

Gospel of Glory: Signs of Resurrection and Life

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, September 15, 2024
PASSAGES	John 2; John 4; John 6; John 10; John 11
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:13:22 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

The signs in John's Gospel are arranged, not merely collected, and the arrangement is part of the teaching. Read the second sign and the second-to-last sign side by side and you find the same question asked twice: will you believe? Jesus answers Martha not with a date on a calendar but with himself — *I am the resurrection and the life*.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ The seven signs in John form a sandwich structure. The outer layers mirror each other, and the middle — the bread of life — is the lens for reading all of them.
- ◆ The official's son and Lazarus are a matched pair. In the Greek the boy is not merely sick; he is about to die.
- ◆ Jesus can heal at a distance, and everyone in the Lazarus story knows it. That is exactly what makes the four-day delay so pointed.
- ◆ Martha gets a bad reputation from one story about a kitchen. Here she says something audacious: "but even now." She is not a flat character.
- ◆ "Your brother will rise again" must have landed like a gentle deferral. It was not one.
- ◆ Resurrection and life are not phenomena to chart and anticipate. They are a person, and they are rooted in him.

- ◆ He did not pray it timidly. Jesus shouted “Lazarus, come out” where everyone could hear — the volume is part of the sign.
- ◆ Jesus knew what performing a public sign two miles from Jerusalem would cost him. He did it anyway, on purpose.

► 1:13:22

Matt began with housekeeping — a lost and found that has grown past clothing into art, books, a stack of cups and a puddle jumper — and then with a book he keeps meaning to mention. Richard Bauckham’s *Gospel of Glory* is where the name he has been giving this run through John comes from. “These series don’t need to have names,” he admitted. “That’s just my narrative.” But glory is a heavy theme in the fourth Gospel, and in John it keeps company with the signs.

1. Seven signs, arranged like a sandwich

► 1:14:23

Seven events in John are called signs. Many readers treat the raising of Lazarus as the last one, since it is the last time the word appears — but when Jesus clears the temple and is asked what sign he can show for doing it, his answer is “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” That is a sign too. It simply happens later on the calendar than it does in the book.

Laid out, the seven form the sandwich structure common to ancient writing. Top and bottom: water, wine, cleansing. Second and second-to-last: people dead or dying. Third and third-to-last: people who cannot walk or see. And in the absolute middle, the bread — Jesus multiplying loaves and then talking at length about his body as real food and his blood as real drink. The middle is not filler. It is the guiding influence on the whole thing, the lens through which the rest is read: he is the provision.

Matt’s reason for the tour was practical. John is a big book, and knowing what structure the author is working with makes it less intimidating — enough, he hoped, to encourage people to be in it without anxiety.

2. The second sign: a father, a dying boy, a strange first answer

► 1:17:31

An official from Capernaum comes to Cana, where the water became wine, and asks Jesus to come down and heal his son. The English says the boy is at the point of death; the Greek says he is about to

die. That detail matters, because it is what makes this story a genuine match for Lazarus rather than a lesser cousin of it.

“So Jesus said to him, ‘Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.’ The official said to him, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your son will live.’ The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.”

JOHN 4:48–50 ↗

► 1:19:45

Matt put himself in the man’s sandals. A father fixated on a dying child, hearing a comment he cannot place — is this a rebuke or an encouragement? — and having no patience for a side road. “How can I get this back to my thing,” he imagined thinking. “Anyway, about my boy.” The man skates right past the line about signs and wonders and asks again. And then he believes the word and starts walking home, and on the road the servants meet him with news that the fever broke at the seventh hour — the hour Jesus spoke (John 4:53–54). He and his whole household believed. Signs really do produce belief. That is what they are for.

3. “This illness does not lead to death”

► 1:21:59

Before the matching story, some context. Jesus has just been in Jerusalem, where people picked up stones to kill him for claiming to be God. The crowd is splitting — some devoted, some murderous — and he withdraws. Bethany is about two miles from Jerusalem. Going back there is going back into that.

► 1:22:41

“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.’”

JOHN 11:3–4 ↗

Put yourself in that house. You are close personal friends with the healer of men, and you have just been sent a message saying this will not end in death. “I’m on the inside,” Matt said, playing the thought out. “I’m not going to get sick. Demons aren’t coming to my house. I’m in the platinum plan.” Mary and Martha would have felt relief. They had sent for him; he was surely coming.

► 1:24:41

What John writes next is one of the hardest sentences in the Gospel:

“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.”

The *so* is not a typo. When he finally says they are going back to Judea, the disciples are appalled, then baffled by talk of twelve hours in the day and a friend who has fallen asleep. Thomas settles it grimly — “Let us also go, that we may die with him” — which is not faith in the outcome so much as a refusal to be a coward. Matt respected it: “I respect that they want to go anyway.”

And he wanted the room to feel how bad the odds looked. It is not only that Bethany sits close to Jerusalem; many of the people mourning with Mary and Martha have come out *from* Jerusalem. In a crowd that size, not everyone is a friendly. “I don’t think you could even expect to just barely skirt around the disaster,” Matt said. “This feels like it’s going to be a confrontation.” And it is one — “but maybe not the way the disciples thought.”

4. Martha’s “even now”

► 1:26:59

Martha comes out to meet him — not in the house, not at the mourning service, but out on the road.

“Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.’”

JOHN 11:21-22 ↗

► 1:28:46

Read the second sentence slowly. The *now* in “even now” is a now in which her brother is four days dead. She is not asking for a good day or a little comfort. “That’s a pretty high level of faith, in my opinion,” Matt said, and he wanted the room to hear how badly she has been set up for disappointment: a close friend who heals at a distance, a message saying this would not end in death, and a funeral anyway.

5. “Not now, sweetie”

► 1:30:10

Jesus answers with another perplexing line —

“Your brother will rise again,” and Martha: “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”

Commentators often treat her reply as reciting a standard Jewish belief. Matt granted that, and then

added the thing that gets left out: she is a disciple. She has sat under this teaching. Jesus says it constantly.

► 1:31:16

“And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

JOHN 6:39–40 ↗

He says it twice more in that same chapter — no one can come to me unless the Father draws him (John 6:44), and whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life (John 6:54) — the same refrain each time, landing on the same clause: *and I will raise him up on the last day*. Notice where those sit. They are in the bread discourse, the middle of the sandwich, the lens. “He also repeats his messages a lot,” Matt said, and Martha, “as a student of Jesus, probably understood this is an emphasis.”

So when she hears “your brother will rise again,” she hears the refrain she has been taught — which, standing at a tomb, is “the dynamic equivalent of saying *not now, sweetie*.” After she had risked “even now.” It probably hurt. Matt asked the room to stop flattening her into the woman who complained about the kitchen — one story, in which Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and Martha did not: “She’s a real human. She’s not a flat character.” She is re-entering grief, he thought, “because she had these little hopes. I’m not sure how strong they were, but they were kindled.”

6. Resurrection turns out to be a person

► 1:33:34

“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.’”

JOHN 11:25–27 ↗

Her answer is the second remarkable thing she says. “This is another solid Martha,” said Matt — “accepting Jesus’s lofty identity.” Note what she does not do: “she is no longer nagging him about Lazarus.” Where the official was *yeah, anyway, about my kid* — “that’s how I would have been,” Matt

admitted — “Martha totally accepts Jesus’s side tangent about his identity and is focused on Jesus himself instead of fixating on Lazarus.” A funny reversal of the pairing, and he was careful not to overclaim it: “I’m not saying that this parallels on purpose.”

Then she goes and gets her sister, quietly —
saying it in private: the Teacher is here and is calling for you.

7. Jesus wept — and had already decided

► 1:35:35

Mary comes next and falls at his feet with the identical sentence: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. She is weeping; so is the crowd that came with her.

Jesus is deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled, and asks where they have laid him. Come and see, they tell him. Jesus wept.

► 1:36:48

Matt cut off the reading people are tempted to make of that. “It’s not that Mary cried harder and he just likes her more, and so then he decides, oh, okay, well now I’ll do something about it.” The decision was made before he left — before he met either sister. “The point is that Jesus premeditated this thing. He already told his disciples: I’m going to do this, we’re going to wake him up, I’m glad it’s going to happen this way for the glory of God, so that you will believe” — not *we’ll see, depends how into it they are or how much they cry at me*. “Martha just gets sermons, Mary gets miracles — that’s not the point here.” The tears are not a change of mind. They are affection for a family he loves, and the onlookers read them correctly: “See how he loved him!”

8. Why he did it this way

► 1:37:26

The objection is voiced three times in the chapter — by Martha, by Mary, and finally by the crowd: could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying? The answer is obviously yes. John raises it repeatedly because he wants the reader to sit in it. “I think John wants you to think about that,” Matt said. “Why did he do it this way? Why didn’t he just do it from a distance? Why did he wait two days?”

At the tomb Martha objects to the stone: four days, there will be an odor. Matt read that generously — if she expected a resurrection, why worry about the smell? More likely she thinks Jesus wants time with the body, as any of us would when a loved one dies, and perhaps does not realize how long it has been. She is “trying to politely protect Jesus from doing something super awkward in front of a bunch of

people” — heading off a misstep in front of the crowd on her friend’s behalf. His reply is the whole message in one line: “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”

► 1:38:43

Matt wondered aloud about the rest of that crowd. People had heard Jesus could raise the dead, “but I don’t think it was the most common of things” — maybe heard about once or twice, almost certainly not seen. “At the same time, I wonder if people in this crowd are starting to hope. I’ve heard this happen before — maybe we’ll see it too.”

► 1:39:51

“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.”

JOHN 11:41–42 ↗

► 1:41:26

There is the reason for the delay, stated out loud. And then the manner of it. “I’ve never prayed for a dead body to come back from the dead,” Matt said, “but I imagine that if it were me, I’d be doing it real quiet, just in case nothing happened” — so that nobody could say he laid it all out there and it did not work. Timid, hedged: *Lord, if it’s your will, I don’t know about today, but please just be near us and maybe raise him from the dead.* Jesus shouts it, in front of everyone, “just confident, like this is going to happen” — and he does that in part for their sake. The volume is not incidental; the whole thing is a sign. Matt guessed at the room: “You probably weren’t bored at all. You probably weren’t even fidgeting — just staring, mouth open, like *what on earth is about to happen.*”

“When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out.’ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’”

JOHN 11:43–44 ↗

9. Lazarus out, Jesus in

► 1:42:01

Matt let himself enjoy the picture for a second. “If his feet were bound with linen strips, I wonder — was he hopping? Did he still smell? Maybe you’re too excited and you don’t notice the smells anymore. When dead people come back to life, your heart is pounding too much to smell, I guess. I don’t know.”

Then the harder half of the verse:

many believed, and some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. “Imagine seeing this and not liking it,” he said — you just watched Jesus raise somebody from the dead, so surely he is the Christ, “this kind of a no-brainer” — “and yet there were some who watched who were going to go tattle.” He voiced them: “I can’t believe this guy came back here after all he did and said. We should have stoned him when we had the chance. This is a terrible problem we have on our hands.”

► 1:43:20

Which means the exact thing the disciples were anxious about back in verse 8 — people wanting to kill them — is now only aggravated, because Jesus has made a huge scene and word travels fast.

The council convenes in a panic: if we let him go on like this, everyone will believe him, and Rome will take away our place and our nation. Then Caiaphas says the cold, practical thing — better that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish. What he means, Matt said, is “we should just go ahead and kill him already and save our people, and all our problems would go away.” But “in his capacity of high priest, and in the Lord’s mercy, God allowed him to prophesy,” and he was “way more right than he knew.” From that day on they made plans to put him to death.

► 1:45:13

Matt would not let this be an accident. “Jesus is no fool. I’m sure he knew just how dangerous what he was doing was — performing another sign, this one a spectacular one right outside Jerusalem, and he did it anyway. He’s not just doing it to troll them, and he’s not just building a movement. This is part of his conscious decision to lay down his own life on purpose.” From one angle it reads almost poetically: Jesus in exchange for Lazarus. Lazarus rises, and it is “a death knell for the Jesus movement, at least from one perspective.” From every other angle it is far larger — as Caiaphas said more rightly than he knew, for the whole nation, and for all the scattered children of God who, like Lazarus, are “so dead they’re helplessly dead.”

10. Do you believe this?

► 1:47:18

Back to Martha, and to the clarification hiding inside the perplexing sentence. She may well have thought she was being comforted with a religious principle — he does teach the last-day resurrection often, so “okay, yeah, you’re comforting me with religious truth.” But with the official, Jesus was not rebuking a frantic father; he was stating a fact about what signs do. Here he is correcting something subtler. Resurrection on the last day is true. It is also not the whole answer, because resurrection and life are not first of all events to study, chart and anticipate. “Life isn’t as much a phenomenon as it is a person.” Jesus is resurrection from the dead. Jesus is life.

Which relocates the question. “Once again our theology in reading this book is challenged,” Matt said — challenged so that we reframe resurrection and life as “not just events or things associated with Jesus, but rooted in his person.” And more important than figuring out the when and the how is being able to answer what he asked her in front of a sealed tomb: *do you believe this?* He closed by praying for exactly that — help us to believe you, to see these signs and come to you, thank you for who you are, we ask you for life — and then pointed the room to the Heart Ministry prayer teams standing up front, and to any Hope Chapel person nearby who would pray right where you were sitting. The question he left standing is still Martha’s question, and it is still asked at the tomb.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [John 2:19](#)
- [John 4:48–50](#)
- [John 4:53–54](#)
- [John 10:31](#)
- [John 11:3–4](#)
- [John 11:5–6](#)
- [John 11:16](#)
- [John 11:21–22](#)
- [John 11:23–24](#)
- [John 6:39–40](#)
- [John 6:44](#)
- [John 6:54](#)
- [John 11:25–27](#)
- [John 11:28](#)
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- [John 11:37](#)
- [John 11:38–39](#)
- [John 11:40](#)
- [John 11:41–42](#)
- [John 11:43–44](#)
- [John 11:45–46](#)
- [John 11:47–48](#)
- [John 11:49–52](#)
- [John 11:53](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Where have you quietly assumed you were on the platinum plan — close enough to Jesus that certain troubles would skip your house? What happened when they did not?
2. “He stayed two days longer.” How do you make sense of a delay from someone who loves you and could act?
3. Martha risked “even now” and seemed to be told not now. When have you prayed something audacious and heard what sounded like a deferral?
4. If resurrection and life are a person rather than a date, what does that change about how you pray for someone who is dying, or grieve someone who has died?
5. Jesus asked Martha “do you believe this?” in front of a sealed tomb. What is the sealed tomb in your life this week, and what would believing him in front of it actually look like before next Sunday?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhwVuREfm8&t=4402s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.