

Kev's sermon notes for guys online eGroup
Nov. 3, 2019
Pastor Steven Furtick
Sermon title: "The Lazarus Factor"

Elevation Worship

My Testimony: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKB561oh0hM>

Here as In Heaven: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxTc98K9OeU>

Never Lost: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ligZiYgPGT0>

Scripture

John 11: John 11 New International Version (NIV): The Death of Lazarus - 11 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." **4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."** 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, 7 and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." 8 "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. 10 It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light." 11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." 12 His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. 14 So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16 Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Jesus Comforts the Sisters of Lazarus: 17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." 28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. 32 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." **33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"** Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead 38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." 40 Then

Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” 41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” 43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

Sermon notes – “The Lazarus Factor” by Pastor Steven Furtick

- So excited about our new single called “Never Lost” - and today I want to take this verse from this song and make it applicable to your life – on a practical level.
- **The song “Never Lost” says this: “God still shows up at the tomb of every Lazarus.”**
- Let’s look at the Scripture where this line came from.
- Everybody here has a Lazarus and we want to bring these things together in God’s presence.
- See John 11
- The word Lazarus literally means the “one who God helps”
- Have you had God help you out of a mess that you got yourself in?
- His sister is Martha - and she’s the one that “makes the mortgage payment.” (figure of speech).
- His other sister was Mary - she was a good listener.
- And Jesus liked visiting them because Martha made these great lemon pepper wings (humor) - and Mary would sit at his feet to be discipled. A good listener is good to have - but a good cook is even better - and if you ever find a good cook and a good listener - marry him or marry her.
- And Jesus love visiting these folks that lived a few miles outside of Jerusalem - and he would often be refreshed from his ministerial travels.
- But in John 11 they need Jesus’ help.
- As Lazarus’ sickness begins to overtake the affairs of the family, Martha issues a request for Jesus and for help - where she says: Lord the one you love is sick. I really like how she says this - and everything up to this point in John 11 makes sense to me - to get Jesus here real quick to do the healing that he does - it makes sense - Jesus loves them - so he will come to them - and he would visit them - and help them - and it is in Jesus’s nature to come and help them.
- In the next verse we read something that does not make sense - some people here today are dealing with things that don’t make sense anymore.
- And this is what I want to speak to you today.
- See: 5 “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, 7 and then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”
- Let’s examine this together: It will be one thing for the Bible to say “he loved them but stayed two more days” - which would mean that he could not come because he had other people to help. However, the Scriptures uses an interesting word: “so” - so he stayed where he was for two more days - Jesus love them loved them so he did not come when they want him.
- Today’s sermon title is: “The Lazarus factor.”
- Opening prayer: Lord enable me to preach this beyond my human understanding or my oratorical abilities - God I pray that something will go forth from this pulpit today - that would call forth from the hearts of your people - the kind of faith that makes a difference - in Jesus name I pray - amen.
- Spoiler alert: Lazarus dies and then comes back to life in John chapter 11.
- I did not want to leave you in suspense too long.

- Have you ever given any thought as to how people have different love languages? In fact, there is a book called the five love languages. I'm so glad that my wife is blessed with the love languages of physical touch - what a blessing – I much prefer physical touch over acts of service. (sarcastic comment).
- **God's love language is trust**
- Based on the many years that I've studied the Bible - if you asked me how does God receive love? My answer is that God loves to be trusted - more than he likes to hear you sing - more than how you wear a cross around your neck - more than when you come to church (something a pastor probably shouldn't say) - God loves you when you trust him on Tuesday - God loves us the most if we can be trusted.
- **We often equate love with comfort - but God equates love with trust.**
- **If we are not studious and don't give attention to the Scripture, we will conflate and confuse our human definition of love with divine love - and love that is not simply an action - but is the essence of who God is.**
- I do not know about your first job - but I will put this out there - that I had one of the most interesting first jobs of anyone. My first job at the age of 15 was to work at the Pet Rest Cemetery & Cremation Service - that paid \$150 a week – where I had my own beeper. And I'm proud of that - and I did those pet funerals with dignity – where I learned how to preach to dead churches (sarcastic comment) - and I learned who my real friends were - when they let me stop at the crematorium - on the way to the mall.
- One of the worst jobs ever must be the PR manager for Jesus Christ.
- To explain his actions or give a press conference for Jesus Christ - when he does things like - he loved them and he received their hospitality from them - but when it came time to help them, he stayed away two extra days. Why? Because he loved them.
- It's an interesting construct.
- **And we find every day in our lives the difference between our job and God's job. God's job is outcome - your job is process.**
- **The longer that you think you can control outcomes of people in your life, the more frustrated you will become in this journey of your faith.**
- **And many of us have been taught that faith is a way to control outcomes – Where the math works like this: if you pray this and do that - you can expect this. But everybody in here has a Lazarus. The Lazarus factor is the thing in your life that made that formula fall apart.**
- **The Lazarus factor is the thing in your life that caused you to question the very nature of your faith.**
- **And we learn in this Scripture that faith is rarely a form of manipulation by which we are able to get God to keep our schedule - I got news for you - God will not be manipulated - God will not be moved just because we get a little uncomfortable in a situation - and I hate to break this to you - but faith is not a means of manipulation - it is a patience with mystery - the kind of mystery that can say on one hand: God can do anything - and on that same breath we say that God can't do everything – and there is something in your life that God will not do - that he did for someone else - that he has not done for you yet.**
- I am simply trying to state today that everybody has a Lazarus.
- Everybody has something in here that was supposed to be done – but didn't happen – and we say this: if God really loved you, he would - if God really saw you, he would - if God is really strong like they say he is, he would - if God really had all power in his hand, he would have.
- **We confuse God's love with proof in circumstantial evidence - we never get to the foundational core – the love of God is not always proven by the way I feel his presence. The love of God is proven by the way I deal with his perceived absence.**
- Love of God is not always proven when we want to thank him for his many blessings - the love of God is proven in our lives when we cannot feel him - but by faith we praise him - because he is God - even when we don't sense God – He is still God.

- Is there anyone here that is willing to give Him their praise in this place today - where we praise Him for who he is not just for what He does.
- And Martha did not have text messaging back then - and when Martha sent word to Jesus to come quick because "the one you love is sick," she would have to wait several days. After sending a request for help only the messenger returned.
- And Jesus left Martha "on red" - Have you ever heard of this phrase before? This is the same thing as encountering a person that you've been trying to avoid.
- **In Jesus left Martha "on red." Have you ever been left "on red" by God? Hey Jesus! The one you love is sick. Hey Jesus - I'm depressed. Hey Jesus - I can hardly breathe right now. Hey Jesus - I feel all alone. Hey Jesus - I need to know how to make this decision. Hey Jesus - I need you to show me how to stop my husband from being crazy. A Jesus - I need you to do for my kids what Prozac can't do and calm them down. Hey Jesus - I need you to straighten this out.**
- Have you ever had a prayer that Hit the ceiling and did not go anywhere?
- Have you ever prayed a prayer that bounced right back?
- Have you ever prayed a prayer that came back to you with such velocity that you barely got out of your mouth – and had to stare at the same situation again?
- And Jesus left Martha "on red" - because he loved them - not because he was busy - but because he loved them. He loved them so much that he didn't come.
- And I don't know what to do with that.
- Humanly speaking, my love language is presence. Where we feel "you don't love me if you don't come."
- We often say: "we are there with you in spirit." This sounds nice - but might not be helpful in getting things done.
- "Being there in spirit" does not help cook chicken soup when I am ill.
- And people will give you nice clichés - expecting that to comfort you – "Well if God put it on you, He will not give you any more than you can handle."
- Let's be honest with each other: Sometimes a cliché Scripture is annoying. Halloween is over - we can take our masks off now - and admit for a moment - so you don't think you're going to hell for thinking it - you can have great faith and still be frustrated - you can have great faith still and wonder sometimes what the _____?
- **One of these days I'm gonna launch a CD and call it "Honest Worship - The stuff you wish you had the guts to say" - where it's going to have songs like "you are never going to let - never gonna let me down - except for that one time" and "you seldom lost a battle - except when I was 14." - where we sing about real situations. And we often conflate God's love with the circumstances of our situation.**
- And if you look for the circumstances of your life for the proof of God's love - you're looking for love in all of the wrong places.
- Jesus told Martha that the situation would not end sickness or death but in the glory of God. Well hallelujah (sarcastic comment) - yes God is your provider - but he's not paying your rent.
- **Everybody has a Lazarus - something that God was supposed to do for - that he did not do.**
- What I love about the Bible is that it gives us the insight of hindsight.
- **The Insight of hindsight is the ability to know why John wrote his gospel - so that you may believe.**
- John is on a whole different approach vs. the three other gospels. John explains seven signs that Jesus did and the seven sayings that Jesus said - and he organizes things not as it's happening - but after it happened - after he has the insight of hindsight.
- **The insight of hindsight is really powerful - but we don't live our lives with the benefit of the insight of hindsight for every situation. I would like to suggest to you, that Mary and Martha (on mourning the loss of Lazarus) in chapter 11, never read John chapter 12. This is probably a good estimate since John did not**

write his gospel until A.D. 85 Jesus died in A.D. 32. This means that did not get to read chapter 12 while they had to live out chapter 11.

- Let me show you something that's in Chapter 11. See verse 2.
- See John 11: 1- 3: Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."
- Important point: never use a period where God uses a parenthesis.
- Some things in your life will make sense after the fact - that don't make sense right now.
- Not only did Martha cook for Jesus, she worshiped him.
- Verse 2 did not happen until John chapter 12 - after what we read in John 11 - after the revelation that Jesus is about to give.
- **However, the writer puts it in Chapter 11 - because if you do not see yourself worshiping John chapter 12, you will not have the strength to wait in John chapter 11. God tells us today: see yourself in John chapter 12 - worshiping God - see yourself worshiping - see yourself grateful - see yourself restored - see yourself better - see yourself free - see yourself delivered - see yourself healed - see yourself armed with your testimony.**
- **They say you have to see it to believe it - God says you have to believe to it see it.**
- Jesus has to break this down for us - and we need this remedial training. For those in the honors class of Christianity and don't need this message, you can start working in your grocery list – while I preach to the rest of the people in this room.
- Even the disciples that were close to Jesus were often confused about his motives - and they doubted the outcome because they had not yet seen the cross - and even at the cross most went home because they had not yet seen the resurrection.
- He is the God of the outcome - and we are not.
- And the reason that we need this in our lives is because our job is to sow the seed.
- **Scripture Jesus tells us to pray to the Lord of the harvest. Kev's bonus study: See: Matthew 9:38: Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." and Luke 10:2 He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."**
- **Harvest represents the result in the seed represents the process.**
- **He's the God of the outcome. However, we are the Lords of the seed - we decide on what we are going to sow. We decide on what we withhold.**
- The only thing that is difficult to us in reading this passage is that we have the insight of hindsight - and the disciples did not.
- See verse 7.
- What the disciples did not know is that Jesus was invincible until his assignment was complete.
- Jesus was not going to die until it was his time to die – he was only going to die at the moment when God was to reveal and release the salvation that brought him on earth to carry - and the disciples did not know this.
- You don't know what you're going through while you're going through it.
- See verse 9.
- Was that helpful? Sounds insightful - but the disciples are still not sure what to do.
- Are they going to Judea are not? Are they going to help out Lazarus or not?
- See verse 11.
- Jesus is speaking symbolically - while the disciples speaking literally. Jesus was speaking of Lazarus' death and the disciples thought he was talking about natural sleep.

- **We will all see things on the surface. We all have a Lazarus - not just the person that we lost - not just a relationship - our Lazarus might be something in our character - that we thought would be fixed by now - where we send a message over the Jesus asking Him to come over to Bethany (where Martha and Mary live) - to break these chains so that we can serve Him.**
- **Everybody has a Lazarus - and I'm not a rookie pastor anymore. Some people have a Lazarus that's buried so deep they forgot about it - and it no longer registers anymore because we have learned how to move on from the event - however we never processed the disappointment. The Lazarus factor says that how you process the disappointment determines whether it becomes faith that propels you or fear that paralyzes you.**
- So, when Martha and Mary sent word for Jesus - and he didn't come - now have a decision to make. If Jesus did not come when they wanted him to come - and he did not do what they wanted him to do - does he still love us?
- This is a Lazarus factor - I know that God loves me and I'm no longer looking for proof of that fact - I living from the proof that he loves me - this love is not based on what he did - sometimes this love is proven by what he chooses not to do.
- And Jesus says I'm going to wake Lazarus up.
- See verse 15.
- **The Lazarus factor - is the faith to follow Him anyway. We all have a Lazarus - whether it's a dream that didn't play out the way you thought - or the way you saw the most important relationships in your life play out - or the missed expectations of the "starter-kit" Christianity when you begin your walk - or have to reconcile the fact that Jesus love them and yet he was still late.**
- Jesus wasn't fashionably late - it was functionally late - It means that Jesus was late because of his love - because it was something about his character that would not be revealed if Jesus had showed up on time.
- He had to show up at the tomb so they could see something about him - not a new thing - but to show his glory in a way they had never seen before.
- He is going to show you his demonstration of power in a way that you have not experienced it before.
- I know it's very difficult to stay in that place of faith.
- See verse 17.
- This is difficult understand for the Jewish people that John is addressing and this gospel. They believed that within the first three days of the spirit could be returned to a man. It was a superstitious belief that was common to Judaism at the time. But Jesus waited until after the prescribed time period to reveal his glory.
- **Is God waiting past the point of your expectation - so his strength can kick in with the new velocity?**
- Note that Bethany was only 2 miles away from Jerusalem - and many family members had visited to comfort Martha and Mary following the loss of their brother - and is only so much people can do in the mean well.
- There are some things in our lives that only Christ can do.
- Yes, the prayers & help are appreciated - but Jesus is needed here. This is a big job and we need the master - the healer - the great I am - the bread of life - the light of heaven.
- See verse 21.
- We all have different ways of dealing with disappointment. Martha went out to meet Jesus and Mary stayed in the home. Some of us jump into bed and roll up the covers during matters of disappointment - and some want to meet disappointment at the gate. Martha's perspective: "You came when I cooked but you didn't come when I cried - why did you not address the situation and avoid the need to experience grief?"
- For us, this about dealing with things in our lives that have died - God deals with Martha individually - where she says you (Jesus) did not do what I wanted you to do but that doesn't change my perception of who you are.
- We all need to understand to not change our opinion of who Jesus is - even if there's a delay.

- Martha offers Jesus an honest perspective of what she expected.
- **The most godly prayer that you can pray is the most honest prayer that you can pray.**
- If you would have stopped it - if you would have prevented - if you can do all things, why did you not do the things that I needed you to do that I've seen you do for others? - I saw you heal people – I saw you touch lives - I saw you treat people that that were mean to you.
- **Don't confuse love with conformity to an agenda.**
- **See John 11: 20 to 22: And something takes over Martha and I hope it takes over us today - because we all have a Lazarus - something that you just buried or in the process of being buried - and there is a funeral going on at the same time that faith is trying to be born in your heart today.**
- See verse 22
- God is present in this moment now.
- God is with us in this season. God is with us in this moment.
- **Let's bring our disappointment into the presence of God - and even now he is sovereign - even now he is holy - even now he is good - even now he is worthy - even now he is showing up.**
- Jesus is telling Martha that she missed the point - I am the resurrection and the light - stop trying to improve my presence based on what I do - however I want you to see who I am - not based on what I didn't do - what you want me to do.
- **The Lazarus factor is the thing inside of you - that knows that He is God - I'm sure that you are - and it would've been had Jesus showed up on time - but even though you didn't – Jesus - you are still who you say that you are. Even though I wish - you are. Even though I hoped - you are. Even though he died - you are. Even though it happened - you are.**
- God brings us to these points - to see what we are going to do with these disappointments.
- Martha met him at the gate - and although she was disappointed that she did not experience the miracle that she so desperately needed - she still knew Jesus to be the son of God that was to come into the world.
- **See John 11:28 - at this point Jesus is still at the gate - he will stand where you need him to stand & will come as far as you are willing to let him in.**
- Martha was angry at Jesus - but she still received a miracle - perhaps we need to work our angry praise?
- See verse 32
- Mary fell to his feet in frustration.
- And when Jesus saw her pain, he participated in it.
- **The Lazarus factor is not only that God gives miracles in desperation – he also says that he is with us during the pain of disappointment. Jesus then asks Mary to take him to the tomb of Lazarus - that place – symbolically that place within us - the place of betrayal – that place of exhaustion – that place of embarrassment.**
- The question I have is why didn't God speak it at the gate from a distance - he didn't even have to come to Bethany to heal Lazarus - but I think he wants us to see that Jesus likes to come close to the situation.
- Everybody has a Lazarus and everybody has a turn that life took - that you didn't see coming - that God didn't prevent.
- **And this may seem like a simple message - but is probably one of the most important messages delivered here - God says to us - take me to that place - is not a physical location - it is an emotional location - take me to that place – where we stop being optimistic - we started going through the motions - swinging an ax with no blade - where you managed the addiction and are no longer fighting it - take me to that place – where you show people your façade because you think people can't handle who you really are at the core of your being - that place.**

- Everybody has a Lazarus – and the question is not do you have a Lazarus? - the question is what you do about it?
- See verse 35.
- How powerful is it that Jesus wept before he delivered the miracle? Before he demonstrates his authority, he demonstrated his empathy. He wants us to know that he is with us - while we are waiting for it.
- God says this: I'll be with you while you're waiting for it - I'll be with you and people didn't come through for you.
- See verse 36 and 37.
- Here Jesus operates according to his purpose and not on the opinions of others.
- The stone across at the entrance equates to what comes in and what comes out of your heart today.
- **Jesus asks the people to remove the stone - something that he could have done himself - he could but he didn't - until you open up yourself to the possibility that God can do it - your heart is a closed tomb - keeping things in - and not letting one anyone else know was going on in our hearts.**
- See verse 41 – 44
- Jesus says this: if you believe, you will see the glory of God. Father I thank you that you heard me. The dead thing came out - the dead place came to life - the dry bones came together - hear the word of the Lord.
- Closing prayer: In a loud voice he commanded the thing that was dead to come alive. The Lazarus factor says this: you do not always get Lazarus back - but his presence is always calling something forth - he is the God of the outcome – Don't let your Lazarus convince you that He does not love you - He loved us so much that he left someone else to die – He showed up at the spot - and He is still showing up - at the tomb of every Lazarus - and even if you are at a place that you don't want to be, God is still standing there – He has not abandoned you. The Greek word never is u mé (phonetic spelling is oo may). When Jesus says never will I leave you and never will I forsake you - is a double negative. It means never no never. Father in the name of Jesus - I thank you that you heard us the first time - that there's no one standing before you today who cannot declare that you are weeping with us in our disappointment. I speak to every Lazarus in the room today - in the name of Jesus - I call joy forth in the name of Jesus - I called piece, purpose, and glory forth in the name of Jesus - for we know the sickness and trail do not end in death - but for the glory of God. The Lazarus factor is that He is given glory - out of the situation. It is the situation that gives the opportunity for a revelation. Amen.