John 11 â?? Part 18b

Description

When Jesus arrives in Bethany he finds that Lazarus had died and his body placed in a tomb and had been there for four days already. There ensues a conversation between Martha and Jesus which I think is worth looking at in more detail. It is a conversation that deals with the reality of life even in death. Martha, who unlike her sister, was a person who was rather more â??down to earthâ?• and â??matter of factâ?•. She appears to be less concerned that Lazarus, her brother, had died and more concerned for her loss, probably due to the fact that her circumstances and quality of life were now going to be different, as in Jewish culture Lazarus would have been the sisterâ??s provider and protector. We donâ??t read that the sisters were married so can only assume they were still provided for by their birth family, of whom Lazarus was a key figure.

Marthaâ??s conversation with Jesus in John 11:21 is one of desperation and â??what are we going to do nowâ?• conversations. If we look closely at the Greek word that is used for â??diedâ?• in this verse we find that she uses a word that shows exasperation, a word that indicates that she has failed to grasp that Jesus is life and that death has no hold. Marthaâ??s understanding of the situation was â??well what are we going to do now?â?• it was all about her. Incidentally the word she uses is the word ETETHNESKO which indicates separation or more precisely â??doomedâ?•.
Mary, on the other hand, uses the word APOTHNESKO, John 11:32, which was a word more commonly used to indicate separation of body and soul. Mary had found a deeper understanding of life. She had grasped and understood that â??life in Christâ?• or more precisely â??life in Godâ?• was a constant experienced state not something that was obtained on death. Mary, it appears, was a lot less concerned about her situation and more concerned about the physical loss and sadness of her brother. There does not appear to be any tones of accusation or blame towards Jesus, just one of sadness that her brother had died. We also need to note at this point the difference in attitude, Martha came and immediately engages in a more confrontational way with Jesus John 11:32, whereas Mary came and fell at his feet John 11:32. Mary had understood and entered into an experience with Jesus that led her to be more at peace than her sister Martha, who by contrast, appears to be less at peace and therefore holding a weaker understanding and experience of Jesus â??the resurrection and lifeâ?•.

As we move through the story we find that some of the Jews, who had come to see the spectacle, yes it says they had come to comfort Martha and Mary, but by now their comfort had turned to cynicism and jest, John 11:37, and were saying could he (Jesus) not have intervened before it was too late. Even these Jews had failed to grasp the reality of life. The truth is that life is eternal and that death has no hold when we enter into and believe that Jesus is the resurrection and life and that any kind of life outside of this existence and experience is doomed rather than fulfilled.

In John 11:39-40 we still find Martha protesting and Jesus reminding her that if only she would believe she would see the glory of God.

What does it take for us to let go all of our gathered human thinking and perceptions in order for us to believe and accept by faith that Jesus is life and that anything outside of that which we think is life is in fact death. Mary had come to this place where as Martha had not. Both of them had the same

opportunity to accept and believe into Jesus, yet one still wanted control of her life while the other had abandoned control of theirs and found that her life was â??hid with Christ in Godâ?• Colossians 3:1-4. It was Maryâ??s life and humility that is recorded in John 11:45 where we read that â??many of the Jews which came with Mary and had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in him.â?•
I hope and pray that this will be our experience, that we come to Christ knowing that when we abandon our life to his omnipotence we then truly begin to live, and the quality of that renewed life is the experience that draws people to God.

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Category

1. Journey through John

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