finally, in the Gospel according to John, Jesus is the eternal God, the one who has no beginning and no end. He is explained as the promised savior so that we can understand his divinity well.

As we compare the four Gospels; on the one hand, we realize the greatness of Jesus and on the other, we understand the meaning of his work. That is to say, the characteristics of Jesus and his works are explained clearly to us.

Among the verses of the Bible we read today, let us focus on what the Lord Jesus has done in relation to the resurrection of Lazarus. What did Jesus do there? To find a thorough answer to this question, we need to read through the entire chapter 11 of John. You may not have read through the entire Bible, but I suggest that you read chapter 11 of this Gospel

according to John. Then, you will understand something. Throughout this chapter, we can see the love of Jesus, the power of Jesus, the grace of Jesus as well as Jesus himself. Let us ask ourselves this simple question.

The question is, "What did Jesus do in this chapter?" To make a long story short, firstly, when Jesus was asked for help, he did not depart immediately. Instead, he delayed getting there on purpose. However, because of this, he indeed arrived there at the perfect time. Secondly, he shared the agony of Martha and Maria.

Although Jesus was asked to come to save Lazarus immediately, he waited for some time on purpose instead of starting instantly. Let us try to imagine this situation.

These three people, Martha, Mary and Lazarus were special friends to Jesus. Jesus used to stay at the house of these friends very often and had a pleasant time talking with them. As Lazarus became sick and his condition deteriorated, his sisters, Martha and Maria called for help and sent a messenger.

John
11:3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, saying, "Lord, the one whom you love is ill."

They tried to let Jesus know that they were in serious trouble. What did Jesus do when he heard these words? He must have wanted to leave immediately, but he did not. He did not jump up and depart for the trip to help his friend. It is what we would naturally expect from him and it must have been what Martha, Mary and Lazarus believed that he would do. We all would do so. However, what Jesus did was beyond our understanding. He did not depart soon.

We can't help but feel, "What are waiting for, Jesus?" However, Jesus has never acted on his own accord. Not even once. He always prayed first. "Father, they are in trouble. May I come to them now?" "No, wait for a moment." "Yes, Father." Period. Jesus prayed and waited until he was convinced as to what he had to do before he made a move.

John
11:4 But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness is not meant to end in death. It is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

11:6 Yet, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was for two more days.

It was not for two hours, but for two days. It is such a strange reaction, which is beyond our comprehension, isn't it? Some people might think that it was his cold heartedness. However, Jesus did

so absolutely on purpose. The Lord, of course, knew what he was doing.

John
11:7 After this, he told the disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

Jesus did not make any move when the messenger came and asked him. But here, he suddenly said, "Let's go back." This time, he acted as he was told by his Father in heaven. Very often, we try to understand the intention and conduct of Jesus. For example, when we think of why Jesus did not act quickly to help them in this case, we all get perplexed and puzzled. But, in actuality, we have had experience like this a number of times in our lives, haven't we? We have cried out for help.

We have prayed desperately and asked the Lord to lend us his hand, but our prayers were not heard. At least, nothing happened as we expected. When our family member died, the Lord never came to help them. This was exactly what Martha and Mary experienced some 2000 years ago in a town called Bethany. What did Jesus do this time?

Jesus did not intervene. He could hear but he did not listen. At first glance, he looked as if he had no intention to listen to them. He chose to not make haste to help them; instead he intentionally delayed getting there. In actuality, this is exactly what he does to us today, isn't it? We always feel that nothing goes as we wish. Why is that? Because it is not best for us. We can't help but repeatedly ask ourselves why the Lord does what he does. Having a close look at some of the incidents described in these verses may help us find the answer to this question.

First of all, Jesus loved them.

John
11:5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

Needless to say, the love of the Lord God has a totally different nature from the love of men. It is not possible to understand or explain the love of the Lord God but it can be experienced. Martha and Mary experienced, felt and realized his love, which enriched their lives abundantly.

Secondly, Jesus understood the severe pain of Lazarus. Martha and Mary sent a messenger to Jesus because they could not leave Lazarus alone who was in the agony of death. Jesus, of course, met the messenger and heard what was happening to Lazarus. Jesus heard their cry for help.

Jesus realized that their situation was desperately serious. There was nothing Jesus was not aware of. Very often, we are prone to feel that the Lord is

indifferent towards us. We always tend to forget that we are loved by Jesus and the Lord knows us very well.

Thirdly, Jesus did not try to prevent the death of Lazarus.

John
11:32 Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

For Jesus, who is the life itself, it must have been trivial to save Lazarus from death. He did not even have to be there to heal Lazarus. Only if Jesus had commanded, it would have been enough to save Lazarus.

Fourthly, Jesus desired the death of his friend, Lazarus.

John
11:37 Surely the one who opened the eyes of the blind man could have kept this man from dying, couldn't he?

Jesus did not want to keep Lazarus away from death. If we only look at this on the surface, he might seem like a cold-hearted friend. Or we might wonder, is this what he called love? Why didn't Jesus, who had helped so many other people, help his friend, Lazarus? They had a close relationship for a long time and Jesus even stayed at his house many times.

Fifthly, it is written that, before Jesus left, he stayed where he was for two more days.

John
11:6 Yet, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was for two more days.

11:17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

Of course, it was no surprise for Jesus. Jesus knew what was happening there. He was informed about it by his Father God. Jesus was not dispatched immediately because it was not the best time for him yet.

Sixthly, Jesus finally intervened.

John
11:43 After saying this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"
11:44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet tied with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a handkerchief. Jesus told them, "Untie him, and let him go."

Jesus shouted in a loud voice. When Jesus shouts,

even the dead hear it. When the Lord commands, something happens. The impossible turns possible. He calls into existence things that don't yet exist. This time, even death had to admit its powerlessness and Lazarus who had been dead came back to life.

And seventhly, Martha and Mary received from Jesus something far better than what they prayed for and sought.

John
11:40 Jesus told her, "I told you that if you believed you would see God's glory, didn't I?"

Not only did they see the illness healed, but they saw the glory of the God. This was a supreme experience. These seven truths that we have seen will happen to us all. Let us think over them again one by one.

First of all, it was not only Lazarus or Mary that Jesus loved but he loves each one of us. Jesus sincerely loves each one of us personally. Jesus is never indifferent to any one of us. Jesus cares about each human being.

Secondly, Jesus knows what is happening to us most precisely. The Lord is aware of all hidden motives of our conduct. On all accounts, the Lord is heading toward his goal. There is absolutely nothing that can be hidden from Jesus.

Thirdly, Jesus is capable of solving all our worries completely. Jesus hears our cry that seeks his help. Jesus has promised us that he will hear and accept all our voices.

Fourthly, Jesus does not always answer to us the way we expect. Jesus does not save us from being tested through pain and agony but he rather allows it to happen. He lets us be tempted and go through hard times.

Fifthly, Jesus answers to our requests at the time of his choice. Needless to say, the "time of the Lord" is always the "best time." From a human being's perspective, it is too late to come because there should be no hope left after someone has been in his tomb for four days.

Sixthly, this time, Jesus eventually offered a helping hand. The Lord still offers a helping hand to us today. The Lord steps in when "the time of the Lord" comes. Let us be careful not to be tempted by the devil. We should not give up no matter what happens. We do not have to be devastated.

Finally, the answer of Jesus always far exceeds what we expect. So, let us all look up to the Lord with great expectations and believe in the magnificence of the Lord.

Why did Jesus take these series of actions towards Martha, Mary and Lazarus? Why do we also have to suffer from so many difficulties, something we cannot understand?

I guess that we can think of two reasons:

Firstly, Jesus allows many unacceptable things to happen to us, which make us suffer so much. We can't help but wonder why and we are completely perplexed when we face severe ordeals and are seriously agonized. However, it is indeed through such ordeals that the glory of the Lord is revealed.

John

11:4 This illness is not meant to end in death. It is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

It is neither to afflict us unceasingly nor to make us give up and abandon our lives, but it is for the glory of the Lord to be revealed that he makes us go through so many pains we cannot understand.

As we can see from the Old Testament, the people of Israel also had to pass through the wilderness. It was not just for four days or four months or four years but it was for forty years. During these years, as they wandered in thirst with no one to help them, they were exposed to severe sunlight and their enemies. However, the Lord gave them the bread of heaven, manna and water as well. When the people of Israel were led with the pillar of cloud and fire, they saw the glory of the Lord. This was what they experienced through the pain and distress.

Secondly, the Lord allows difficult things to happen in order to test and increase the faith of those who belong to him. Without ordeals, there will be no growth. If we don't fall into suffering, we won't turn our face to the Lord sincerely. If we don't seek help, we won't have a chance to understand the Savior in a true sense. If we have no burden at all, we will never cling to the promises of the Lord.

John

11:15 For your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe.

This must be another reason that the Lord does not intervene in the problems of our life immediately and instead leaves us alone for a while. We are always confused as to whether we should face the problem straight on or turn away from it. We think very hard about what to do but we are left bewildered. However, there is one thing we should not forget under any circumstances. The glory of the Lord God is waiting to be revealed. And it is through such ordeals that we get closer to the Lord and our faith is strengthened. After all, it is the only thing we should

keep in mind, isn't it?

There is another thing I want to say before I finish this sermon. Jesus became one with Martha and Mary. That is to say, Jesus shared the pain of Martha and Mary. Very often, we are asked a question like this: when our family member is seriously ill or injured and is on their deathbed; why won't the Lord come to help them? Isn't he concerned at all? Sometimes, it seems as if our prayers are not answered but he just passes by without even giving a glance. No matter how hard we pray, it does not help us escape from death, which must be so easy for Jesus to prevent.

One thing is clear. The Lord cares for all. There is absolutely nobody to whom the Lord is indifferent.

John

11:32 As soon as Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell down at his feet and told him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

11:33 When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, he was greatly troubled in spirit and deeply moved.

11:34 He asked, "Where have you put him?" They told him, "Lord, come and see."

11:35 Jesus burst into tears.

This is the shortest verse in the whole Bible, "Jesus burst into tears." Jesus wept. I believe that Lazarus heard from Martha and Mary that Jesus wept because of him. When these two women testified at a later time, they must have said that Jesus cried with them, which they could never have forgotten. Jesus always cares about those who belong to him. Jesus shares their pains, agonies and sorrows. We will never be left alone in temptations or ordeals. Let us finish this sermon after reading some more verses.

Hebrews

4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. Instead, we have one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet he never sinned.

Jesus understands everything about us. During the life he lived on this earth as the Lord, Jesus too experienced many agonies. Jesus understands how it is to be completely isolated and to be totally misunderstood by everyone. Jesus has experienced all kinds of agonies and pains. Jesus knows physical pain too. Jesus suffered from hunger and thirst. He also felt fatigue. Furthermore, he understood the meaning of resisting the devil and relying upon the words of the Lord alone.

What are we suffering from? Please let Jesus know it. Jesus is concerned about each one of us and he

sheds tears with us.

1 Timothy

2:5 There is one God. There is also one mediator between God and human beings—a human, the Messiah Jesus.

Here, the Lord Jesus is called, “a human, the Messiah Jesus.” However, the Lord is the God who is human too and at the same time, he is the human who is the God too. In his divinity, Jesus is the authority, the almighty and glorious. In his humanity, the Lord is full of grace, understanding and kindness. Let me read this verse again.

Isaiah

63:9 In all their affliction he was afflicted.

We are never left alone even in times of the worst pain or suffering. Each one of us is valuable to the Lord. The Lord only does what is best for us. It is for this very reason that the Lord lets us go through hardships. However, when he does, Jesus suffers with us. If we dare to pour out our pain to the Lord, we will understand how the Lord shares our pains, how much he is concerned about us and that he accomplishes the miracle of blessings at the most appropriate time.

End